PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

SIXTH SERIES—VOLUME 230

HOUSE OF COMMONS

OFFICIAL REPORT

FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT
OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN
AND NORTHERN IRELAND
FORTY-SECOND YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SESSION 1992-93

COMPRISING PERIOD
18 October—29 October 1993

HER MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT

MEMBERS OF THE CABINET

(Formed by the Rt. Hon. John Major, MP, June 1993)

Prime Minister, First Lord of the Treasury and Minister for the Civil Service—The Rt. Hon. John Major, MP
Lord Chancellor—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Mackay of Clashfern
Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs—The Rt. Hon. Douglas Hurd, CBE, MP
Chancellor of the Exchequer—The Rt. Hon. Kenneth Clarke, QC, MP
Secretary of State for the Home Department—The Rt. Hon. Michael Howard, QC, MP
President of the Board of Trade (Secretary of State for Trade and Industry)—The Rt. Hon. Michael Heseltine, MP
Secretary of State for Transport—The Rt. Hon. John MacGregor, OBE, MP
Secretary of State for Defence—The Rt. Hon. Malcolm Rifkind, QC, MP
Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Lords—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Wakeham
Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons—The Rt. Hon. Tony Newton, OBE, MP
Secretary of State for the Environment—The Rt. Hon. John Gummer, MP
Secretary of State for National Heritage—The Rt. Hon. Peter Brooke, CH, MP
Secretary of State for Employment—The Rt. Hon. David Hunt, MBE, MP
Secretary of State for Social Security—The Rt. Hon. Peter Lilley, MP
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster—The Rt. Hon. William Waldegrave, MP
Secretary of State for Scotland—The Rt. Hon. Ian Lang, MP
Secretary of State for Northern Ireland—The Rt. Hon. Sir Patrick Mayhew, QC, MP
Secretary of State for Education—The Rt. Hon. John Patten, MP
Secretary of State for Health—The Rt. Hon. Virginia Bottomley, MP
Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food—The Rt. Hon. Gillian Shephard, MP
Chief Secretary to the Treasury—The Rt. Hon. Michael Portillo, MP
Secretary of State for Wales—The Rt. Hon. John Redwood, MP

LAW OFFICERS

Attorney-General—The Rt. Hon. Sir Nicholas Lyell, QC, MP
Lord-Advocate—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Rodger of Earlsferry, QC
Solicitor-General—Sir Derek Spencer, QC, MP
Solicitor-General for Scotland—Thomas Dawson, Esq, QC

MINISTERS NOT IN THE CABINET

Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasury—The Rt. Hon. Richard Ryder, OBE, MP
Ministers of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office—
Minister for Overseas Development—The Rt. Hon. The Baroness Chalker of Wallasey
The Rt. Hon. Alastair Goodlad, MP
The Rt. Hon. Douglas Hogg, QC, MP
David Heathcoat-Amory, Esq, MP
Ministers of State, Home Office—
The Rt. Hon. The Earl Ferrers
Peter Lloyd, Esq, MP
David Maclean, Esq, MP
Financial Secretary to the Treasury—Stephen Dorrell, Esq, MP
Paymaster General—The Rt. Hon. Sir John Cope, MP
Ministers of State, Department of Trade and Industry—
Minister for Energy—Tim Eggar, Esq, MP
Minister for Industry—The Rt. Hon. Tim Sainsbury, MP
Minister for Trade—Richard Needham, Esq, MP
Ministers of State, Department of Transport—
Minister for Public Transport—The Rt. Hon. Roger Freeman, MP
Minister for Aviation and Shipping—The Rt. Hon. The Earl of Caithness
Ministers of State, Ministry of Defence—
Minister of State for Defence Procurement—Jonathan Aitken, Esq, MP
Minister of State for the Armed Forces—Jeremy Hanley, Esq, MP
Ministers of State, Department of the Environment—
Minister for Housing, Inner Cities and Construction—The Rt. Hon. Sir George Young, MP
Minister for Local Government and Planning—David Curry, Esq, MP
Minister for the Environment and Countryside—Tim Yeo, Esq, MP
Minister of State, Department of Employment—Michael Forsyth, Esq, MP
Minister of State, Department of Social Security—
Minister for Social Security and Disabled People—The Rt. Hon. Nicholas Scott, MBE, MP
Minister of State, Scottish Office—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Fraser of Carmyllie, QC

MINISTERS OF STATE, NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE—
Robert Atkins, Esq, MP
The Rt. Hon. Sir John Wheeler, MP
MINISTER OF STATE, DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION—The Rt. Hon. The Baroness Blatch, CBE
MINISTER OF STATE, DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH—
Minister for Health—Dr. Brian Mawhinney, MP
MINISTER OF STATE, MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD—Michael Jack, Esq, MP
MINISTER OF STATE, WELSH OFFICE—The Rt. Hon. Sir Wyn Roberts, MP

DEPARTMENTS OF STATE AND MINISTERS

Agriculture, Fisheries and Food—
MINISTER—The Rt. Hon. Gillian Shephard, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—Michael Jack, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARIES—
The Earl Howe
The Hon. Nicholas Soames, MP

Defence—
SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. Malcolm Rifkind, QC, MP
MINISTER OF STATE FOR DEFENCE PROCUREMENT—Jonathan Aitken, Esq, MP
MINISTER OF STATE FOR THE ARMED FORCES—Jeremy Hanley, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE—The Lord Cecil of Essenden

Education—
SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. John Patten, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. The Baroness Blatch, CBE
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SCHOOLS—Eric Forth, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE—Robin Squire, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FURTHER AND HIGHER EDUCATION—Timothy Boswell, Esq, MP

Employment—
SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. David Hunt, MBE, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—Michael Forsyth, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
The Lord Henley
Miss Ann Widdecombe, MP

Environment—
SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. John Gummer, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE—
Minister for Housing, Inner Cities and Construction—The Rt. Hon. Sir George Young, MP
Minister for Local Government and Planning—David Curry, Esq, MP
Minister for the Environment and Countryside—Tim Yeo, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
Tony Baldry, Esq, MP
The Baroness Denton, CBE

Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs—
SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. Douglas Hurd, CBE, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE—
Minister for Overseas Development—The Rt. Hon. The Baroness Chalker of Wallasey
The Right Hon. Alastair Goodlad, MP
The Rt. Hon. Douglas Hogg, QC, MP
David Heathcoat-Amory, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE—The Hon. Mark Lennox-Boyd, MP

Health—
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR HEALTH—The Rt. Hon. Virginia Bottomley, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—
Minister for Health—Dr. Brian Mawhinney, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
The Hon. Tom Sackville, MP
The Baroness Cumberlege, CBE
John Bowis, Esq, OBE, MP

Home Office—
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE HOME DEPARTMENT—The Rt. Hon. Michael Howard, QC, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE—
The Rt. Hon. The Earl Ferrers
Peter Lloyd, Esq, MP
David Maclean, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE—Charles Wardle, Esq, MP

Law Officers' Department—
ATTORNEY-GENERAL—The Rt. Hon. Sir Nicholas Lyell, QC, MP
SOLICITOR-GENERAL—Sir Derek Spencer, QC, MP

Lord Advocate's Department—
LORD-ADVOCATE—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Rodger of Earlsferry, QC
SOLICITOR-GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND—Thomas Dawson, Esq, QC

Lord Chancellor's Department—
LORD CHANCELLOR—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Mackay of Clashfern
PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY—John M. Taylor, Esq, MP

National Heritage—
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NATIONAL HERITAGE—The Rt. Hon. Peter Brooke, CH, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE—Iain Sproat, Esq, MP

Northern Ireland Office—
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND—The Rt. Hon. Sir Patrick Mayhew, QC, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE—
Robert Atkins, Esq, MP
The Rt. Hon. Sir John Wheeler, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
The Earl of Arran
Michael Ancram, Esq, MP

Paymaster General's Office—
PAYMASTER GENERAL—The Rt. Hon. Sir John Cope, MP

Privy Council Office—
LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL AND LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS—The Rt. Hon. Tony Newton, OBE, MP
LORD PRIVY SEAL AND LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF LORDS—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Wakeham

Public Service and Science, Office of—
CHANCELLOR OF THE DUCHY OF LANCASTER—The Rt. Hon. William Waldegrave, MP
PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY—David Davis, Esq, MP

Scottish Office—
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SCOTLAND—The Rt. Hon. Ian Lang, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Fraser of Carmyllie, QC
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
Lord James Douglas-Hamilton, MP
Allan Stewart, Esq, MP
Sir Hector Monro, MP

Social Security—
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SOCIAL SECURITY—The Rt. Hon. Peter Lilley, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—
Minister for Social Security and Disabled People—The Rt. Hon. Nicholas Scott, MBE, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
Alistair Burt, Esq, MP
William Hague, Esq, MP
The Viscount Astor

Trade and Industry—
PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF TRADE (SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY)—The Rt. Hon. Michael Heseltine, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE—
Minister for Energy—Tim Eggar, Esq, MP
Minister for Industry—The Rt. Hon. Tim Sainsbury, MP
Minister for Trade—Richard Needham, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE FOR CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND SMALL FIRMS—The Lord Strathclyde
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE FOR CORPORATE AFFAIRS—Neil Hamilton, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TECHNOLOGY—Patrick McLoughlin, Esq, MP

Transport—
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT—The Rt. Hon. John MacGregor, OBE, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE—
Minister for Public Transport—The Rt. Hon. Roger Freeman, MP
Minister for Aviation and Shipping—The Rt. Hon. The Earl of Caithness
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
Robert Key, Esq, MP (Minister for Roads and Traffic)
Steve Norris, Esq, MP (Minister for Transport in London)

Treasury—

PRIME MINISTER, FIRST LORD OF THE TREASURY AND MINISTER FOR THE CIVIL SERVICE—The Rt. Hon. John Major, MP
CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER—The Rt. Hon. Kenneth Clarke, QC, MP
CHIEF SECRETARY—The Rt. Hon. Michael Portillo, MP
FINANCIAL SECRETARY—Stephen Dorrell, Esq, MP
PAYMASTER GENERAL—The Rt. Hon. Sir John Cope, MP
ECONOMIC SECRETARY—Anthony Nelson, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY—The Rt. Hon. Richard Ryder, OBE, MP
LORDS COMMISSIONERS—
Irvine Patnick, Esq, OBE, MP
Nicholas Baker, Esq, MP
Timothy Wood, Esq, MP
Timothy Kirkhope, Esq, MP
Andrew Mackay, Esq, MP
ASSISTANT WHIPS—
Robert G. Hughes, Esq, MP
James Arbuthnot, Esq, MP
Andrew Mitchell, Esq, MP
Michael Brown, Esq, MP
Derek Conway, Esq, MP

Welsh Office—

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WALES—The Rt. Hon. John Redwood, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. Sir Wyn Roberts, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE—Gwilym Jones, Esq, MP

Her Majesty's Household—

LORD CHAMBERLAIN—The Rt. Hon. The Earl of Airlie, KT, GCVO
LORD STEWARD—The Viscount Ridley, TD
MASTER OF THE HORSE—The Lord Somerleyton
TREASURER—Greg Knight, Esq, MP
COMPTROLLER—David Lightbown, Esq, MP
VICE-CHAMBERLAIN—Sydney Chapman, Esq, MP
CAPTAIN OF THE HONOURABLE CORPS OF GENTLEMEN-AT-ARMS—The Viscount Ullswater
CAPTAIN OF THE QUEEN'S BODYGUARD OF THE YEOMEN OF THE GUARD—The Earl of Strathmore and Kinghorne
LORDS IN WAITING—The Viscount Long, CBE, The Viscount St. Davids, The Viscount Goschen, The Lord Mackay
BARONESS IN WAITING—The Rt. Hon. The Baroness Trumpington

SECOND CHURCH ESTATES COMMISSIONER, REPRESENTING CHURCH COMMISSIONERS—The Rt. Hon. Michael Alison, MP

CAMBRIDGE REFERENCE LIBRARY

HOUSE OF COMMONS

PRINCIPAL OFFICERS AND OFFICIALS

THE SPEAKER—The Rt. Hon. Betty Boothroyd, MP

CHAIRMAN OF WAYS AND MEANS—Michael Morris, Esq, MP

FIRST DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF WAYS AND MEANS—Geoffrey Lofthouse, Esq, MP

SECOND DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF WAYS AND MEANS—Dame Janet Fookes, MP

CHAIRMEN'S PANEL—

Dr. John G. Blackburn, MP, Joe Benton, Esq, MP, Frank Cook, Esq, MP, Patrick Cormack, Esq, MP, Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody, MP, Alan Haselhurst, Esq, MP, Robert Hicks, Esq, MP, James Hill, Esq, MP, Norman Hogg, Esq, MP, Roy Hughes, Esq, MP, Sir John Hunt, MP, Barry Jones, Esq, MP, Martyn Jones, Esq, MP, Sir James Kilfedder, MP, Sir David Knox, MP, John McWilliam, Esq, MP, Michael J. Martin, Esq, MP, Iain Mills, Esq, MP, Edward O'Hara, Esq, MP, Sir Giles Shaw, MP, Michael Shersby, Esq, MP, Roger Sims, Esq, MP, Mrs. Ann Winterton, MP, Nicholas Winterton, Esq, MP

HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION—

The Rt. Hon. The Speaker (Chairman), The Rt. Hon. Margaret Beckett, MP, The Rt. Hon. Alan Beith, MP, The Rt. Hon. Paul Channon, MP, The Rt. Hon. Tony Newton, OBE, MP, The Rt. Hon. Peter Shore, MP

SECRETARY OF THE COMMISSION—R. W. G. Wilson

BOARD OF MANAGEMENT—

Sir Clifford Boulton, KCB (Chairman), Sir Alan Urwick, KCVO, CMG, Miss J. B. Tanfield, J. Rodda, FCA, I. D. Church, Mrs. S. J. Harrison

SECRETARY OF THE BOARD OF MANAGEMENT—B. A. Wilson

OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

SPEAKER'S SECRETARY—N. Bevan, CB

ASSISTANT SECRETARY TO THE SPEAKER—Mrs. M. E. Thomson

TRAINBEARER—D. J. Lord, MBE

DEPUTY TRAINBEARER—P. L. Warwick

DIARY SECRETARY—Mrs. S. Norvell

SPEAKER'S CHAPLAIN—Rev. Canon D. C. Gray, TD, PhD

SPEAKER'S COUNSEL—H. Knorpel, CB, QC, T. J. G. Pratt, CB

ASSISTANT TO SPEAKER'S COUNSEL—P. Harvey, CB

OFFICE OF THE CHAIRMAN OF WAYS AND MEANS

SECRETARY TO THE CHAIRMAN OF WAYS AND MEANS—Ms P. A. Helme

DEPARTMENT OF THE CLERK OF THE HOUSE

CLERK OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS—Sir Clifford Boulton, KCB
CLERK ASSISTANT—D. W. Limon, CB
CLERK OF COMMITTEES—J. F. Sweetman, CB, TD
PRINCIPAL CLERKS—
W. R. McKay (Public Bills)
C. B. Winnifrith (Table Office)
R. B. Sands (Select Committees)
G. Cubie (Overseas Office)
A. J. Hastings (Journal Office)
R. J. Willoughby (Private Bills)
D. G. Millar (Select Committees)
M. R. Jack, PhD (Standing Committees)
R. W. G. Wilson (Domestic Committees)
W. A. Proctor (Financial Committees)
DEPUTY PRINCIPAL CLERKS—S. A. L. Panton, Mrs. J. Sharpe, Ms A. Milner-Barry, F. A. Cranmer, R. J. Rogers, C. R. M. Ward, PhD, Ms H. E. Irwin, D. W. N. Doig, D. L. Natzler, E. P. Silk, A. R. Kennon, L. C. Laurence Smyth, S. J. Patrick, D. J. Gerhold, C. J. Poyser, D. F. Harrison, S. J. Priestley, A. H. Doherty, P. A. Evans, R. I. S. Phillips, R. G. James
SENIOR CLERKS—Ms P. A. Helme, D. R. Lloyd, R. A. Lambert, B. M. Hutton, J. S. Benger, D Phil, Miss E. C. Samson, N. P. Walker, M. D. Hamlyn, P. C. Seaward, DPhil, C. G. Lee, C. D. Stanton, A. Y. A. Azad, H.R. Neilson (acting), D. Steel (acting), D. J. Clarke (acting), P. E. Bolton (acting)
CLERKS OF DOMESTIC COMMITTEES—K. J. Brown, P. G. Moon
ASSISTANT CLERKS—C. A. Shaw, P. M. Hensher, Ms L. M. Gardner, F. J. Reid, M. Hennessy, G. R. Devine, Mrs. J. N. St. J. Mulley, T. W. P. Healey, Miss S. R. Adams
SENIOR EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—G. E. Clayton, Miss R. J. Challis, S. D. Barrett
HIGHER EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—L. L. Kaye, A. P. Hubner, Miss S. J. Fox, Mrs. P. Fisher, F. McShane, J. D. Whatley, M. Clark, Miss A. M. Loader, Miss F. L. Allingham, Mrs. L. M. Nugent, J. A. L. Dresner, M. P. Oxborough, N. P. Wright, Ms C. M. Genis, Mrs. C. Oxborough, R. W. A. Barrand
SPECIALIST ASSISTANTS—J. K. Wheatley, Miss S. Phipps, PhD, Miss C. M. French, Ms C. L. Auchterlonie, C. B. Dibben, J. Cable, V. A. A. Mengot, R. J. Gartside, P. J. King
EDITORIAL SUPERVISOR OF THE VOTE—B. Tidball, DEPUTY—Miss L. Lewis, ASSISTANTS—Miss B. Balcomb, J. Puricelli, K. B. Wood, P. D. Howlett, Mrs. L. R. Shade, P. A. Jack, P. L. J. Sullivan
SECRETARIES—Mrs. G. E. C. Sclater (Clerk of the House), Mrs. S. D. Pamphlett, Miss S. P. Chubb, Mrs. D. Gent, Miss A. T. Power, Miss D. J. Somers, Mrs. K. J. Georgiou, Miss L. Young, Mrs. H. Agnew, Miss S. Littlebury, Mrs. J. Stott, Mrs. A. M. Douglas, Miss K. McClelland, Mrs. B. Hunter, Mrs. A. M. Allen
EXAMINERS OF PETITIONS FOR PRIVATE BILLS—R. J. Willoughby, B. P. Keith
REGISTRAR OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS—R. B. Sands
TAXING OFFICER—R. J. Willoughby
SUPERINTENDING CLERK—R. A. Broomfield
CHIEF OFFICE CLERKS—Miss A. Fuki, J. Hole, Miss E. Segal, A. Catinella, Mrs. D. B. Nelson, Miss C. A. Benger

DEPARTMENT OF THE SERJEANT AT ARMS

SERJEANT AT ARMS—Sir Alan Urwick, KCVO, CMG
DEPUTY SERJEANT AT ARMS—P. N. W. Jennings
ASSISTANT SERJEANT AT ARMS—M. J. A. Cummins
DEPUTY ASSISTANT SERJEANTS AT ARMS—P. A. J. Wright, J. M. Robertson
CLERK IN CHARGE—Miss S. J. Scott Thomson
ADMISSION ORDER OFFICE—A. Chipperfield, BEM, Mrs. S. J. Warren, A. J. Spencer
PRINCIPAL DOORKEEPER—R. H. Usher
DEPUTY PRINCIPAL DOORKEEPERS—C. E. Gray, J. C. W. Cooper
SENIOR DOORKEEPERS—R. A. F. Chapman, D. Shiels, J. Town, R. J. Tyack, R. D. Walkerdine
HEAD OFFICE KEEPER—M. Bryant
SENIOR OFFICE KEEPERS—V. M. Roccia, K. R. Dickason, C. R. Harris, BEM
OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH MANAGER—Mrs. M. Mainland
NURSING SISTER—Miss S. Todd
PARLIAMENTARY WORKS DIRECTORATE—
DIRECTOR OF WORKS—H. P. Webber
DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF WORKS—B. C. Sewell
PRINCIPAL WORKS OFFICERS—A. Makepeace, R. Bentley, G. Goode, B. R. Hall, C. Hillier, M. Moone, J.F. Moore, M. Trott
SENIOR PROFESSIONAL TECHNICAL OFFICERS—C. Brown, C. Cowell, J. Eaton, T. Fox, S. Howard, T. Jardine, B. O'Boyle, J. Stone
COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER—A. Blake
DEPUTY COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER—Mrs. S. Morrison

DEPARTMENT OF THE LIBRARY

LIBRARIAN—Miss J. B. Tanfield
DEPUTY LIBRARIAN—Miss P. Baines, B.Litt
LIBRARY AND RESEARCH—
ASSISTANT LIBRARIANS (Heads of Division)—S. Z. Young, K. G. Cunninghame
DEPUTY ASSISTANT LIBRARIANS (Heads of Section)—Mrs. J. M. Wainwright, FIInfSc, C. C. Pond, PhD, Mrs. C. B. Andrews, R. C. Clements, Mrs. J. M. Lourie, R. J. Ware, DPhil, C. R. Barclay, Mrs. J. M. Fiddick, Mrs. C. M. Gillie, R. J. Twigger, Mrs. G. L. Allen
LIBRARY CLERKS, SENIOR—Ms F. Poole, Ms C. E. Nield, T. N. Edmonds,R. J. Cracknell, CStat, Miss O. M. Gay, Miss B. McInnes, B. K. Winetrobe, Miss M. Baber, Ms A. Walker,Mrs. H. V. Holden, Mrs. P. Carling, Miss J. Seaton, FLA, A. J. L. Crompton, Ms P. Strickland, Miss V. A. Miller, Ms H. M. Jeffs, M.P. Hillyard, S. A. Wise (period), Ms. J. Roll (temporary)
ASSISTANT—Dr. A. Davies, Ms W. T. Wilson, E. H. Wood, Miss N. J. Chedgey, M. Nawaz, P. Bowers, PhD, T. E. Dodd, A. C. Seely, Ms J. K. Dyson, Miss F. M. Watson, G. Danby, PhD, W. F. Lea, PhD, Miss P. M. Hughes, PhD, B. C. Morgan
SENIOR EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—P. W. Skerratt (period), J. A. Prince, MLS (acting)
SENIOR LIBRARY EXECUTIVES—K. N. H. Parry, ALA, Miss C. E. Fretten, ALA, Mrs. P. V. Wiles, Miss I. O. White, ALA,Mrs. P. E. Cook, ALA (acting), Ms F. Whittle (acting)
EDUCATION OFFICER—Mrs. C. Weeds; ASSISTANT—Mrs. C. C. O'Connor
HIGHER EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—E. L. V. MacGregor, Ms B. A. Rowlands, ALA, J. P Brevitt
HIGHER LIBRARY EXECUTIVES—Mrs. D. W. Clark, Miss M. H. Fletcher, Mrs. G. C. Brown, Ms H. Armstrong, Miss E. J. Jones, ALA, G. Haig, Miss G. L. Cooper, Mrs. E. H. Riley, ALA, Mrs. F. M. Ward, Mrs. M. A. Azim, ALA, T. C. Holmes, C. M. Sear, Ms J. B. Hall, ALA,R. Freebury, ALA, A. D. Parker, ALA, Miss C. M. Blair, ALA (acting), Miss A. Hatton (acting), Mrs. J. A. Smith (acting)
EDITOR, WEEKLY BULLETIN—D. B. Inns
LIBRARY EXECUTIVES—P. E. M. Ward, Mrs. J. M. Smith, ALA, Miss J. Lyall, ALA, Ms Z. Smallwood, Miss C. Owens,Miss L. K. Fleming, Mrs. J. Priestley, Miss C. M. A. Chambers, Miss S. Pepin, ALA, P. C. Tomes, R. O. Steeden, G. G. Newell, Miss V. S. Spratt, B. Smith (acting), Miss K. E. Susilovic (acting), A. B. Estorffe (temporary)
EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—Miss N. Harland, Mrs. A. J. H. Mara, D. A. Brown, M. Greenhill (Head Library Attendant), Ms J. Fessey, A. J. Fuller, Miss J. M. Perkes, Mrs. H. Onyskiw, A. Clark, Miss A. Gual, Ms M A. Moulton, Miss N. M. Sutherland, Mrs. C. Millar, Mrs. P. M. Burnett, P. R. Mann (acting), F. M. Codd (acting), Miss J. Appleton (acting)

VOTE OFFICE—
DELIVERER OF THE VOTE—H. C. Foster
DEPUTY DELIVERER OF THE VOTE—J. F. Collins ASSISTANT DELIVERER OF THE VOTE—O. B. T. Sweeney
BOOKSHOP MANAGER—C. D. Lister HIGHER EXECUTIVE OFFICER—B. G. Underwood
SUPERINTENDING CLERKS—Mrs. S. Fuzio, A. J. Ashton
VOTE OFFICE ASSISTANTS—G. E. Howard, C. P. Williams, P. Hannett, J. Harrington, M. D. Cook

DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

DIRECTOR—J. Rodda, FCA
FEES OFFICE—
ACCOUNTANT—A. J. Lewis
DEPUTY ACCOUNTANT—A. R. Marskell ASSISTANT ACCOUNTANTS—M. Fletcher, Mrs. G. Crowther
SENIOR EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—Mrs. D. C. Hill, N. P. Crawley HIGHER EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—Mrs. J. Peach, Mrs. G. M. Baker, Miss R. Harrison, Ms M. R. Morris, G. L. Turner EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—D. M. Allen, D. J. D. Woods, Ms P. R. Mills, Miss S. V. A. Weaver, P. H. Olden, A. D. Rowlands, P. J. S. French, Miss T. D. Ruewell, Miss M. Oliver, Miss D. M. McGuire, Mrs. S. M. Chalmers, R. A. P. Edwards, Mrs. C. J. Stockton, A. C. Martin
FINANCE OFFICE—
HEAD OF OFFICE—M. J. Barram, IPFA, MBCS,
ASSISTANT ACCOUNTANTS—R. H. A. Russell, ACMA, Ms S. Peterson, IPFA
SENIOR EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—Mrs. N. Norman
HIGHER EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—P. McGuinness, Ms K. Bigwood, Miss V. E. Wilson
EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—Miss D. E. Johnson, P. F. Dawson, Miss D. O. McElderry, Miss V. Browne (temporary), Miss R. Astbury (temporary), Ms S. Pratt (temporary), Ms T. Myers (temporary)
ESTABLISHMENTS OFFICE—
HEAD OF OFFICE—B. A. Wilson
DEPUTY HEAD OF OFFICE—J. A. Robb
SENIOR EXECUTIVE OFFICER—Miss P. J. Hurford HIGHER EXECUTIVE OFFICER—Miss J. Bremner
PERSONNEL OFFICE MANAGER—M. Page PERSONNEL OFFICERS—C. L. Watson, Miss C. E. Jackson, Mrs. R. A. Baker, Mrs. A. McGuinn
COMPUTER OFFICE—
COMPUTER OFFICER—R. S. Morgan, FBCS, FIInfSc NETWORK PLANNING OFFICER—J. Fishenden
NETWORK SUPPORT OFFICER—Mrs. J. M. Cleveland COMPUTER SUPPORT MANAGER—Miss M. Morrison
EXECUTIVE OFFICER—C. J. Bumstead COMPUTER SUPPORT OFFICER—P. Barratt
COMMON SERVICES UNIT—
HEAD OF UNIT—V. H. Stocker HIGHER EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—R. Gunn, M. J. H. Caswell
INTERNAL AUDITOR—A. A. Cameron SENIOR AUDITOR—S. J. Lewis
STAFF INSPECTOR—R. C. Collins
WELFARE OFFICER—Mrs. A. Mossop

DEPARTMENT OF THE OFFICIAL REPORT

EDITOR—I. D. Church

DEPUTY EDITOR—P. Walker

PRINCIPAL ASSISTANT EDITORS—R. V. Hadlow, J. Gourley, W. G. Garland, Miss H. A. Hales

ASSISTANT EDITORS—Ms C. V. Grainger, Miss V. A. A. Clarke, Miss L. Sutherland, S. M. Hutchinson, C. Fogarty

COMMITTEE SUB-EDITORS—D. Crotwell, Mrs. A. M. Browne, Miss V. A. Widgery, Mrs. H. J. G. Natzler, Mrs. A. Street, L. Gilmore, Ms G. Hardgrave, P. Oglethorpe, P. Hadlow, Miss C. Hanly, M. Watson, Ms. K. Stewart, J. Ransley, Mrs. E. J. Gregory

REPORTERS—Miss E. Morris, Ms J. Dall, Ms P. Kelly, Miss K. Myers, Ms J. Warrington, Ms D. Jones, Mrs. J. Symons, Mrs. J. L. Davies, Miss E. A. Jarka, Miss J. Goodman, Miss J. Levy

PRINCIPAL TRANSCRIBER—D. N. Harrington, MBE

DEPUTY PRINCIPAL TRANSCRIBERS—Mrs. M. J. Harding, Miss J. Beck (acting)

IT MANAGERS—Miss J. L. Brown, R. Daniels

PRINCIPAL HANSARD ASSISTANT—Miss R. Washington

SENIOR HANSARD ASSISTANT—J. Brake

ANNUNCIATOR SUPERINTENDENT—A. E. Thompson

REFRESHMENT DEPARTMENT

DIRECTOR OF CATERING SERVICES—Mrs. S. J. Harrison, MHCIMA

OPERATIONS MANAGER—N. M. Hutson, MHCIMA

CATERING ACCOUNTANT—D. R. W. Wood, FCA

EXECUTIVE CHEF—I. Gabay, MBE

PERSONNEL ADMINISTRATOR—Mrs. S. M. Nicholls, FHCIMA, MIPM

CATERING MANAGER, HOUSE OF COMMONS—P. Gale, MHCIMA

CATERING MANAGER, BELLAMY'S—Ms S. Hovells, LHCIMA

BANQUETING MANAGER—C. J. Griffiths

ASSISTANT BANQUETING MANAGER—Miss C. Skidmore, LHCIMA

ASSISTANT CATERING MANAGER—M. W. E. Johnson

ASSISTANT CATERING ACCOUNTANT—Mrs. B. A. Langley

PERSONAL ASSISTANT TO THE DIRECTOR—Mrs. A. G. Lunn

DEPUTY EXECUTIVE CHEF—S. Norris

SYSTEMS MANAGER—D. Capstick

SHORTHAND WRITER TO THE HOUSE—Mrs. P. J. Woolgar

HEAD OF SECURITY—Chief Superintendent A. E. F. Longhurst, LVO

DEPUTY HEAD OF SECURITY—Superintendent C. M. Harris

POSTMASTER—J. Arnold

TRANSPORT MANAGER—J. W. Jones

SUPERVISOR OF PARLIAMENTARY BROADCASTING—Miss M. E. Douglas

DIRECTOR OF THE PARLIAMENTARY OFFICE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY—Dr. M. G. Norton

THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

IN THE FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND
[WHICH OPENED 27 APRIL 1992]

FORTY-SECOND YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 230**

TWENTY-FOURTH VOLUME OF SESSION 1992-93

House of Commons

Monday 18 October 1993

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

SOCIAL SECURITY

Medical Tests

1. **Dr. Goodson-Wickes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what consultations he has had concerning the institution of objective medical tests in relation to the payment of benefits.

The Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Peter Lilley): In the course of my review of invalidity benefit I am considering introducing an objective medical test. My officials have undertaken a number of informal discussions with medical experts. No decisions have yet been made, but I am encouraged by the progress made so far.

When we have firm proposals I will publish them and consult formally and fully.

Dr. Goodson-Wickes: May I congratulate my right hon. Friend on tackling the necessary and rigorous review of the social security system, the operation of which is perceived by many to be subject to abuse at the expense of the most vulnerable in society?

Is it not ridiculous that, at a time when the nation's health is improving steadily, the number of people claiming invalidity benefit has risen by one third over the past five years? May I welcome my right hon. Friend's statement that he is considering an objective medical test, which would not only avoid difficulties in the doctor-patient relationship, but, most importantly, would ensure that benefit is drawn only by those who are incapable of work?

Mr. Lilley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his remarks about the long-term review of public expenditure, and social security expenditure in particular. If we are to ensure that the system guarantees the position of the most vulnerable, we must make sure that money is not wasted or abused. That lies behind much of our thinking.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend also for pointing out that we are to review the unsatisfactory procedures by which medical checks are operated to test whether a person is incapable of working. Doctors will welcome the proposals to bring in an objective test which will remove them from their present invidious position.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Is the Secretary of State aware that his use of the word "objective" in that fashion is both pejorative and offensive to the medical profession as it implies that those who give accurate clinical judgments on medical conditions are influenced not by medical conditions but by personal attributes, or by some aspect of the doctor's relationship with the patient? Is that not unacceptable, ignorant and a poor excuse for the Government's attempts to cut the money available to the most vulnerable?

Mr. Lilley: I do not agree with the hon. Lady at all. There have been many criticisms of the present arrangements, particularly from doctors, since the previous uprating statement.

I received 300 letters from doctors, more than 290 of which supported the changes that we have made. I have never criticised doctors for the way in which they operate the present system. It is up to us to provide a system that does not put doctors in an invidious position and results in an objective test of medical capacity to work. The present system has changed over the years due to legal rulings, and has been difficult for doctors to operate. It is up to us to produce a better system, and that is what I am trying to do.

Mr. Hawkins: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that, under this Government, spending on the long-term sick and disabled—of whom there are many in my constituency—has more than trebled in real terms to around £15 billion a year? Is that not a powerful commitment by the Government to helping the most vulnerable?

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend is quite correct. There has been a particularly rapid growth in the number of people on invalidity benefit. The number has nearly trebled over the past 15 years, and expenditure on invalidity benefit has more than trebled during that period in real terms.

We have deliberately improved the benefits for disabled people through the disability working allowance and the disability living allowance. The allowances are targeted on those who have disabilities and who need help with mobility and care. That is a gauge of our determination to help those in need. We are determined to persist with that, but that requires us to make sure that other money is not misspent.

Mr. Dewar: Does not the Minister recognise that, with unemployment remaining stubbornly high at around 3 million, the impact on the cost of invalidity benefit is bound to be severe, as his own permanent secretary pointed out in evidence to the Public Accounts Committee a couple of years ago? Should not the right hon. Gentleman's anger and concern be concentrated on the Government's economic failure, rather than on those who have been forced on to benefit by ill health? Has the right hon. Gentleman read the remarks—reported in the press on Sunday—of Archbishop Winning, the Roman Catholic archbishop of Glasgow, who commented on the hypocrisy of targeting single parents, the unemployed and the disadvantaged in the name of a moral crusade? Is it not time that the Ministers gave up scapegoat politics and tried to face some of the real issues?

Mr. Lilley: The only anger that I feel and the only anger that I ever express is at the Opposition, for their scaremongering tactics—for deliberately causing concern among the sick, the elderly and the frailest in our society. Our policies and reforms are intended to help those people, and it is monstrous that they should be used as shock troops for the Labour party, as a substitute for its lack of policy. I entirely agree with the archbishop that no one should target the frail and the vulnerable, single mothers or otherwise, and I have no intention of doing so. We want a better system that will help those who need the help of those better off than themselves.

Pensioners (Incomes)

2. **Mr. Streeter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the average income of a pensioner with savings in 1979 and in the latest year for which figures are available.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. William Hague): Converted to 1991 prices, the average income of a pensioner with savings was £90·10 a week in 1979. That had increased by more than half as much again—to £141·20 per week—by 1990-91, the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Streeter: I thank my hon. Friend for his impressive reply. Does he agree that the present Government have perhaps helped pensioners most of all by getting inflation down and keeping it down so that the real value of those pensioners' hard-earned savings is not constantly eaten away by ever-spiralling prices as it was in the late-1970s?

Mr. Hague: I thank my hon. Friend for his compliment and agree with his statements. It is only under this Government that pensioners and future pensioners have had the opportunity and incentive to save on any significant scale. Some 76 per cent. of pensioners now have savings income, and that income, on average, is more than twice pensioners' savings income in 1979. That is a far cry from the days of 1974-79, when the value of pensioner savings income actually fell.

Mr. McAllion: Will the Minister confirm that a report on households with below average income published by his Department last July revealed that there are nearly 3 million pensioners in this country whose income has either been frozen or cut since 1979? Is not that a national disgrace in a country as wealthy as Britain? Will he also confirm that the average incomes to which he referred excluded housing costs and, above all, the costs of heating houses once the Government have imposed VAT on domestic fuel at the next Budget? Will he now tell the House what protection he offers to those pensioners on income support and to those who get by on incomes slightly above benefit level? That is the burning issue facing the country and the House at the next Budget.

Mr. Hague: The households below average income figures to which the hon. Gentleman refers are available both including and excluding housing costs. Both sets of statistics are freely available. In considering those figures, however, the hon. Gentleman should reflect on the fact that the proportion of pensioners in the bottom quintile—the bottom 20 per cent.—of income distribution is 24 per cent., whereas in 1979 it was 38 per cent. That is a measure of the extent to which pensioners' living standards have improved over that period.

Mr. David Shaw: Can my hon. Friend confirm that one reason why the average pensioner income has been increasing so dramatically under the Conservative Government is that some 16 million people now save through life insurance schemes and towards second and even third and fourth pensions, and that in the next 20 to 30 years the prosperity of pensioners will constantly increase and improve as a result of the Government's policies?

Mr. Hague: There is a great deal in what my hon. Friend says: 61 per cent. of all pensioners and 69 per cent. of recently retired pensioners receive income from an occupational pension. That compares with 43 and 55 per cent. respectively in 1979. A great many more of the pensioners of the future now also have personal pensions as well as occupational pensions and a great many more of them are able to save. That bodes well for pensioners' living standards in the future.

Mrs. Golding: The Minister will be aware that that still leaves one in seven pensioners relying on state benefits and, as at present calculated, it looks as though a single pensioner's uprating next April may be little more than £1 a week, given the Government's failure to provide an adequate state pension. Will the Minister answer the question that my hon. Friend the Member for Dundee, East

(Mr. McAllion) has just asked him? Will he guarantee pensioners full compensation for the devastating effect that VAT on fuel will have on their household budgets?

Mr. Hague: All parts of the hon. Lady's question are about the uprating statement, which has still to be made. I am afraid that she and the rest of the House will have to wait for the uprating statement by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. The Government have already made it clear, however, that there will be extra help for less well-off pensioners and that that help will be available at the same time as the higher fuel bills arise.

Income Support

5. **Sir Thomas Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the current take-up of income support.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Alistair Burt): The latest available estimates of take-up of income support for 1989 show that almost £9 out of every £10 of available income-related benefit was being claimed and almost four out of every five people eligible do claim.

Sir Thomas Arnold: In what ways has the Benefits Agency responded to the impact of the recession? Is my hon. Friend satisfied with the quality of information available to the public?

Mr. Burt: The Benefits Agency has indeed responded to the need for greater information about benefits. It is now responsible for a wide range of initiatives to increase awareness of entitlement. Exhibitions, talks, liaison with citizens advice bureaux, the operation of multi-lingual telephone freelines and participation in local radio phone-ins all provide information about benefits. We hope that the one-stop shopping initiative will increase the availability of information still further.

Mrs. Mahon: What does the Minister intend to do about the discrimination in income support against young people under the age of 25? Is he aware that young people in my constituency who live independently are left with about £36 a fortnight to live on and are reduced to going to the Salvation Army with chitties for food?

Mr. Burt: The majority of young people under 25 who are in receipt of benefit are living with other people, which is why they are on a lower rate than those aged over 25. A continual provision is made by the Government to consider young people in hardship. In particular, a special hardship claim has been increasingly used during the past couple of years because we have increasingly made information about it available.

Pension Age

6. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has received about the equalisation of pension ages for males and females; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hague: We have received more than 4,000 representations about the equalisation of state pension ages.

Mr. Thurnham: Is my hon. Friend aware that several other countries are moving towards a common retirement age of 66, or even 67? Does he agree that those people who want a common retirement age of 60 should face the fact that that would cost more than £4 billion? Should not the Opposition get off their backsides and go and see the reality of what is happening in, for instance, Sweden and Denmark?

Mr. Hague: I am aware of the developments in the countries to which my hon. Friend refers. They are subject to many of the same demographic pressures as we are. In this country equalisation at 65 would mean that there would be 2·7 working people to every retired person in the year 2030, but equalisation at 60 would mean a similar support ratio of 1·8 working people to each retired person in that year. So there would be major implications for future expenditure if an age as low as 60 were to be chosen, but that is one of the available options. The Government will announce their decision in due course.

Dr. Godman: Is the Minister in a position to estimate the effects of equalisation of the payment of pensions to men and women on women aged 60 to 65 who are in receipt of invalidity benefit? Is it his Department's intention to continue with its appeal to the English Court of Appeal concerning Commissioner Skinner's decision to restore invalidity benefit to women aged 60 to 65? Will the Minister answer the question himself?

Mr. Hague: There has been no change in the Department's attitude on that question. Obviously, there are implications for expenditure between the ages of 60 to 65 when we come to consider the equalisation of state pension age, but there is no change in the Government's policy on that matter to announce now.

Unemployed People

8. **Mrs. Bridget Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what amount is spent from his Department's budget on benefits for unemployed people.

The Minister for Social Security and Disabled People (Mr. Nicholas Scott): The estimated cost of paying unemployment benefit, income support, housing benefit and social fund payments to the unemployed in the year ending March 1993 was £9·3 billion, representing 12·5 per cent. of total benefit expenditure.

Mrs. Prentice: Does the Minister agree that with 3 million people unemployed at a cost of £9,000 per person —some £27 billion a year—the best way that he and his team could serve the unemployed would be to argue their case forcefully with the Treasury and put the responsibility for unemployment fairly and squarely on the shoulders of those members of the Government responsible for the economic mess that we are in?

Mr. Scott: The level of unemployment since the end of the second world war has depended on a range of factors, including international conditions, demographic change, technological change—*[Interruption.]* If the Opposition do not believe that, one of them should stand up and say why unemployment doubled during the period of office of the last Labour Government. A range of other factors affect unemployment. Against the background of some of those factors, we are determined to ensure that we reduce unemployment as quickly as possible. Over the past six months, we have been rather successful in doing so.

Mr. John Marshall: Has my right hon. Friend estimated the cost of benefits to the unemployed if we were to introduce a national minimum wage or sign up to the social chapter? Would not both of those increase unemployment and spending on the unemployed?

Mr. Scott: My hon. Friend has drawn attention to two factors that would add to unemployment and increase the range of other factors that tend to increase rather than decrease unemployment at any particular point.

Ms Lynne: Does the Minister accept that more money will have to be found for unemployment benefit if so-called "absent fathers", assessed by the Child Support Agency, find that they cannot stay in work because maintenance payments are so high? Does he accept that the legislation will have to be looked at to ensure that fathers who are already paying are not penalised and that real absent fathers do not get away scot free?

Mr. Scott: My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State will answer a question precisely on that issue in a moment. I am not anxious to increase the amount of money spent on meeting the needs of unemployed people, except in so far as it encourages them to accept and benefit from training, and to find their way back into work.

Low-income Families

9. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what extra help, over and above normal upratings, has been made available to help low-income families since 1987.

Mr. Burt: Since 1988, extra help has been made available to low-income families with children, worth around £1 billion a year from April 1993.

Mr. Evennett: I thank my hon. Friend for his reply and congratulate him and his Department on the extra resources for low-income families. They show the Government's commitment to the family. However, will my hon. Friend look carefully in the ongoing benefits review to ensure that the Government have targeted the most vulnerable and those with young children in real need? Does he agree that we must ensure that taxpayers' money is spent effectively and efficiently?

Mr. Burt: I am grateful to my hon. Friend's remarks and hope that I can reassure him that both the social security system and the Government's commitment are designed to target resources in the manner that he would like. In addition to the £1 billion for low-income families, which I mentioned a moment ago, we have also been able to direct an extra £1 billion towards pensioners since 1988 and, over the Government's lifetime, we have been able to orientate an extra £5 billion towards the disabled. We agree with the premises that my hon. Friend stated.

Mr. Raynsford: Does the Minister agree that the effect of the targeting that he has pursued has been to create extremely deep poverty traps for low-income households, particularly those in work, so that at present a low-income family getting help from family credit and housing benefit will lose 97p of every extra pound that it earns? When will the Government act to reverse those absurd poverty traps, which are an appalling disincentive for people in that position?

Mr. Burt: The particular statistic that the hon. Gentleman quotes applies to a tiny minority of people. The reform of the social security system in 1988, and subsequent changes to the tax and national insurance systems, have virtually eliminated the worst effects of the poverty trap. It is now virtually impossible to be worse off as a result of an increase in gross earnings. The hon. Gentleman knows that he refers to a tiny number of people.

Pensioners

10. **Mr. Hendry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the total value of extra help which has been directed to less well-off pensioners since 1989.

Mr. Hague: The total value of extra help given to pensioners on [illegible] incomes since 1989 is now around £1 billion a year.

Mr. Hendry: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for stating the large amount of resources that have been given to less well-off pensioners. Does he agree that the Government are right to target help to less well-off pensioners rather than spreading the money more thinly? Does he further agree that successive generations of pensioners are likely to be better off through their own resources? Is that not better than the weasel words of the Opposition, who say that they care about pensioners, but, at the same time, do all that they can to discourage people from taking out personal pensions?

Mr. Hague: My hon. Friend is right. The Government policy on pensions over the past three years has had three main strands: first, to maintain the value of the basic state pension; secondly, to encourage increased provision from other sources; thirdly, to use the additional resources made available to help those pensioners who have not shared in the increased provision of resources from elsewhere. That policy has had the effect of raising pensioners' average living standards over the period, and will produce greater benefits in future.

Mr. Winnick: Does the Minister realise the disgust that pensioners feel for the £1 increase in pension that they are to get next year? How will that miserable, miserly sum help those pensioners who will be faced with the imposition of VAT on gas and electricity, many of whom are unlikely to receive any compensation from the Government? Pensioners are being crucified by this Government. The Minister should recognise the disgust and loathing that the elderly feel towards him and his colleagues.

Mr. Hague: The hon. Gentleman anticipates the uprating statement. I wish that he and others of his hon. Friends understood that low inflation is the friend of pensioners and not their enemy. *[Interruption.]* Although interest rates are low at the moment, they are positive for those who have savings income. In the 1970s, the rate of inflation grew to be 14 per cent. higher than the level of interest rates available to pensioners. What sort of compensation was given by the then Labour Government to pensioners in that position?

Mr. Matthew Banks: Will my hon. Friend confirm that the average income that pensioners have received from savings since 1979 has more than doubled as a result of the policies pursued by the Government? Will he assure the

House that, in the current review of social security benefits, he will do everything in his power to ensure that we continue to provide the most where the need is greatest?

Mr. Hague: My hon. Friend is quite right: the average savings income of pensioners has more than doubled since 1979. He is also right about the importance of concentrating social security resources on the neediest, and that is what the Government have done.

Mr. Bradley: Is the Minister aware of the fear among pensioners about the forthcoming imposition of VAT on fuel? Will the Minister confirm today that the help that will be given to pensioners will be additional to the 1·8 per cent., or £1, rise in pensions? Will he further confirm that the help will be given to all pensioners in addition to the £1 a week? Will he ensure that the announcement about the uprating of those benefits is made on the same day as the Budget to allay pensioners' fears even further?

Mr. Hague: That question is the same as several that have already been asked and I must therefore give the same answer. The Government have already made it clear that less well-off pensioners will be given additional help; the details of that help will be announced at the time of the uprating statement.

Mr. Knapman: Can my hon. Friend confirm that basic pensions were increased by 3·6 per cent. last April, when the inflation rate was 1·3 per cent? Does that mean that the average pensioner couple is £2 per week better off and does it mean that low inflation benefits pensioner couples?

Mr. Hague: My hon. Friend has illustrated very well the way in which falling inflation benefited pensioners over the last financial year; their increase was based on the higher rate of inflation that prevailed at the time. The general point has been put very forcefully by my hon. Friend and by other hon. Members: low inflation helps pensioners. That is what Opposition Members still do not understand.

Family Poverty

11. **Mr. Wicks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the impact of child support legislation on family poverty.

Mr. Burt: The Child Support Act 1991 laid the foundation for a new system of child support maintenance in order to achieve more maintenance, more regularly, for more children. We expect the proportion of lone parents receiving maintenance nearly to double in the long run. Regular receipt of maintenance will mean that many parents with care no longer have to depend on income support and will have a real choice to work if they are able to do so, thus increasing the family's income.

Mr. Wicks: Does the Minister accept that the vast majority of lone mothers—and, most important, their children—will not benefit from child support by one extra penny? The 70 per cent. of lone mothers who receive income support will have every pound of child support deducted from their income support, pound for pound. Is not child support now turning into a piece of a taxation? Is not the Child Support Act, in practice, an Exchequer Support Act? Does not this mean-minded practice risk undermining the important principle of parental responsibility?

Mr. Burt: The hon. Gentleman has spoken before about his support for the principles. I accept and am grateful for that: I think that he speaks for everyone.

This is the position relating to the increasing availability of maintenance. Improving a situation in which maintenance had been in decline, and giving more women the opportunity to receive a portable income, will improve those women's circumstances in the short, medium and long term. As their children become older, the regular payment of maintenance will be a major advantage to them when they seek choices. Even if some are floated off income support in the first place—which is always a possibility when income is increased—the regular availability of more maintenance will be a genuine advantage to them in the years to come. That is the purpose of increasing maintenance and the point of the principle behind the Child Support Act, which the whole House has supported.

Mr. Jenkin: I thank my hon. Friend for his clear enunciation of the purposes behind the Child Support Agency. It is not something for which we should apologise. Are not we right to try to prevent the state from undermining the responsibility of parents and promoting illegitimacy and irresponsibility? Is not it also true, however, that the system must not simply be fair, but must be seen to be fair? Is my hon. Friend entirely satisfied that it is as fair as it can possibly be? Are there mechanisms that we should review and will the Department consider reviewing and monitoring the way in which the legislation is operating?

Mr. Burt: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. Of course, any new piece of legislation must be kept under constant review when it is introduced; that is being done with the Child Support Act, but no changes are contemplated at present.

I must state clearly that, contrary to some items in the press, the Child Support Agency is indeed chasing fathers who have not been paying, as well as examining cases in which those who have been paying maintenance have not necessarily been paying a realistic amount and in which separation agreements have been largely based on support by the taxpayer. It must be right for us to ask parents to assume responsibility for their children, rather than placing a burden on low-income taxpayers with families of their own. Parents must support their own children wherever possible: that is the principle behind the Child Support Act.

Mr. Dewar: The Minister will know that the Labour party has a strong belief that every parent must contribute to the maintenance of his or her child. Is not he concerned that the inflexibility of the financial system means that some highly relevant circumstances cannot be taken into account, for example, the cost of exercising access, or major property settlements made at the time of divorce or separation? Does not that—at least in some cases on the face of it—lead to hardship?

On the important point of helping families, despite what the Minister has said, and while accepting the legitimate interests of the Department to recoup expenses, is not it true that a vast number of children will get no benefit out of that? If we are interested in the children and if that is what the system is about, is not there a strong case that there should be a disregard and some way of giving an advantage from maintenance collected to those who need it most?

Mr. Burt: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman's continued support for the principles and was pleased to see that this year the Labour party conference reversed its decision of last year to oppose the principles of the Child Support Act. In relation to the two particular points that he mentioned, I reiterate that the regular payment of maintenance for more children will be a long-term benefit for them even if, in the short term, some families are floated off benefit. It must be better that families are not dependent on benefits and that maintenance comes in as a regular source of income, which will increase the opportunities and choices to the family in the future.

As to the payment of maintenance to the child as a matter of priority, as the hon. Gentleman knows, the formula places the payment of maintenance to the child as the greatest item of priority after an individual absent parent has looked after his own housing costs, his own immediate physical needs and the needs of any natural children in a second family. We believe that it is right to maintain the priority of that payment to the child. Any concession on that principle runs the risk of once again making the payment of maintenance to the child a matter of discretion. That was one of the problems of the previous system which we were anxious to avoid.

Mr. Quentin Davies: Does my hon. Friend agree that, in the light of experience, it is almost inevitable that some fine tuning will be desirable when a major new agency such as the Child Support Agency is established? Therefore, will he take a detailed look at the rules and not hesitate to change them if he finds that in practice justice is not perfectly being done between the competing interests of the taxpayer, the first family and subsequent families?

Mr. Burt: I listened carefully to what my hon. Friend said. I shall repeat what I said previously. New legislation is looked after carefully and kept under review. We have no proposals to change the rules, but often the silent voice in the debate over the past few weeks has been that of mothers who previously had not been receiving adequate maintenance regularly. Many of the cases in the papers have shown what low sums of maintenance were previously paid and the need to provide increased maintenance that not only suits mothers with children but relieves the taxpayers who, in many cases, have been an unwitting party to separation agreements and have been asked to provide money that they can ill afford.

Pensions

13. **Mr. Dickens:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what measures his Department is planning to encourage personal choice in pensions.

Mr. Lilley: The Government are committed to encouraging wider choice in pension provision.

Mr. Dickens: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that it is a fact that, since 1988, when it was possible to contract out of the state earnings-related pension scheme, 5 million pensioners have chosen to contract out and have personal pensions? Does not that show and amplify the Government's commitment to personal choice and personal pension schemes and should not we encourage everybody to think more about their future and provide for their twilight years?

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend is right. The measures that we took to widen choice for private pension provision have been extremely successful—5 million, or 10 times as many as were initially forecast, have taken out personal pensions following that measure. That is on top of the 10 million or more people who have occupational pensions. We want to build on that success and enable people to build up pension provision for retirement, to give them additional resources over and above those provided by the basic state pension.

Mr. Skinner: Is the Secretary of State aware that it is one thing for business executives who have had a 20 per cent. increase in their salaries in the past 13 months and for those who have had tax cuts during the past 14 years to be able to have a personal choice in pensions? But for the great majority of pensioners who will have to put up with a miserly £1 increase as a result of the measures taken by the Government, it will be a scandal. They have not got two ha'pennies to rub together, never mind talking about a personal pension scheme, while it cost £4,000 to bring the Secretary of State back from France to vote in the House of Commons.

Mr. Lilley: The hon. Member may want to see higher inflation so that, by money illusion, people appear to get more, but I remind him that most people do not have, in addition to their basic state pension, the index-linked pension to which he can look forward when he retires from the House. They are jolly glad that we have got inflation down because inflation undermines the value of their savings and robs them. He may be proud of being a supporter of the Government who robbed pensioners of a quarter of their savings in a single year, but we are determined that that should never recur.

Pensioners (Mortgages)

15. **Mrs. Roe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what estimate he has of the number of pensioners who own their own homes and have repaid their mortgage.

Mr. Hague: Our latest estimates are for 1990-91 and show that 3·3 million pensioner units owned their own homes and had paid off their mortgages in full.

Mrs. Roe: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that reply. Is he aware that more than 75 per cent. of pensioner homes now have central heating, compared with less than 50 per cent. in 1979, and that almost 90 per cent. of pensioner homes have a telephone, compared with only 50 per cent. in 1979? Does not that show an increase in the standard of living of pensioners under this Government?

Mr. Hague: My hon. Friend points to some important statistics, which are evidence of the way in which pensioners' living standards have improved, on average, over the past 14 years. She could similarly have pointed to the large increase in the proportion of pensioner households that own a car. All that evidence points in the same way.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Lenient Sentences

31. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Attorney-General how many cases he has referred to the Court of Appeal in the last three months on the ground of unduly lenient sentence.

The Attorney-General (Sir Nicholas Lyell): In the three months to 30 September 1993, leave was sought to refer eight cases to the Court of Appeal. One of those eight has so far been determined by the Court of Appeal and has resulted in an increase in sentence.

Mr. Evans: I thank my right hon. and learned Friend for that reply, disappointing though it was. Does he agree that, as the result is so low, to concentrate his mind it might be a good idea if his pay were linked to referrals? Is he also aware that, with judges talking about prosecuting people who have been burgled, we now have mad judge disease? How will he control it, because we know that the lot opposite are crackers and any minute they will catch it?

The Attorney-General: My hon. Friend will remember that the judiciary is independent. I do not think that my hon Friend completely understood my answer to his question. Of the eight cases that have been referred in the past three months, one has been decided by the court and that resulted in an increase in sentence. In my hon. Friend's terms, that is 100 per cent. and I doubt whether I could do any better.

Mr. Fraser: Could the Attorney-General tell us, from his unique position, whether the Home Secretary or the judges are correct about the use of prison as a deterrent to crime?

The Attorney-General: I have taken the trouble, which not many people outside the debate have, to read quite carefully what most of the proponents have said. What is striking, when one reads carefully what has been said by both my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary and those who have entered the debate, is that the amount of agreement overwhelmingly outweighs any disagreement.

Mr. Shersby: Is not the most effective deterrent and punishment of offenders arrest, conviction and, in many cases, custody? Will my right hon. and learned Friend take note of the views of the mass of the British public who believe in that and draw it to the attention of Her Majesty's judges?

The Attorney-General: My hon. Friend is right: by far the most effective deterrent is the likelihood of being arrested, brought to trial and convicted. I do not think that Her Majesty's judges, or anyone else, need me to draw that to their attention.

Matrix Churchill

32. **Mr. Mike O'Brien:** To ask the Attorney-General what representations he has received in the last month on the Matrix Churchill affair.

The Attorney-General: None.

Mr. O'Brien: If the Scott inquiry discovered in the course of the evidence that it is taking that there was unlawful conduct or behaviour on the part either of Ministers or civil servants, would the Attorney-General, in his position, feel it appropriate to influence in any way the decision whether any prosecutions might take place?

The Attorney-General: I repeat what I said earlier: if conduct in any circumstances arising out of that inquiry or from anywhere else gives rise to a sufficiency of evidence for a realistic prospect of criminal conviction, such a matter will be brought before the courts without fear, favour, affection or ill will.

Crown Prosecution Service

34. **Mrs. Angela Knight:** To ask the Attorney-General, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Lewes (Mr. Rathbone) of 21 June, *Official Report*, column 41, in what proportion of cases the CPS does not consult the police before a case is discontinued.

The Attorney-General: That information is not centrally recorded, but the Crown Prosecution Service policy is to consult the police in all cases unless it is impracticable to do so.

Mrs. Knight: I thank my right hon. and learned Friend for his answer. He will be aware that, too often, both the victim and the investigating officer are not informed of why a case has been discontinued. Will he make it his policy to review the practice so that the victims of crime are not left in the dark, which happens too often at the moment?

The Attorney-General: My hon. Friend makes an important point. In my discussions with the Crown Prosecution Service, it has made it clear to me and I shall make it clear to the House that its policy is to consult the police before discontinuing any case on every occasion where it is practicable. I emphasise that it is not just a question of consulting the administrative support unit or the crime support unit of the police, but that the different agencies such as the police, prosecutors and others in the criminal justice system, while performing their different functions, need to work as a team. It is essential that the information gets back from the CPS to the police, whom it consults, and back to the officer on the case or the officer on the beat so that he or she can refer to the victim and each person involved can understand what is going on, therefore ensuring a better appreciation of the decision in the case.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Will the Attorney-General investigate the concern of the police that, under what I understand are called the criteria for consistent quality, if the papers of a case are out of order in any respect when they reach the CPS, it does not proceed with the prosecution? If that is the case, will he ensure as a matter of urgency that the criteria are reviewed and that all well-founded cases are prosecuted?

The Attorney-General: I will certainly look into that matter, which I have not heard described under that nomenclature or in such jargon. It ties in closely with what I have been saying. If there is some apparent lacuna in the evidence or in the handling of the case, the Crown Prosecution Service should go back to the police to see whether it can fill the gap and so that the police have the opportunity to go back to the officer on the case so that the gap can be filled.

35. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Attorney-General what is the complement of the Crown Prosecution Service; and what is the number of staff in post.

The Attorney-General: The CPS has a current total manpower requirement of 2,281 lawyers, of whom 2,181 were in post on 30 September this year, and 4,386 administrative staff, of whom 4,335 were in post on the same date.

Mr. Butler: I thank my right hon. and learned Friend for that answer, which should be reassuring in that the figures show nearly a full complement of staff. Does he believe, however, that the CPS is as effective as it might be, even if it is as well staffed as it might be? I draw his attention to the disturbing rise in the number of discontinued cases revealed in the annual report of the Director of Public Prosecutions in the summer. Will my right hon. and learned Friend draw that concern, which I know is widely shared in the House and among the public, to the attention of the Director of Public Prosecutions before next year's report is prepared so that some explanations may be given?

The Attorney-General: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who highlights a point that causes much public concern and which the Director and I have considered very closely. The Crown Prosecution Service is a great deal more effective than it is given credit for. The statistics are often looked at extremely crudely. They represent in part the fact that the CPS is now up to strength and is performing the function of weeding out cases that should not go before the courts, either on evidential grounds or because it is not in the public interest to pursue them, much more effectively than it was able to do in its early days. Equally, I have looked personally at a significant number of cases. I invite hon. Members to look in detail at such cases and, indeed, invite me to do so, because although mistakes are sometimes made—it is a good thing if they are discovered—there is often a good explanation for them which satisfies people. That is why the good liaison, about which I spoke before, is so important.

Mr. Rooker: Given the large number of legal and administrative staff in the Crown Prosecution Service, why is it necessary to ask a police officer to explain to a victim why a case has been discontinued, when in many cases the officer also has to tell the victim that he does not agree with the case being discontinued? Why cannot the Crown Prosecution Service contact victims direct in such circumstances so that a proper explanation can be given?

The Attorney-General: If the hon. Gentleman reflects on the numbers involved, the answer will become clear. Police officers investigate a case and meet the victim in the first place. There are 128,000 police officers, backed by 49,000 civilians in the service. There are 2,000 prosecutors, who handle 100,000 cases in the Crown courts and 1·5 million cases overall. The police obviously should liaise with the victim, but we need good feedback between the prosecutor and officer in the case. That is how we shall achieve what the hon. Gentleman and I want.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Know-how Fund

38. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the work of the know-how fund.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd): The purpose of the know-how fund is to support economic and political reform in central and eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union and the Baltic states. A list of projects funded under the scheme has been placed in the Library.

Mr. Marshall: Although I thank my hon. Friend for the speed with which the know-how fund makes decisions, does he agree that it is essential for the future development of eastern and central Europe that we should be more willing to trade with such countries? Otherwise, the risk is that some will follow the path of Lithuania and Poland and re-elect a communist Government.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. An improvement in world trade is enormously important to countries throughout the world, including those in central and eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, but the know-how fund is a terrific success and we must sing its praises. My hon. Friend may be interested to know that President Walesa described the know-how fund in these terms:

"the British do not say much but they do a lot"

—not words but action.

Ms Eagle: Will the Minister explain what use it is for countries that have recently experienced political upheaval to be given money and progaganda on the so-called benefits of extreme Thatcherite policies when what they need is help to recover and develop a reasonable political system?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: In referring to extreme Thatcherite policies, the hon. Lady is referring to policies that are enormously popular in central and eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. In former Czechoslovakia, for example, the mass voucher privatisation programme has been a terrific technical success as a result of British merchant banks' advice. It was described as

"the largest and most successful corporate sell-off in the world"

by the *Wall Street Journal*. I could give legion examples to the hon. Lady.

British Economy

39. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the benefits to the British economy from the aid programme.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: British companies benefit substantially from contracts financed through the aid programme and from spending by the multinational aid agencies.

Mr. Butler: I thank my right hon. Friend for that reply, although I had hoped for some figures; perhaps they will appear next time. Does he agree that the benefit is twofold: first, to small and medium-sized British firms; and, secondly, to the intended recipient as it takes control of

expenditure of the funds given by hard-pressed British taxpayers out of the hands of the corrupt regimes that often cause the problems that we are trying to deal with and leaves it more firmly in the hands of our Overseas Development Administration?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My hon. Friend is right. Small enterprises such as consultancies and other training providers benefit greatly from delivering services under the overseas aid programme.

Mr. Meacher: Since British aid is 84 per cent. tied aid —the highest in the European Community—and since the Overseas Development Administration states that every £1 of Britain's multilateral aid produces an extra £1·40 in British exports, are not the Government shooting themselves in the foot with their aid cuts? Will the Minister confirm that, as a result of the Government's two-year freeze in aid, by the year 1995 the aid budget will have fallen to its lowest recorded level of 0·26 per cent.of gross national product—precisely half the figure for 1979? Even if the Government do not care a hoot about aid cuts to the third world, does the Foreign Secretary care about kicking British exports in the teeth, which is what the Government will be doing by making additional cuts in aid in next month's Budget?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: There were two factual inaccuracies in what the hon. Gentleman said. He described tied aid as 80 per cent., but it is not. He got his facts wrong —it is 70 per cent. He talked about aid cuts; there have not been aid cuts. The aid programme has risen by 10 per cent. in real terms in the past four years and this year increased in real terms by 1 per cent., so he was wrong again.

Sir David Steel: No one doubts that the aid programme benefits British industry in the way that the questions on the Order Paper suggest. However, is the Minister concerned that, while the commitment made in the Conservative election manifesto and by the Prime Minister in Rio last year was that we would move towards the United Nations target of the gross national product aid programme, we are moving away from that target even before the present round of spending cuts is completed?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: As the right hon. Gentleman knows, we reaffirmed our commitment to meet the target as soon as possible at Rio de Janerio. We have a substantial aid programme which includes all sorts of aid amounting to more than £2 billion a year. That is a significant programme which is deeply respected throughout the world.

Exports

40. **Mr. Bates:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the way in which overseas aid contributes to British exports.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Overall export levels depend on many factors, but we estimate that aid-financed visible exports are worth about £1·6 billion a year.

Mr. Bates: Does my hon. Friend agree that, wherever possible, the British aid budget should be given in the form of British goods and British services? If we do so, we not only target the money that we provide to those people most in need, for whom it is designed, but help to strengthen the British economy, which, in turn, will help to maintain and increase our aid budget in future years.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Aid does benefit British investment and British exports considerably. The aid and trade provision currently costs about £100 million a year, finances 35 per cent. of the British cost of the bid and generates three times as much in exports as it costs.

Rev. Martin Smyth: Does the Minister accept that the questions and answers confirm the concern felt by many in the country that we are using the dictum that charity begins at home and that the issue is not to provide aid to those in need, but how to benefit ourselves?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I think that everyone knows that charity begins at home, but there is—as the hon. Gentleman and many others recognise—a large part for the aid programme to play.

Aid Programme

41. **Mr. Spring:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the effect of the British aid programme on British industry.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: British aid benefits British industry, both directly through aid-financed contracts and by helping developing countries become more prosperous trading partners in future.

Mr. Spring: Bearing in mind the importance of developing the private sector to achieve sustained economic growth in developing economies, what encouragement in our overseas aid programme is given to private direct capital flows?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The aid programme benefits British industry enormously. Our bilateral programme gives about £1·5 billion worth of business to British industry each year. I am glad that there is a terrific amount of British direct private investment in developing countries. Of the European Community countries we make half the direct private investment in developing countries—about £1·7 billion in 1992.

Mr. Janner: Does the Minister accept that British industry relies greatly upon peace in the world and on the opening up of new markets? In the circumstances, will he accept that it must be the wish of all hon. Members that aid be now extended to the PLO to assist it to build up viable economies in Gaza and Jericho?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I know that the British Government wish to give support to the peace process between Israel and the Palestinians in every possible way. I hope that the hon. and learned Gentleman's question will be given careful consideration.

Aid Balance

42. **Sir Thomas Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to change the balance of expenditure between bilateral and multilateral aid.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The balance of our aid spending is reviewed every year.

Sir Thomas Arnold: Does my hon. Friend agree that, generally speaking, bilateral aid is more efficient than multilateral aid and should be protected?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: I very much agree with my hon. Friend's implication that our bilateral aid is extremely well spent on well-targeted and designed programmes. He makes the point that he would like it to be a higher proportion of the overall aid commitment, but he should bear in mind the fact that in some cases multilateral aid is a useful lever. For example, we have managed to persuade the European Community to adopt a family planning resolution; we therefore affected the whole of European Community policy in an important area and we are bringing to fruition policies that we believe in by persuading other member states to adopt them as part of the multilateral effort.

Mr. Battle: Does the Minister agree, as there has been a shift towards multilateral aid, that Government bilateral aid is falling further behind each year? If the aid programme is so beneficial to the British economy, why on earth does the Minister propose that it be cut in the Budget?

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: As the hon. Gentleman knows, decisions on the level of multilateral aid in the European Community are taken by the EC, not by the British Government. That is a fact of life which we respect, but we also have a high regard for the quality of our own programme which, I think, is often even better directed.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths (Edinburgh, South): On a point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Not yet.

Business of the House

3.31 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): With permission, I should like to make a short business statement about revised business for Wednesday 20 October.

The business for that day will now be: consideration of Lords amendments to the National Lottery etc. Bill.

Business for the remainder of the week will remain as announced.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Before the House begins questions, I remind all hon. Members that this is a very narrow statement, relating only to the change of business for one day. Questions should therefore be related to the change of Wednesday's business and to seeking clarification about that.

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): Will the Leader of the House clarify whether it is the intention to reschedule Wednesday's business in the near future? Given the debate taking place in the country and in the press on issues such as the level of crime and the consequences of the Government's lack of an energy policy, I hope that he can find time for that.

Madam Speaker: Order. I gave hon. Members a good indication of what the question was about, and I hope that they will heed that.

Mr. Newton: As the day in question is an Opposition Day, the right hon. Lady may have been suggesting the subjects for it that she has in mind, and I am duly grateful for that. As for whether she will get an Opposition day before too long, I would not expect her to wait beyond next week.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Having rearranged the business for next Wednesday, can my right hon. Friend squeeze into that day a debate on the decision on women priests, in view of the concern in the country about this subject?

Mr. Newton: I do not know whether I can "squeeze in" that matter on Wednesday, but I do hope to be able to find time for it before too long.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): The Leader of the House has been kind enough to say that he has pulled Opposition business for this week. He is usually keen to let us know with as much notice as possible when debates will take place, so can he tell us now when Opposition business will be discussed before the end of term—and all other dates that will be helpful to planning?

Mr. Newton: That was a good try. The hon. Gentleman is kind to say how helpful I try to be. I can give him a little help: I do not expect him to have to wait much longer than the right hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) for the day that he wants.

Sir Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): As the rearrangement of Wednesday's business gives us an opportunity to consider the national lottery, can the Leader of the House say whether the Secretary of State will be able to tell us whether the lottery will still be viable, given the additional social chapter regulations which the Government agreed on Tuesday—regulations which we were told during the Maastricht debate and at the party conference would add enormously to the costs of industry?

Will the Secretary of State be able to say what the additional costs for British industry and the lottery of these astonishing proposals will be? We had understood that the Government were going to block or endeavour to veto them; instead, with the help of my hon. Friend the Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth), they let them through without a fight.

Mr. Newton: Collectively, the House had obviously come back in what can only be described as an ingenious frame of mind. I am not sure whether the Minister will have a great report to make on that matter, but I shall draw to his attention the fact that my hon. Friend will expect one.

Mr. Boby Cryer (Bradford, South): Will Wednesday's business go on after 10 o'clock, and will there be a resolution to permit that? There is no doubt that the National Lottery etc. Bill was unsatisfactorily drafted and has given rise to a great deal of debate and argument about the allocation of the moneys. For example, there has been no explanation about the allocation to the film industry, and members of that industry and the British Film Institute are highly dissatisfied about allocation through the Arts Council.

In view of that, we should have a good amount of time to debate the legislation and, even though we shall be debating Lords amendments, there should be no attempt to get it through by 10 o'clock. The House should have sufficient time to go into the matter in some detail.

Mr. Newton: I anticipate that the arrangements for this matter will provide adequate time. I shall draw to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for National Heritage the fact that, if he can provide a satisfactory answer for the hon. Gentleman, the time will be shorter than would otherwise be required.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): Does my right hon. Friend agree that, when there is an Opposition debate, it would be a good idea to have it about housing, in view of the latest local government——

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman will resume his seat. That is a good question for Thursday's business, but it is not a question for today.

Mr. Martin Redmond (Don Valley): Could the Leader of the House explain why he has selected that business for Wednesday in view of all the problems in the country, such as those in the coal industry?

Mr. Newton: The obvious reason for choosing that business for Wednesday is that we wish to get the National Lottery etc. Bill through so that it can provide assistance to a wide range of good causes.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): As the National Lottery etc. Bill is designed to benefit the arts and sport, may we be assured that, on Wednesday, it will be universally supported in the House so that the legislation will be quickly dispatched and money can be given to the arts and sport?

Mr. Newton: I take that as an exhortation to those such as the hon. Member for Don Valley (Mr. Redmond), and I hope that they will heed my hon. Friend's wise words.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): Could Wednesday's business be delayed, if only for a few minutes, to allow the Secretary of State for Scotland to make a statement on the report of the inquiry——

Madam Speaker: Order. That is a good try, and if the hon. Gentleman catches my eye on Thursday I might allow him to put it then. However, it is not in order today.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Does the alteration of Wednesday's business mean that this Session will end any sooner? We have been back for just over an hour and people would like to know when the Session is to end.

Mr. Newton: I dare say they would. I shall be in a better position to answer that question when we have judged the mood in which the House has returned for the spillover.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Does the Leader of the House recognise that the coal industry has been the subject of a lottery for the past 12 months?

Madam Speaker: Order. I gave the hon. Gentleman a clear indication of the statement's limit. He knows the rules of the House, and I am sure that he will come to the point right away.

Mr. Skinner: Will he agree to a special clause in the National Lottery etc. Bill so that we can argue the coal industry's case? That case went by default because the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry was more concerned about saving his job than the jobs of the 30,000 miners.

Mr. Newton: If I have understood the question aright, the answer is no.

Coal Industry

3.39 pm

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 20 for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely, mine safety.

My interests in that matter have been frequently declared. My argument today is not related to legalities, but concerns the role and relevance of this House. The matter is serious, because it relates to peril of death and risk of injury in mining operations today. It is both specific and urgent, because there should be immediate concern about the order slickly laid by Ministers immediately after the House rose for the summer recess, which allowed British Coal to act with alacrity and announce that the new arrangements would take effect before the House had an opportunity to consider the matter, and before British Coal had published the relevant codes of practice.

The kernel of the case may lie in a debate on mine safety that took place in the House on 25 April 1989. During that debate, I referred to comments by the senior responsible board member, whom I quoted as saying:

> "My managers will not slavishly follow the code of practice . . . I will send out instructions that will supersede these codes." —[*Official Report*, 25 April 1989; Vol. 151, c. 915.]

That statement appeared to make it quite clear that British Coal, not Parliament, would determine the rules of safe practice in the industry.

The next day, British Coal issued a statement which, I recall, did not exactly deny my quotation, but which appeared to make it clear that British Coal would not act in a manner contemptuous of this House. However, it has done so in support of new rules that go far beyond its suggestion to the Select Committee that it simply wanted the removal of the 1908 Act.

Since then, Ministers have publicly suggested that the new arrangements are an improvement, and that they followed protracted consultation. However, those Ministers were aware, and should have acknowledged, that those consultations created great uncertainty, deep anxiety and extensive doubt, and that they received downright rejection from large sections of the industry.

Given the assurances on mine safety offered to this House by the President of the Board of Trade in March, we are entitled to suggest that Ministers, as well as British Coal, have acted unworthily. Things have been done that are at worst deplorable and at best suspect. Therefore, Madam Speaker, I believe that my request is entirely justified.

Madam Speaker: I have listened carefully to what the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) said, but I must give my decision without stating any reasons. I am afraid that I do not consider that the matter that the hon. Gentleman raised is appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 20 and I therefore cannot submit his application to the House.

Points of Order

3.42 pm

Mr. Nigel Griffiths (Edinburgh, South): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Is it in order for a Minister to supply a Member of Parliament with inaccurate information? I refer specifically to the right hon. Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave) and the fact that a former civil servant—Mr. Mark Higson, an Iraq desk officer—stated that a draft reply to my letter of 3 May 1989 was misleading because the truth was untenable.

Is it in order for the right hon. Gentleman not to come to the House to make a statement on that matter? Is it in order for him to ignore the facts and mislead hon. Members in such a way?

Madam Speaker: I cannot hear points of order involving allegations of inaccurate answers or statements. If the hon. Gentleman is suggesting that the House has been deliberately misled, he must deal with the matter by way of substantive motion—as I think he knows—and not by a point of order to me at this stage.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I recently received representations from a constituent who had been too ill to make them previously —and, as you know, I have also been ill and therefore unable to raise the matter earlier. In the light of those circumstances and the detailed arguments set out in a letter that I delivered to your office today, will you now consider the contents of that letter and then return to the House and rule as follows?

First, will you rule that the motion carried on 23 July 1993—

"That this House has confidence in the policy of Her Majesty's Government on the adoption of the Protocol on Social Policy"—

was invalid in so far as it related to the question of adopting the social protocol, because a motion on that matter had been defeated only the previous day? It is contrary to the long-established rules and procedures of Parliament to attempt to reinstate a negatived resolution or decision within the same Session: I refer the House to the chapter of "Erskine May" that deals with the process of debate.

Secondly, Madam Speaker, will you rule that the motion carried on 23 July was invalid because insufficient notice—only a matter of hours—was given; and, thirdly, that the motion carried on 23 July, being null and void for the reasons I have given, did not comply with the terms of section 7 of the European Communities (Amendment) Act 1993, which is accordingly not yet in force?

This is a very detailed matter, and I believe that you, Madam Speaker, will require some time to consider the letter carefully. I do not expect any decision today.

Madam Speaker: That is most kind of the hon. Gentleman. As he knows, I have not yet even seen his letter. However, I will read it carefully. If the need arises, I will make a statement—but only if the need arises.

Mr. Andrew Bowden (Brighton, Kemptown): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I refer to access to the House. In keeping with many of my colleagues in Norman Shaw South, I am horrified by the new barriers that have been placed between us and the House. Eight minutes is not long, and if someone has a faulty card, that could lead to such a delay that some right hon. and hon. Members may not be able to reach the Lobbies in time.

Furthermore, when I passed through those monstrosities this morning, I was told by a police officer, "It really isn't suitable sir, for you to bring luggage through here." Is it seriously suggested that right hon. and hon. Members emerging from the underground station carrying luggage will have to walk to the New Palace Yard entrance? Will you, Madam Speaker, please order the removal of those gates and revert to the use of the police officers?

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. I understand the feeling of the House on this matter, and I want no further points of order on it.

I have examined the matter over many months. I do not like the reason for the gates, but I believe that it is appropriate to have them. There is a gate at the side that does not require card access, if the hon. Gentleman wants to use it. I do not discuss security matters across the Floor of the House. I will consider the matter further if the hon. Gentleman wants me to do so and, if I think it necessary, will refer the question of Division time to the appropriate Committee. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman understands that security matters should not be discussed across the Floor of the House.

Statement on the Defence Estimates

[Relevant documents: The Ninth Report from the Defence Committee on the Statement on the Defence Estimates 1993, HC 869 of Session 1992-93; Eighth Report from the Defence Committee on Royal Navy: Commitments and Resources, HC 637.]

Madam Speaker: Despite the fact that this is a two-day debate, I have to impose a 10-minute limit on speeches made between 6 pm and 8 pm.

I have selected the amendment in the name of the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I understand that you selected the amendment in the name of the Leader of the Opposition, which had to be tabled before the House rose in July if it were to be debated. Today, I tabled an amendment having the support of several other hon. Members, which I hope you will study and consider for debate tomorrow, so that my amendment also may be voted on tomorrow evening.

Madam Speaker: I am always willing to consider motions that right hon. and hon. Members put on the Order Paper. I spend a good deal of my time each morning doing precisely that.

3.48 pm

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): I beg to move,

That this House approves the Statement on the Defence Estimates 1993 contained in Cm. 2270.

I welcome the opportunity today to talk about the issues raised by the White Paper, "Defending our Future", which was published earlier this year. As the House will be aware, the three months since that White Paper was published have seen momentous events in many parts of the world —events that are of direct concern to the security of this country. It is therefore right and proper that, on this, the first day on which the House is sitting following the Recess, we should be addressing defence, which is the fundamental concern of any Government.

"Defending our Future" makes clear in a way that we have never done before how we go about defence planning. It sets out the results of a comprehensive analysis of the relationship between the Royal Navy, Army and Royal Air Force, and the tasks that those forces are likely to be asked to carry out. It reflects internal work that shows, through the detailed identification and listing of various military tasks, that we have at present the right balance of forces to undertake those tasks.

"Defending our Future" shows also the adjustments that we have made over the past 12 months to bring our forces into line with changes in the international situation. The increase in infantry, the ordering of the helicopter carrier and the confirmation of the Eurofighter are all improvements in capability that will be required in the future, which will enable us to balance our capabilities with our commitments.

This is not just an intellectual exercise. It is fundamental to our confidence in the Royal Navy, the Army and the Royal Air Force that we know that we have the resources to enable them to carry out the tasks expected of them, to carry them out not only adequately but to the high standard of effectiveness and success that this nation has come to expect.

The armed forces are, of course, in the middle of the biggest reorganisation of their structure and size since 1945. It is a formidable task, and it applies with equal significance to the Ministry of Defence itself. There have been suggestions recently that we have more civil servants in the Ministry of Defence than fighting men in the armed forces. That is incorrect. Current plans envisage armed forces of some 240,000 while the number of civil servants will fall to 135,000 and keep falling as efficiency improves and other reforms are implemented. I shall set out a number of areas in which our policy has been developed since the White Paper was published, but I shall first say something about recent developments in Russia and the continuing crisis in the former Yugoslavia.

We shall never forget the scenes that we have recently witnessed in Moscow. I was in Moscow when President Yeltsin brought to a head his long-running confrontation with the Russian Parliament. Since then, he has been forced to take action against those who were using violence to exploit Russia's fragile democracy for thoroughly dangerous and non-democratic ends. No one in this House would welcome the sight of a Parliament building under fire and ablaze, but let there be no doubt about what was at stake. The Russian Parliament was a discredited and undemocratic body, and its leaders were preventing progress towards full and free elections of the kind that we understand.

Russia is now at a vital stage in the development of its democratic institutions. That is why the Government have been steadfast in their support for President Yeltsin as he guides that country through its historic transition from Soviet-style institutions to a new modern constitution. That is the process of democratic reform, and we are committed to it.

Mr. Corbyn: Before the Secretary of State gets carried away with his own propaganda, should he not be aware that the Russian Parliament was elected in a free election, exactly as President Yeltsin was elected, and that the Parliament worked with him to defend the country against the attempted coup in 1991? Is it not the case that what is happening in Russia is the destruction of parliamentary democracy, an end to freedom of the press and the wholesale arrests of people who dare to speak out against the market policies of President Yeltsin? Should there not be a slightly more even-handed approach by western Governments towards what is happening in Russia?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman should be well aware that the Russian Parliament was elected under the old Soviet constitution. I should be astonished if anyone, including him, were to describe that as a democratic electoral process. President Yeltsin, however, was elected on a one man, one vote, basis by the Russian electorate, and submitted his policies to a referendum of the Russian people. The hon. Gentleman should appreciate that fact.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Does the Secretary of State agree that the Russian Parliament, however it was elected, is more democratic than the House of Lords up the road?

Mr. Rifkind: I am not certain that I want to make such a comparison, but the other place in this country is subject to the democratic wishes of the elected Chamber; I do not believe that the Russian Parliament could claim such a status.

At the same time, the events to which I referred remind us that we are in a period of unprecedented uncertainty, and that the progress that Russia has made is based on fragile foundations. Russia risked a reversal of the positive steps that she has made down the democratic path. Had it happened, the people of Russia would have lost the opportunity to enjoy the fruits of a free and democratic society.

Such a development would have brought into power an unstable and profoundly undemocratic Government, by no means sympathetic to the West, and with controls of formidable arsenals of nuclear and conventional weapons. Even worse would have been the implications if the Russian armed forces had divided their loyalties between President Yeltsin and Vice-President Rutskoi, with the danger of Russia slipping into civil war.

It is therefore vital that we underpin our support for the democratic process by continuing with our programme of defence co-operation with Russia, and with central and eastern Europe. We have taken a number of initiatives, including the offer of assistance to Russia with military resettlement, a key element in trying to minimise disaffection among the large numbers of military personnel who will need to find employment in the civil economy. While in Moscow, I signed a protocol with the Defence Minister, General Grachev, on co-operation in that area. The United Kingdom will also provide assistance to Russia on the safe transportation of surplus nuclear warheads.

More widely, we have signed memoranda on extensive programmes of defence contracts with the Czech Republic, with Hungary, with Poland, with Slovakia and, most recently, with Ukraine, where, during my visit to Kiev, I also signed an agreement on co-operation. We are also developing a defence relationship with Albania, with the Baltic states, with Bulgaria and with Romania.

It cannot be stressed too much to the House that, in the past, during the period of the Warsaw pact, although there were occasional contracts at the political level, very few of the military of any of the Warsaw pact powers had any personal contact with their western military colleagues. At one stage, I asked General Grachev how many NATO Ministers he had met before the end of the cold war, during his whole career; he said, "None." That emphasises the huge work that needs to be done to show the Russian military—a very powerful force in the contemporary affairs of that country—co-operation with the west and the proper role of the armed forces in a free and democratic society.

Mr. George Walden (Buckingham): Obviously, I approve of everything that my right hon. and learned Friend has said about the Soviet Union, and especially about helping the Russian army to run itself down. However, I hope that he will say something later in his speech about the inevitable need to help people in the defence industries in this country, which will, inevitably and rightly, be run down, to transfer their skills—sometimes very high-grade skills—to the civilian sector.

Mr. Rifkind: That is, of course, already happening in a substantial way. I do not for a moment believe that we can direct the private sector companies on how they go about the process of adjustment. However, we can pay tribute to the way in which defence industries, even at this time, have identified substantial export opportunities. Many have diversified in a variety of ways. It is for them to take on board the responsibility of adjusting their companies to the new international situation and to the likely demand for their products.

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): Does the Secretary of State realise that no one is asking him to direct the defence-related industries when he is asked to safeguard, in the national interest, the long-term capacity of the British defence-related industries to be able to supply Her Majesty's forces, in exactly the way that he would want, for whatever tasks they are called to fulfil? With that in mind, does he not think that it is necessary to renew the five-year explosives, propellants and related products—EPREP—procurement arrangements? Does he not think that it is necessary to establish a proper strategy for defence diversification in partnership with Royal Ordnance?

Does not the Secretary of State accept that the European Community's KONVER programme is applicable to defence-related industries in Britain? They could use that programme profitably and productively to national advantage, they could save jobs and they could sustain the level of dependable production in the way that the forces would want, if only the Government would willingly participate in such arrangements.

Mr. Rifkind: I have two points for the right hon. Gentleman. First, the main way in which defence industries' interests can be safeguarded is by rejecting the £6 billion cuts in our defence expenditure for which the Labour party conference called. That would so devastate defence industries throughout the length and breadth of the United Kingdom that I hope that the right hon. Gentleman condemns such a policy.

The second area on which I must respond to the right hon. Gentleman is that it must be for the defence industries themselves, as private sector companies, to develop their strategy for dealing with the interests of their companies and of their shareholders. The idea that the Government can somehow take the lead in such a matter goes quite against the whole philosophy that this country has experienced over the years. Any alternative approach would be disastrous for the interests of those companies, suggesting a degree of interference that is quite incompatible with their private sector status. The right hon. Gentleman should take that into account.

Ms Angela Eagle (Wallasey): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Rifkind: No. I must continue my remarks.

Assistance to Russia is not driven by altruism alone. It is squarely in our national security interest that we foster friendly defence links with our former adversaries in the east. It is simply not enough to wish them well: we must be ready with practical help.

There is also much talk of expansion of NATO itself. The issue will undoubtedly be discussed at the forthcoming NATO summit, which will provide an excellent opportunity to reaffirm at the highest level that NATO, and the transatlantic link that it embodies, is indispensable to European security. The alliance remains the focus for stability across Europe. When we come to consider the future size and shape of the alliance, we must not be tempted into hasty or ill-thought-out decisions but must consider carefully all the ramifications of such a step.

Our overriding concern should be to ensure that, whatever steps we take, they do not unintentionally create

[Mr. Rifkind]

new divisions within Europe. Above all, we must strive to find ways of enhancing the security of all European nations —the alliance's existing members, the countries of central and eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, including Russia itself. Russia as a democratic, peaceful, open society is the great prize to be won. If that is achieved, it will enhance the security of Europe as a whole.

I shall now turn to developments in the former Yugoslavia. While the search for peace continues, we remain committed to playing a major part in the humanitarian effort. Our battalion group in Bosnia has continued with its task in difficult and often dangerous conditions. Since the operation started last year, it has escorted 1,541 convoys, delivering a total of 70,000 tonnes of aid, despite the fierce fighting which has raged between Croats and Muslims in central Bosnia around Vitez and Gorni Vakuf, where our troops are based.

There have been several incidents in which the warring factions have fired at or near British troops and installations, but only one recent incident has resulted in a relatively serious injury to a British soldier, who is now recovering in the United Kingdom. I can reassure the House once again that British forces are entitled to use all the considerable firepower at their disposal should they come under fire—as they have had to do several times in recent weeks.

My hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces and I have recently visited British forces in the area. My hon. Friend will, I know, give the House an account of that visit later in the debate. I can only say for myself that what we are achieving in Bosnia—securing the delivery of aid against all the odds, often through the exercise of improvised street diplomacy in very threatening circumstances—ranks among the highest achievements of the British armed forces in recent years.

Mr. Malcolm Wicks (Croydon, North-West): Does the Secretary of State accept that survival rations for the people of Bosnia are not getting through in sufficient amounts? My hon. Friends the Members for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald), and for Vauxhall (Ms Hoey) and I spent three days in Sarajevo last week. We were told by United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees officials that although the survival—I emphasise "survival"—rations per day were 600 g per person, with the onset of winter people are receiving only between 200 g and 300 g.

May I suggest that the policy is not working? The idea that Sarajevo is a safe haven is a cruel joke against the people of Bosnia. Shells are falling. We visited the hospitals. People are killed and wounded. With respect, the policy is a failure.

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman will want to reflect on the conclusion that he reached. The reality is that, but for the aid programme that has been implemented, hundreds of thousands of people who are alive today would be dead. That is the simple fact.

The hon. Gentleman is entitled to say that of course perfection has not been achieved. In the middle of a civil war, it would be remarkable if all the aid got through to every person who would benefit from it. The hon. Gentleman may be right to say that, in certain localities, some of the aid has been prevented from reaching its destination. But to suggest that therefore the policy has failed is a wicked misrepresentation of all that has been achieved in the past year.

Mr. Calum Macdonald (Western Isles): Sarajevo is supposed to be a UN-protected safe area. How is it, then, that the UN can stand aside and watch 500 shells fall on Sarajevo in a single day, and that, even in a quiet period, about 150 shells can land on a supposed UN-protected safe area? Is that not a failure?

Mr. Rifkind: The United Nations can operate only under its present mandate. At present, it is there in a humanitarian role. It has shown remarkable skill and persistence and has achieved success in getting a vast amount of aid through to those who need it. In each area where there have been problems, they have required patient diplomacy, considerable personal courage and great persistence. In the vast majority of cases, that aid has got through, as the hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald) would be the first to confirm.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): Would the right hon. and learned Gentleman maintain that argument were he a citizen of Sarajevo?

Mr. Rifkind: If I were a citizen of Sarajevo, I would be conscious not only of the huge amount of aid that had arrived in the city, but of that which had not yet arrived. I would quite properly refer to both.

I take no exception to hon. Members commenting that not all the aid has got through, but I part company with the conclusion that the policy has failed because only between 70 and 80 per cent of the aid has reached those for whom it was intended, rather than 100 per cent.

One must take into account the fact that, in a civil war, that is a pretty remarkable achievement. One need only compare what the UN has achieved in Bosnia in humanitarian terms with what has not been achieved—hardly even attempted—in Angola, where just as vicious and nasty a civil war is going on, to appreciate what a remarkable amount has been achieved.

With the onset of winter, the UN's humanitarian task in Bosnia will become all the more important: and this winter threatens to be more difficult than last for the victims of the fighting. The mildness of last winter's weather is unlikely to be repeated, the position on indigenous supplies is much worse, and people's health is poorer.

We shall continue our humanitarian work this winter. The Government will replace the current battalion group when its tour of duty ends in November. The Prince of Wales Own Regiment of Yorkshire will be replaced by the 1st battalion of the Coldstream Guards. The squadron of Light Dragoons will be replaced by another squadron from the same regiment, and the Engineer squadron will be replaced by a similar unit from 38 Engineer Regiment. All the units which will be returning have served with great distinction, and the House will want to join me in congratulating them.

All the new units will serve for six months. I should also add that the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force continue to support embargo operations and to police the skies over the Adriatic and Bosnia, and that RAF and naval aircraft and helicopters play a key role in delivering humanitarian aid and in casualty evacuation.

I will now discuss wider defence policy matters, starting with nuclear issues. "Defending our Future" confirms the

Government's belief, in common with our allies in NATO, that nuclear forces will continue to play an indispensable part in preserving peace. We would be foolhardy in the extreme to ignore the continued existence of the large arsenal of nuclear weapons in the former Soviet Union, or the possibility of proliferation in the future.

The Trident programme remains on course: I am pleased to announce that the first submarine, HMS Vanguard, was accepted into Royal Navy service on 14 September, and Victorious was rolled out on 29 September. Construction of the other two submarines is proceeding well.

I hope that, when the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) opens the debate on behalf of the Opposition, he will condemn, in the most unambiguous and unequivocal terms, the policy of his party at its recent conference when it called for the immediate cancellation of Trident and the ending of our nuclear capability.

Dr. David Clark (South Shields) *indicated assent.*

Mr. Rifkind: I note that the hon. Gentleman confirms that that is what he intends to do, and we look forward to judging how unequivocal and unambiguous his statement is, particularly given his own part in the work of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, an organisation that he has never yet confirmed that he has left.

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): The right hon. and learned Gentleman has just said that we need Trident and other nuclear capabilities in case there is a threat from Russia and the former Soviet Union. Would he care to educate the House about how he seeks to deter a threat from a country with which, as he boasted just a few minutes ago, he has signed a defence co-operation agreement?

Mr. Rifkind: I would not suggest that there is any threat from the current Russian Government—of course not. We have extremely friendly relations with a democratic Russia. The right hon. Gentleman should just imagine, however, what might have happened if President Yeltsin had not won his recent confrontation. Imagine if Russia was today ruled by Mr. Khasbulatov and 11,000 strategic nuclear warheads were under his control. Imagine if such a Government sought to reassert their control and authority over the newly independent republics of the old Soviet Union, sought to threaten the Baltic states and to undertake other acts of adventurism.

The reality is that Russia remains a huge military nuclear super-power. At the moment, it has 11,000 strategic nuclear warheads; even if, in 10 years' time, it fully complies with all its obligations—which we are sure, under President Yeltsin, it would wish to do—it will still have more than 3,000 strategic warheads. Therefore, unless the right hon. Gentleman can predict with confidence the future of Russia, his remarks cannot be taken in the way that he would wish.

Mr. Winston Churchill (Davyhulme): My right hon. and learned Friend has stated the potential threat with which the former Soviet Union could confront us under different leadership.

The Conservative party, like Conservative Governments, traditionally has regarded its prime raison d'etre as the defence of the realm. Will my right hon. and learned Friend explain how, after 14 years of Conservative government, national security expenditure has increased by £1 billion while social security expenditure has increased in real terms by £29 billion? That is more than the entire defence budget.

If the Chancellor must look for areas in which to cut expenditure, should not he look first at the abuse of social security?

Mr. Rifkind: I do not wish to comment on what the appropriate level of social security expenditure should be. One can point to the effective way in which the Government have been responsible for the defence of the realm during the past 14 years. Conservative Governments have never treated defence lightly, and I believe that they never will.

The White Paper has also confirmed our commitment to maintaining an effective long-term sub-strategic nuclear capability. I told the House some months ago that we were considering how best to provide this once the WE177 free-fall bomb is withdrawn from service. Our considerations were completed during the recess, and I am able to announce our conclusions today.

A sub-strategic capability remains necessary, because a potential adversary might gamble, under certain circumstances, on our reluctance to launch an all-out strategic nuclear strike in response to his aggression. It is vital, therefore, that we possess the ability to undertake more limited nuclear action, to be able to deliver an unequivocal message to an aggressor that he must cease his aggression and withdraw or face the risk of even greater damage. A sub-strategic capability forms an essential link between conventional and strategic forces, as part of our clear demonstration that aggression of any kind is not a rational option.

The United Kingdom's sub-strategic capability is currently provided by the WE177 bomb carried on Tornado dual-capable aircraft. In the mid to late 1980s, we saw the need to enter into the early development of a sophisticated stand-off weapon which would be able to penetrate the increasingly effective Warsaw pact defences, and which would replace the current bomb. The type of system we began to examine is known as a tactical air-to-surface missile, or TASM.

The security circumstances have changed fundamentally since then. As a consequence, we have concluded that our previous requirement for a new stand-off nuclear weapon capability is not a sufficiently high priority to justify the procurement of a new nuclear system in the current circumstances. Instead, we will plan, after the WE177 eventually leaves service in the long term, on exploiting the flexibility and capability of the Trident system to provide the vehicle for the delivery of our sub-strategic deterrent.

The Trident system is undetectable, reliable, and accurate in its delivery and can carry our sub-strategic as well as strategic capacity at little additional cost. That is set against what would be the high cost of developing a new system. We have no doubt that it will be admirably suited to the additional role.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): My right hon. and learned Friend is announcing an exceedingly important decision, which will effectively end the historic role of the Royal Air Force as the primary instrument of at least sub-strategic deterrence.

Why have the Government come to a different conclusion from the defence strategists of France, the

[Mr. John Wilkinson]

United States and Russia, as those countries have an air-launched capability that they wish to retain? Why are we doing so at a time when nuclear proliferation is a manifest threat, and when all sorts of tinpot dictators can get their hands on nuclear weapons? Is my right hon. and learned Friend saying that the threat of Trident is the appropriate response to them? Is not the right response a flexible and visible dual-capable system such as an air-launched weapon?

Mr. Rifkind: The present capability of the Royal Air Force can continue, under present plans, into the next century. I am not announcing a proposal that is about to be implemented. The WE177 carried by the Tornado aircraft is due, under current plans, to continue in operation, with the Royal Air Force responsible for its sub-strategic capability, into the first few years of the next century. I am referring to what is likely to be the sensible and desirable way of dealing with our long-term requirements over a much longer period.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson) also referred to the circumstances of other countries. He will be aware that in France, which for a number of years has had its nuclear weapons provided by land, sea and air, serious consideration is being given to reducing nuclear potential by one whole category.

We must take into account the fact that it is right and proper that we should adapt our nuclear policy to the very changed circumstances that exist in the post-cold war world. We must get the balance right. We must recognise that there continues to be a potential serious threat from other nuclear powers, and that we must therefore retain our nuclear weapons and our capability to respond both at the strategic and at the sub-strategic level, but to say that we can do so only using the same type and range of weapons that were necessary during the worst years of the cold war would not be justified—nor would that be a proper use of the resources that we have in terms of our other priorities.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): I understand my right hon. and learned Friend's comments about nuclear weapons, but is he saying that the Royal Air Force will not be in receipt of a stand-off weapon capability for conventional delivery? I hope that he is not, but if he is, let me just remind him of the Fairey Battles that had to attack bridges in 1940 because then, too, we had the wrong equipment and the wrong aircraft.

Mr. Rifkind: I can assure my hon. Friend that my remarks refer to nuclear weapons, not conventional weapons: I am not announcing any change of policy with regard to future plans for the conventional capability of the Royal Air Force. I am referring purely to its nuclear capability.

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North): May I welcome the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) back after his illness?

It seems to me that there is a little confusion here. As most of us in the House understood it, the tactical air-to-surface missile was to be the same missile, irrespective of whether it carried a conventional or a nuclear warhead. Is the Secretary of State telling us today that that missile has been cancelled, and therefore that the conventional system that would have accompanied the missile for the RAF has also been cancelled? I cannot interpret his remarks in any other way, and clearly the hon. Member for Tayside, North has made the same interpretation.

Mr. Rifkind: What I am saying is quite clear. In the 1980s, we had been considering meeting our future sub-strategic nuclear requirements by means of the tactical air-to-surface missile system. We are no longer planning on that basis. The matter has been reviewed over the past year, and my announcement today is limited to our sub-strategic nuclear capability. I do not think that I can make it any clearer than that.

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend (Bexleyheath): My right hon. and learned Friend mentioned balanced forces. Does he not agree that, having implemented "Options for Change", which produced a considerable cut in our conventional forces—in some cases going further than was perhaps strictly practicable—it would be fatal at this stage to make a further cut, of the order of £1 billion, in those conventional forces?

Mr. Rifkind: The White Paper published some months ago clearly stated the kind of commitments that we have and the way in which we are meeting them. Clearly, in any deliberation concerning future policy, we must examine responsibily and comprehensively both our armed forces' commitments and the best way in which we can meet them. Those are matters on which it is quite proper that there should be an on-going debate.

Dr. Reid: Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Rifkind: I will later.

Dr. Reid: On this point——

Mr. Rifkind: I will give way once more to the hon. Gentleman.

Dr. Reid: I am not attacking the Secretary of State, but this is one of the most important announcements that he will be making today. It seems to me that he is confusing the warhead and the missile. TASM was a tactical air-to-surface missile. The right hon. and learned Gentleman has told us that he proposes to cancel the sub-strategic nuclear warhead. Is he cancelling the missile —yes or no?

Mr. Rifkind: I am making no announcement today other than with regard to our nuclear capability. If I wished to make further announcements, or if we had reached further conclusions, I would be happy to report them to the House, but I have nothing else to tell the hon. Gentleman about that subject.

Although we shall not proceed as previously planned with a new stand-off weapon to replace the WE177, we remain committed to safeguarding our national capability to design, develop and produce nuclear weapons in the future. It is important to recognise that judgments made now about circumstances in the next century must inevitably be provisional. We shall therefore continue to keep our sub-strategic requirements under review, in close consultation with our allies in NATO, so that we can respond, if necessary, to future changes in the international situation.

I should mention the underground nuclear test conducted by China on 5 October. Given the background

of restraint in testing by the other nuclear powers, we find the Chinese action regrettable. A ban on nuclear underground tests that is not observed by all nuclear powers is of little value. We are committed to working constructively for a comprehensive test ban treaty, which will make a genuine contribution to non-proliferation.

The prospect of an effective test ban treaty in the not too distant future is one aspect of the new environment into which we are moving. Indefinite extension of the non-proliferation treaty in 1995 would be another very positive development. Regrettably, there are also new risks of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, including the possibility of the illegal production of chemical and biological weapons, and we must ensure that our plans, along with those of our allies, are effective in countering them.

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Rifkind: No. I must continue.

The development of our forces to respond to the changing international situation concerns not just our regular forces but also our reserves. "Defending Our Future" makes it clear that we regard the reserves as providing an invaluable contribution to our defence capability, and that we have been involved in a series of detailed studies. I am sure that the House will welcome a report on what has happened since the publication of the White Paper.

We have decided that the time has come to make arrangements to deploy reserves much more widely in operational roles in peacetime. Last week we published a consultative document, "Britain's Reserve Forces: A Framework for the Future", setting out our concept in more detail. The proposals in it provide a basis for consultation, and comments and views from all those with an interest will be welcomed. I will mention three important areas covered by that document.

First, the reserves will have, under our proposals, the opportunity to signify their willingness to be deployed on or in support of operations, in circumstances where compulsory call-out is not justified. That will be managed through a ready reserve list. Such reserves might be used in peacekeeping or humanitarian operations. It will be entirely voluntary, and responds to a long-expressed wish by the reserves for more frequent use of their skills.

Secondly, we propose two new categories of reserve: a high readiness reserve, consisting of individuals who would voluntarily assume an increased call-out liability and who would receive an extra bounty; and a sponsored reserve, consisting of civilians working in defence support areas such as industry, who might agree to take on a volunteer reserve liability.

Thirdly, and particularly important, the document looks at the impact of those proposals on the tripartite relationship between the Government, the reservist and his or her employer, and puts forward some ideas for change.

The proposals in the new document form a policy framework for the use of reserves. Their implementation would require primary legislation, for which we hope to be ready to seek parliamentary time in the 1994-1995 Session.

Our work on the operational requirement for the Army's reserves, and hence the size and shape of the Territorial Army, is continuing. I am conscious of the uncertainty that that causes the Territorial Army, and I assure the House that an announcement will be made as soon as our proposals are ready. I am ensuring that those conducting the review include persons with current experience of the TA, in order that its conclusions will be sound and sensible.

Mr. Julian Brazier (Canterbury): Obviously, many Conservative Members welcome the involvement—albeit limited—of small numbers of reservists with our regular forces. However, does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the review that he mentions will not carry credibility if it is led by regular officers simply going through the same process of nominal consultation—as has been the case in the past? Does he agree that the only way in which recommendations on the future size and shape of the reserve forces will carry any credibility in those forces will be if the review is seen to include at the highest level at least one outsider with direct reserve experience?

Mr. Rifkind: I very much agree with the thrust of what my hon. Friend says, and am taking special care to ensure that those involved in conducting the review include persons with the experience to which he refers. It is also important that the views of those active in the TA should be known not simply after the recommendations are announced or conclusions drawn, but at this early stage. I am, in a number of ways, inviting comments to be fed in at an early stage to ensure that it is not simply a review of reserves by regulars, because I am conscious of the need to ensure that the final proposals emanating from the review are seen to have looked at those matters in the full knowledge of the important work that the reserves do and their capability of achieving much more in the future.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that those proposals can be part of a cohesive defence strategy only if there is no arbitrary cut of £1 billion on 30 November? Will he assure us that he will resist, knowing that he has the support of his Back Benchers in doing so, any such fatuous proposals?

Mr. Rifkind: Making arbitrary cuts would never be a sound and responsible way to conduct defence policy. It is important to ensure that any proposals for defence resources take full account of the armed forces' responsibilities and their ability to carry out those responsibilities effectively.

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith (Wealden): We should like an assurance from my right hon. and learned Friend today that he will make it clear to the Treasury that, in welcoming the proposals to enhance the role of the reserve forces, it will not use it as an excuse to degrade the quality of equipment and training of the regular forces.

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend makes a perfectly fair point. Clearly, it is important to see that the reserves have a role consistent with the skills that they have acquired over the years. They have been anxious to ensure that those skills are used. My hon. Friend will remember that, during the Gulf war, there was considerable frustration that reservists who had undergone a great deal of training, devoting a lot of time to it, were not being fully utilised. The current legislative framework makes that difficult, and it is therefore desirable to change that.

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): In view of the serious deterioration in security in Northern Ireland after the announcement about the agreement with the Sinn Fein

[Rev. Ian Paisley]

leader, Gerry Adams, is the Secretary of State aware of the terrible atrocities carried out in both sections of the community by terrorists operating from both sections of the community and the vilest murders going on in the streets of Belfast? Will he assure the people of Northern Ireland that the part-time category of the Royal Irish Regiment will not be run down at this time?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman is right to emphasise the appalling behaviour of sections of both communities in carrying out terrorist activities. Both full-time and part-time members of the Royal Irish Regiment have a viable and continually crucial role to play in enhancing the security of the Province, and the hon. Gentleman is right to draw attention to that.

In June, I set out our plans for the future of the Royal Naval Reserve and Royal Auxiliary Air Force. The proposals were explained in detail in two consultative documents which we issued to interested parties. We received a good number of responses with both favourable and critical comments.

I am able to announce today that the proposals have been confirmed, and will now be implemented. There was considerable support for the broad thrust of our proposals, which points the way to a move to closer integration with regular forces and to abandoning roles that are no longer relevant.

Sadly, we shall need to disband next year the Royal Naval Auxiliary Service, and No. 1339 wing and No. 2623 squadron of the Royal Auxiliary Air Force regiment, as no relevant new use can be found for them. I pay tribute to what they have achieved in the past. There will be a properly managed rundown of all the units concerned, a point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) in his capacity as honorary inspector general of the Royal Auxiliary Air Force.

Those proposals, taken together, will eventually put the reserves in a position where they have the right organisation, the right equipment and the right legislative framework to make a better contribution than ever before to the defence of the country. That will be our aim in the months ahead.

The search for economy and efficiency in the use of public resources concerns us all. The Government believe that work should be done in the public sector only where it can clearly be shown to be more cost-effective, or where proven operational reasons rule out transfer to the private sector. The defence programme is certainly not exempt from that.

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): Will my right hon. and learned Friend give way?

Mr. Rifkind: I will give way to my hon. Friend in a moment.

One particular example of working with the private sector where we have also had significant success has been the introduction of commercial management at the royal dockyards at Devonport and Rosyth. The current private-sector management arrangements were introduced in April 1987. The Government established these arrangements because, in order to improve value for money, increase efficiency and maintain the effectiveness of the fleet while improving the performance of the dockyards, three main areas had to be addressed.

First, a clear customer-supplier relationship had to be established between the fleet and the dockyards; secondly, the dockyard accounting system had to be reorganised along commercial lines to improve cost analysis; and, thirdly, dockyard management had to be released from civil service constraints and given the freedom and authority to conduct dockyard business in a commercial environment.

We are satisfied that those initial objectives have now largely been achieved. The National Audit Office and the Select Committee on Public Accounts have noted that the dockyard operators have cut costs and improved efficiency. At the same time, both dockyard contractors have achieved some success in diversifying into other markets.

The contracts under which the dockyards are currently operated apply until 1996 at the latest. The Government acknowledge and endorse the view of the Select Committee on Defence on the desirability of making early progress on arrangements to succeed the contracts. Now that the refitting proposals that I announced to the House on 24 June have been confirmed, progress can be made on the future arrangements.

In the light of advances made under commercial management since 1987, we are proposing to seek competitive tenders from the private sector for the sale of both dockyards as separate and independent commercial entities. Such a move would be a logical progression from the current arrangements and would make possible further benefits for the Royal Navy, the taxpayer and the yards. In particular, it would allow much greater freedom and flexibility for the dockyard businesses to be conducted in a truly commercial environment, would encourage private-sector investment in the dockyard infrastructure, and would allow greater scope for a major diversification into other markets.

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside): It is in all our interests that Rosyth dockyard becomes competitive, and my right hon. and learned Friend has already pledged that the refit work for all Sandown class minehunters will go to that yard. Does my right hon. and learned Friend feel that, to ensure that the prices that Rosyth tenders are competitive, Vosper Thornycroft—which actually built both Sandown and Hunt class ships—should be allowed to quote for a proportion of the work?

Mr. Rifkind: Consideration is being given to who might be allowed to tender for the Sandown class work. Perhaps, if my hon. Friend catches your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, he will be able to expand on that in due course.

Our aim is to provide a reliable refitting capability for the Royal Navy, which maximises competition and achieves best value for money for the taxpayer, while ensuring that our strategic requirements will be safeguarded. We expect to invite offers from industry early next year, in order to achieve timely implementation of appropriate follow-on arrangements to the current management arrangements. We believe that there will be a substantial response to such an invitation.

I can also confirm the Government's commitment to a substantial programme of allocated surface refit work for Rosyth. The Government have not ruled out the possibility that some form of contractual commitment relating to future refitting work could be included as one of the matters for negotiation with tenderers for the future management of Rosyth.

At the same time, we will be seeking the greatest possible improvements in productivity and efficiency at both dockyards, to safeguard the interests of the taxpayer and the Royal Navy, and to achieve an effective and competitive structure for non-nuclear refitting. Naturally, to ensure competition, it would not be the Government's intention to permit both dockyards to be sold to the same bidder.

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): What the right hon. and learned Gentleman has said about the possibility of contractual arrangements for the work to be allocated to Rosyth will be received with great enthusiasm in Rosyth—and, indeed, in Scotland. Has any thought been given to how these contractual arrangements might be enshrined in the new arrangements for the management of the dockyard?

Mr. Rifkind: Anyone responding to the Government's invitation to tender for the dockyards will wish to discuss with the Government the allocated programme, which is for the nuclear submarines to be refitted at Devonport and the surface ships at Rosyth. The sale of the yards will be an opportunity for these matters to be discussed. The precise details of any contractual arrangements will be the subject of future negotiations.

All the important issues, of deployment or equipment or the management of defence, would count for nothing if it were not for the continued excellence of the men and women who serve in the armed forces.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Rifkind: No, not at the moment.

It is that quality that underpins everything we do. I should like today to say something about the way we recognise the achievements of our service personnel through the honours system.

When my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister announced earlier this year certain changes to the honours system, which has been approved by Her Majesty the Queen, he said that it had been decided to end the distinction between those gallantry awards given to officers and those to non-commissioned ranks. We have now completed our review of how that principle might be reflected in practice, and I am now able to announce the new arrangements.

The current system recognises different degrees of danger and risk to life and limb by considering four standards, or "levels", of gallantry in the field. They are headed by the supreme award for valour—the Victoria Cross—and reach downward to the mention in dispatches. I propose to deal with the four levels in that order.

The Victoria Cross, which is available for award in recognition of truly exceptional gallantry and the greatest heroism, may be awarded to all ranks of Her Majesty's forces. It requires no change, and will remain our highest award, exactly as now.

The second level, for conspicuous gallantry and great heroism, is currently represented by the Distinguished Service Order for officers, and by the Conspicuous Gallantry Medal, the Distinguished Conduct Medal and the Conspicuous Gallantry Medal (Flying) for non-commissioned ranks. In future, conspicuous gallantry and great heroism will be recognised by a new award, with a new title that has yet to be decided. It will apply to all three services and, like the Victoria Cross, will be open to service men and women of any rank.

The DSO will continue in being, but its purpose will be the recognition of exceptional service in positions of substantial responsibility for command and leadership during active operations.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): I ask the Secretary of State, as the son of a man who was awarded the military medal for bravery in the field: is it the case that other ranks will be denied the DSO?

Mr. Rifkind: What I have said is that there will be a new award for gallantry and heroism, and it will be available to officers and non-commissioned ranks. So far as the DSO is concerned, it will continue in being, but its purpose will be the recognition of exceptional service in positions of substantial responsibility for command and leadership during active operation. In the vast majority of cases, it is clearly an award for command and leadership, and will apply to persons who are officers.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Rifkind: I should like to complete the point.

The DSO has always been recognised as an award that recognises leadership qualities. That has been taken into account in the past, and it is right and proper that such an award should continue.

Mr. Bill Walker: My right hon. and learned Friend will be pleased to know that everyone in the services with whom I have spoken will welcome the statement about the DSO. There has never been any doubt that it was an award for leadership, usually in difficult and trying battle conditions. Quite properly, it should remain that way.

Mr. Rifkind: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I am sure that he is right.

Dr. Godman: Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Rifkind: No.

At the third level—currently represented by six separate awards—it has been decided that the most suitable means of recognising gallantry and bravery at sea, on land and in the air, would be by award to all ranks of the decorations which at present are restricted to commissioned and warrant officers only—the Distinguished Service Cross, the Military Cross and the Distinguished Flying Cross.

Finally, the award "mention in dispatches" is currently available to all ranks in all three services. That award will be retained, but will be reserved as an expression of commendation for gallant conduct on active operations. A new award, to be called the "Queen's Commendation for Valuable Services" will be introduced to cover the large number of cases where mention in dispatches has hitherto been awarded for reasons other than gallantry in the field —for example, service in technical and administrative posts within an operational theatre. Awards of the revised mention in dispatches and the new Queen's Commendation will be announced in the *London Gazette* and accompanied, as now, by a certificate and an emblem to be worn on the ribbon of the appropriate campaign or service medal.

The changes will come into effect at once, and will not be subject to retrospective action. I am sure that the House will join me in welcoming the changes, which will ensure

[Mr. Rifkind]

that the way that we recognise gallantry from the men and women of our armed forces takes into account only the nature of the service that they have rendered, and not the rank of the person involved.

Discussion of gallantry awards makes us all recognise what is fundamental to all considerations of defence.

Mr. Foulkes: I do not want to diminish the importance of medals for gallantry, but will the Secretary of State answer a question about jobs? On 2 September, I wrote on behalf of my Ayrshire colleagues to ask for a meeting with a Minister about the situation of Jetstream in Prestwick, because announcements about redundancies were imminent. Not only did the Secretary of State refuse to do anything, but the Minister of State refused to meet us. Some 630 job losses were announced at Prestwick.

Will the Secretary of State ask the Minister to meet Ayrshire Members of Parliament so that we can discuss possible ways to save jobs at Prestwick? Some possibilities are available. For example, the Ministry of Defence should be using British aircraft——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order.

Mr. Foulkes: I am just finishing.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. No, this intervention is too long.

Mr. Rifkind: I am aware of the Jetstream aircraft. I remember, some years ago, visiting the factory at Prestwick and I pay tribute to the quality of the aircraft. However, there is no Ministry of Defence requirement for such an aircraft at the moment. My hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement would be happy to meet Ayrshire Members of Parliament, but I would not want to give rise to false expectations.

Mr. Ian Bruce (South Dorset): I know that my right hon. and learned Friend earlier paid tribute to the civil servants who do such a marvellous job for the forces. Will he comment on press speculation that the north Bristol Procurement Executive building is about to be cancelled, because my constituents have been told about three times that they will definitely be moved? They would be only too pleased to save defence money by staying where they are.

Mr. Rifkind: The project to which my hon. Friend refers will, once it has been implemented, save substantial sums of money for the defence budget. That is why the project was approved not only by the Treasury but by the National Audit Office, which went into the matter in great detail.

My hon. Friend was quoted in a newspaper as referring to what he claimed to be 150 empty Ministry of Defence properties. I know that he will be as pleased as I am to learn that that is incorrect. We have looked at his list and only six—not 150—of the properties on it are in the possession of the Minister of Defence. All of them, if they are empty, are up for disposal. If my hon. Friend knows of anyone who would like to buy them, I would be only too happy to take that matter forward.

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): I wish to raise a matter that is of great importance to 500 people who work for the Royal Ordnance factory in my constituency—the explosive propellants and related products agreement, known as EPREP, which was announced to the House by the Minister of State in January for a second five-year period.

I understand that that went out for competitive tender in July, and that the Royal Ordnance factory won the competitive tender at a lower price than was originally envisaged; but that the second, five-year agreement, with the security and continuity of supply that it would involve, has not yet been signed by the Ministry of Defence. My constituents wish to know whether it will be signed, and they would be grateful if my right hon. and learned Friend could enlighten us.

Mr. Rifkind: It is, of course, important that the armed forces have the ammunition supplies that they require. We are close to coming to a conclusion on that matter. I recognise the concern that my hon. Friend has expressed, and hope that we shall be able to go forward with the project at an early date.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Rifkind: I want to draw my remarks to a conclusion, because many hon. Members wish to take part in the debate.

We rely on the actions of the men and women who serve, and who sometimes have to suffer, in order that our freedom can be guaranteed. Those of us responsible for the management of defence have a duty to those men and women. We must ensure that they are required to perform only tasks for which they have sufficient manpower, good modern equipment and a clear and realistic statement of their aims. It is our intention to ensure that we continue to meet those needs.

4.44 pm

Dr. David Clark (South Shields): I beg to move, to leave out from 'House' to the end of the Question, and to add instead thereof:

'believes that the Government's plans, set out in the Statement on the Defence Estimates, Cm. 2270, do not effectively address the long term security needs of the United Kingdom; congratulates local authorities, trade unions and progressive defence companies for their work on defence diversification; calls for the immediate establishment of a Defence Diversification Agency; welcomes President Clinton's decision to continue the moratorium on nuclear testing; calls for the early signature of a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and the extension of the Non-Proliferation Treaty after 1995; and demands that the United Kingdom fully participates in moves to enhance international peace and security, in particular by strengthening the United Nations.'.

It has not gone unnoticed that we are debating the 1993 defence estimates within five parliamentary weeks of having debated those for 1992. Having heard the Secretary of State's speech, which I thought was somewhat lacking in content, I feel that he has not made the best use of his time.

It does not take a genius to work out why the Government are in such haste. They are rushing through the debate because they know that, in the Budget next month, the Chancellor will announce further defence cuts. I emphasise that it will be the Chancellor making the announcement and not the Secretary of State for Defence. The cuts to be announced in November are Treasury-led and the Secretary of State knows that he cannot justify them in defence terms. By the tawdry measure of

scheduling an early debate, he is hoping to avoid a properly informed parliamentary debate. We shall not let that happen.

The Opposition accept that, with the changes in the world scene, notably the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw pact, there is a case for a reduction in defence spending, but any reduction must be justified only on defence criteria and not on the passing whim of the Treasury. The defence criteria must be determined only after a full-scale defence review and in consultation with our NATO allies. That is the sensible way forward and I regret that the Government will not accept it.

I have a few remarks that I trust will find consensus across the House. In the early 1980s, when I was a deputy defence spokesman for my party, I came to know and appreciate the skill and work of the men and women who contribute to our defences—the members of the armed forces, those involved in administration and research and those who work in our defence industries. Collectively, they play their part admirably in ensuring our security. If anything, my admiration of those people is even stronger now. My experience over recent years has served to reinforce my impressions. We are well served by them all.

I specifically included the defence industry workers, for they are often forgotten. Their skills produce the wherewithal by which our armed forces carry out their jobs and duties so well. In recent years, more than 100,000 have lost their jobs and it is a scandal that the Government have done practically nothing to stop them being thrown on the dole queue. We argue not only that it is morally wrong for the Government to do so little to find alternative employment for the men and women who have served Britain so well over the years but that, as a nation, we cannot afford to lose those skills. They will be essential if we are to rebuild our shattered industrial base. That is why our amendment places so much emphasis on the call for a defence diversification agency.

Over the next 12 months, I hope to arrange a series of meetings across the country on defence diversification, building on the new consensus that is emerging not only in trade union circles and local government but in the defence industry. It is a matter of deep regret that the Government have washed their hands completely of any planning, or any assistance, to help the defence industry to diversify. They call it free market enterprise; it is not enterprise, it is dogma.

Across the Atlantic, the Americans, with their defence conversion commission, show us how to give help and ease some defence workers into civilian occupation. It is a matter of deep regret that our Government will not help. Governments are helping also in Europe and the EC has made money available under KONVER. Regrettably, the Government will not play a full part in that effort.

On this point, let me press the Secretary of State again on the issue raised by my right hon. Friend the Member for Islwyn (Mr. Kinnock)—the EPREP order. It is not good enough for the Secretary of State to say simply that he expects to announce a decision soon. As I understood it, he announced the decision some time ago.

That is how I understood it. That is how the House understood it and that is how the industry understood it. Why has there been the delay? The Secretary of State must have seen the letters that I have seen, in which British Aerospace says that unless that order is forthcoming soon, it will have to implement redundancies and possible factory closures. When are we to get that announcement —or must we wait for the Treasury again? When we get the answer, will the order be for five years or not? I would willingly give way.

The Minister of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. Jonathan Aitken): The hon. Gentleman may not be aware that the tender has not yet run out, so the anger that he is voicing is perhaps a little overdone. We regret that there has been a delay. On the other hand, it is perfectly reasonable, in the present public expenditure climate, for there to be extra scrutiny of an important order. No one is suggesting that the armed forces will not have the ammunition that they require when the order has been settled.

Dr. Clark: As the Minister knows, in February the Minister announced the projected five-years buy for the various ammunition projects. It was understood by Royal Ordnance that an order was to be forthcoming. Does not the Minister understand that if those firms and factories close, we might not be able to meet the demands for ammunition of our armed forces? I do not need to remind the Minister of the Gulf war, when we were almost forced to rely on the Belgians to supply shells, and the fact that they refused to supply them to us.

We cannot and should not be dependent on overseas companies for such vital things as ammunitions. It is critical that the announcement is made soon so that any fear or concern that may be felt by British Aerospace and its workers can be allayed as soon as possible.

I join the Secretary of State in paying tribute to our service personnel and especially to those serving in conditions which can be best described as theatres of war, such as the streets of Northern Ireland, the skies of Iraq or the mountains of Bosnia. We should never forget that they risk their lives daily in our name. I get angry with those uninformed armchair pundits who question the efforts of our troops in Bosnia. Let there be no doubt about the dedication of those troops. Many more civilians would have lost their lives in that troubled land. I accept that all the aid is not getting through—we all accept that—but that is no reason not to continue to try.

The troops of all nations struggling against the odds to get humanitarian aid through deserve the praise of us all. The skill of the Royal Engineers in building a 50-mile road across the mountains over one summer, which will be the sole route into central Bosnia this winter, is simply staggering. The Sea King helicopter pilots who fly mercy missions and who risk being shot at from all three sides show amazing fortitude and courage. Their colleagues who fly the Sea Harriers demonstrate similar skills and daring as they fly missions over treacherous mountain terrain.

On the ground, in that inhospitable environment, the troops show incredible discipline as their daily tasks involve risking their lives. Already Corporal Edwards has lost his life and, in other incidents, other soldiers have been wounded, sometimes seriously. On my second visit to Bosnia at the end of September, I had a vivid reminder of the danger. I was in Vitez when Private Paul John Jones of the Prince of Wales Regiment was hit in the throat by shrapnel. We was within a centimetre of death and it was only the skills of the Army medical staff in Vitez that saved him. He is now in hospital in Woolwich, and I know that I speak for the whole House in wishing him a full recovery.

[Dr. Clark]

Such incidents bring home the dangers facing our troops as they serve with honour and distinction under the blue hats of the United Nations.

Let us not forget, however, that Bosnia is only one of the many conflicts that are being waged throughout the world. I have witnessed comparable tragic events in Nagorno Karabakh, and my hon. Friend the Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid) reported a similar situation in Georgia. Having such highly professional and experienced forces, as well as being members of the United Nations Security Council, means that we are likely to face increasing demands to contribute more to future United Nations operations.

The collapse of the Soviet Union may have reduced the nuclear threat to the west, but it has not left the world without conflict. We have witnessed the outbreak of scores of local wars, many civil and all especially nasty, in which thousands of innocent civilians have died. Clearly, if all warfare is to be avoided, it is incumbent on us as politicians to seek all ways in which to do it. Indeed, it could be argued that that it is the nature of our profession. In a sense, war occurs only when politics has failed. We ought to remember that war can resolve little in the end and usually it is politics that resolve the problem.

In the past few years, there has been welcome progress in reducing the number of weapons of mass destruction, notably chemical weapons. However, there is still a long way to go, especially in efforts to achieve a nuclear-free world. I was delighted to speak at the recent annual meeting of the North Atlantic Assembly in Copenhagen in support of a resolution to seek ways in which to achieve the objective of a nuclear-free world. The resolution concluded with the aim:

"To study ways in which an international deterrent regime could be brought about which would allow the reduction of nuclear weapons in a co-ordinated fashion so that national arsenals can be reduced to a minimum level or even totally abolished"——

[Interruption.] Hon. Gentlemen may laugh, but I was pleased that that resolution was passed unanimously and I congratulate the right hon. Member for Honiton (Sir P. Emery) on moving it so effectively. I was also pleased that every Conservative Member voted for that resolution, which demonstrates support for negotiated nuclear disarmament, is not confined to Labour Members.

At the last general election, Labour argued for a battery of measures which would help us on the road towards the elimination of nuclear weaponry. That, we emphasised, would be done through multilateral negotiations and until "elimination of those (nuclear) stocks is achieved, Labour will retain Britain's nuclear capability, with the number of warheads no greater than the present total."

That was in our manifesto in 1992. It was our position at the last election and it is our position today, as was reaffirmed at the party conference in Brighton when a resolution was passed declaring:

"Conference reconfirms the Labour Party's commitment to the ongoing negotiations on strategic nuclear forces with the view to their eventual world wide elimination"

That is the position of the Labour party. The Secretary of State asked me about it and I hope that he understands it.

Mr. Rifkind: I should be grateful if the hon. Gentleman would explain to a rather incredulous House and an even more incredulous country how he reconciles that motion with another passed by the same conference—which he has not yet mentioned—calling for an immediate abolition of Trident nuclear weapons. Why is he so reluctant to comment on that?

Dr. Clark: I thought that I had made it clear that at the last election we said that we would retain Britain's nuclear capability—which is Trident—with a number of warheads no greater than the present total. The motion at the party conference attracted no more votes than it did last year or the year before. The reality is that we will keep Trident.

Our vision of a nuclear world is enshrined in article 6 of the non-proliferation treaty and in UN resolutions that were passed as long ago as 1946, which were signed and supported by Conservative Administrations. We all know that a world of general and complete disarmament is a difficult goal, but it is a goal which we must not abandon. In recent years, we have advanced more rapidly towards our commonly held desire. One welcome sign of our advance is the chemical weapons convention that commits Britain and many other states to rid the world of chemical weapons. Surely, if that can be achieved for chemical weapons, it can eventually be achieved for nuclear weapons.

Another welcome development has been the decision of the new United States Administration to maintain the moratorium on nuclear testing. We hope, and we urge, that, despite the recent Chinese nuclear test, which we deplore, the United States will continue the moratorium. The House should applaud the recent agreement between Russia and the Ukraine to get rid of all nuclear weapons on Ukrainian soil, in line with the recent strategic arms reduction talks treaty.

Mr. Frank Cook: The United States is continuing the moratorium, the Chinese want to continue testing and the British Government want to resume testing. Will my hon. Friend ask the Secretary of State what the difference is between China's nuclear policy and ours?

Dr. Clark: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for asking that question. I shall pass it on.

Much has been done in recent years to advance the cause of nuclear disarmament—mostly, I am afraid to say, by other states, but there are steps that the Government could be taking to speed up the advance. They could, for example, begin by freezing the number of nuclear warheads on Trident. Why are they increasing the number from 192 on Polaris to 512 on Trident? Why not freeze it at the same level as Polaris, as we would? As my hon. Friend the Member for Stockton, North (Mr. Cook) said, what is the difference between our policy and that of the Chinese?

The Government have been dragged along by the United States and have put pressure on the Americans to resume nuclear testing, yet we know that testing is not necessary for our Trident weapon and, as the Secretary of State announced today, the nuclear warhead of TASM will not be proceeded with, so there is no need to test that. I hope that the Secretary of State will join the Labour party in supporting a moratorium on testing.

Mr. Rifkind: May I clarify the point, because I know that Labour Members are very concerned about it? TASM is a nuclear system which is no longer being proceeded with. The continuing references to conventional stand-off missiles do not refer to TASM, which is a quite separate system that will continue in the RAF's programme.

Dr. Clark: I am grateful for that clarification. As I understand it, the Secretary of State is saying that the complete TASM system, which he claims is purely nuclear and has no dual capacity, will not be proceeded with. That means, therefore, that there will be no stand-off facility for the Royal Air Force.

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman should be aware that there is a quite separate proposal that continues as part of the Royal Air Force's programme for a conventional stand-off missile. That is nothing to do with TASM, which is purely nuclear-related.

Dr. Clark: So the Secretary of State is saying that a conventional air-to-surface missile will still be available to the Royal Air Force. I thank him for that clarification, and we shall see whether it is repeated in later debates.

Will the Secretary of State take the argument a stage further? Will he adopt, for example, the objective of signing the comprehensive test ban treaty by 30 September 1996, as the United States Government have? Will he propose that the French and Chinese Governments agree to mutual transparency arrangements for nuclear forces similar to those due to be adopted by the United States and Russian Governments under the START verification agreements?

Finally, will the right hon. and learned Gentleman hold serious discussions with all five nuclear states about an agreement to end the production of fissile material for military purposes? If we could get movement on those three points, it would take the argument a long way forward.

The House knows Labour's historic commitment to the United Nations, which is enshrined in clause IV of the Labour party's constitution. We have always had our concerns and criticisms of the United Nations, but they have always been used to support our calls for reform. In the past few years, our belief in the United Nations has grown stronger and our position was set out recently by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith), when he said:

"Our commitment to a strong United Nations must be the foundation stone of our foreign policy."

Our defence and disarmament policies should be seen as one method of achieving a more secure world and a safer future for Britain, but we should recognise that there are many others. We need to overcome the gross economic imbalances and the environmental degradation that the world currently suffers, because they also threaten Britain's long-term security. No amount of military might can overcome those challenges. We need a comprehensive approach to the problems that recognises that the use of force should always be the last resort.

For decades, the world was scarred by the cold war. The war is over and there has been no victor. In our debate in the next two days, we should reflect on that fact and on the new situation. Confrontation between the east and west has gone: it must not be replaced by conflict between the north and south.

The world is faced with a new set of diverse opportunities and challenges to strengthen peace and security. The time has come for fundamental changes at the United Nations if it is to respond effectively to those challenges. We need to recognise that the role of the military in United Nations operations has increased and that it is likely to go on increasing.

All those factors should cause us to reconsider the deployment of British forces in support of UN operations. The great importance of our membership of NATO means we must go back to Brussels and Mons to discuss with our allies the role of NATO in a strengthened UN. Clearly, we need further discussion on this issue. I hope that at the January 1994 NATO summit, which the Secretary of State mentioned, a detailed and comprehensive redefinition of NATO's relationship to the United Nations can be agreed. This is a matter of growing urgency. Many hon. Members have heard critics say that NATO goes either out of area or out of business. I hope that, in three months' time, all NATO members will, in the words of the preamble to the north Atlantic treaty,

"reaffirm their faith in the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations."

NATO needs to re-examine its proposed force structure to make it more relevant to United Nations requirements, and we may need to reconsider the role of the rapid reaction corps, in which we take such a lead.

But it cannot be left to NATO: Britain must put forward its own views. The House will know that I, on behalf of the Labour party, made a number of proposals to strengthen the UN. The establishment of a military planning group and a modern communications group were both ideas which I proposed in the House on 21 January 1993. In July, I repeated the proposals and I was pleased to see that the Government, in a letter to the Secretary-General 11 days later, supported some of the ideas.

Much progress is still to be made on this front. We need to consider what Britain can do short of providing fully formed units. I believe that we could do much more through the deployment of small numbers of staff officers and monitors for the United Nations at headquarters and operational level. In this way, our experience of peacekeeping, which is unique in the world, could be made more widely available to United Nations commanders in the field.

The House knows that Labour fully supports the deployment of British troops in Bosnia. We said in June that if additional British troops were required for the implementation of United Nations plans for safe havens, they should be provided. In the event, they have not been requested, but let me make it clear that I do not accept the view that the use of military force is the only way to solve the conflict in Bosnia. Britain has a role to play, but no one apart from the people of Bosnia can bring lasting peace to the area. We know that, once a final peace settlement is achieved, its implementation will require additional British troops. The Secretary of State will recall that as long ago as 20 April I indicated that we should meet that new commitment, while fully recognising the financial and human needs involved.

Mr. Richard Ottaway (Croydon, South): Is the hon. Gentleman saying that Labour Members, such as the hon. Member for Croydon, North-West (Mr. Wicks), who advocate sending in troops immediately are wrong?

Dr. Clark: I am not saying that at all. I should have thought that, on this issue, the hon. Gentleman would be wise not to try to introduce party politics as hon. Members from both sides of the House share the view of my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, North-West (Mr. Wicks). I made the Labour party's position clear. We have always argued that British troops should have been sent to help to get humanitarian aid through. We argued that for a full six

[Dr. Clark]

weeks before the Government were persuaded. We also argued at the appropriate time that some of the Serbian positions should have been bombed.

We have also argued that, if requested, British troops should go to the safe havens. Together with my hon. Friends the Members for Motherwell, North and for Carlisle (Mr. Martlew), I visited one safe haven this summer. Thankfully, it was being effectively managed by 10 United Nations troops, who were doing a superb job. Troops are not always needed. However, if they were needed in that capacity, they should have been sent.

We shall probably need about an extra 5,000 British troops if a peace agreement is signed. We should not hesitate to send troops to try to bring some peace to that troubled country. As those troops are all volunteer forces, we must pay particular attention to the human cost involved. If we increase our United Nations commitments, that will increase the number of unaccompanied tours and put further pressure on service families. I hope that, at some stage in the debate, the Secretary of State will reaffirm his commitment to achieving an average 24-month gap between emergency tours of duty. I also hope that he will join me in telling service personnel and their families that military operations in support of the United Nations are not simply about helping the international community. Our forces are working with the United Nations and are doing a great deal to strengthen Britain's long-term security.

The Prince of Wales Regiment has been transferred from Germany straight to Bosnia, and I find it strange that the troops serving in Bosnia—a theatre of war where they are constantly shot at—receive less pay than they did when in Germany. Their families are still in Germany, where they have family commitments. It is absolutely outrageous that the troops in Bosnia get less pay than when they were in Germany. I hope that the Secretary of State will consider that issue and take action on it. I must make some progress as I have spoken for too long; I think that the House is unanimous on that issue.

There is still much to be done. We need more multinational training for UN-type operations in the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation. We need to train with our new friends in eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States as it is likely that they will be increasingly involved together in United Nations operations. We should remember the valuable work being carried out by other regional security organisations in other parts of the world, such as Liberia.

There are many lessons to be learned. One lesson to be learnt from Bosnia is that we must increasingly bring together civil agencies and the military. They have different objectives and different ways of achieving them, and difficulties sometimes occur because of misunderstandings. It is important that we try to do what we can to minimise such misunderstandings.

Labour welcomed the establishment of the United Nations arms transfer register. However, we believe that it must be improved as quickly as possible. The incorporation of new types of weapons as well as some types of dual-use technology should be agreed at next year's review of the register. Talks with our EC and NATO partners about agreed restrictions on defence exports are also vital. I understand that the Government have some difficulties on that issue and know that they will resist the proposals because of their concern to try to cover up the export of arms to Iraq.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, the right hon. Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave) has recently been back on the rack. His attempts to blame civil servants for his mistakes have caused justified outrage. He and I both know that it was not the fault of his officials or the intelligence service, but his fault and his alone.

Mr. Corbyn: In September 1988 my hon. Friend the Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) and I, together with a number of peace organisations, met the right hon. Member for Bristol, West (Mr. Waldegrave) in the Foreign Office to discuss the gas attacks on Halabja and Kurdish people in Iraq. We pleaded with him for a total arms embargo on Iraq because of the destruction of human rights and Kurdish people in Iraq. He was well warned by experts in our delegation, including people who had suffered in Iraq at the hands of Saddam Hussein. The right hon. Member chose to ignore that advice and apparently went ahead with arms sales to that country.

Dr. Clark: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his intervention. He has a long record of interest and involvement in such issues in Iraq and throughout the world. I think that the House will note the issues that he has raised, which supplement the argument that I was trying to advance. I do not want to personalise the issue, as it did not involve only the right hon. Member for Bristol, West.

Mr. Kaufman: Is not the position worse because, at the same time as my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) and others were urging the Government to impose a total arms ban on Iraq in 1988, the Government were secretly relaxing the guidelines and deceiving the House of Commons by failing to tell it what they had done—as the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster admitted to the Scott inquiry a few days ago?

Dr. Clark: My right hon. Friend makes a valid point. Over recent years, he has consistently argued and tried to raise the issue at the Dispatch Box in order to reveal the Government's position. I am sure that his stance will be vindicated by the Scott inquiry when it reports. The Secretary of State for Defence also bears responsibility. He is a qualified lawyer and is supposed to respect the principles of justice. What justice did he have in mind when, on 22 November 1992, he signed the public interest immunity certificate that could have jailed three innocent men who risked their lives trying to serve this country? That was unforgivable and the Secretary of State should try to explain his position.

Our constitutional arrangements are based on the fact the Ministers are supposed to be responsible for Government policy. In practice, today's Ministers never accept responsibility. They blame foreigners, trade unions and a Labour Government who lost office 14 years ago. Now they even blame their own civil servants. Next they will be blaming the fairies at the bottom of the garden. The Government and Ministers do not have the principles of those such as Lord Carrington and Sir Thomas Dugdale who resigned as a matter of honour.

One of the great myths of British politics is that Conservatives are sound on financial planning—nothing could be further from the truth. In defence, as elsewhere, their figures never really add up. The funds budgeted for in

the reports were never sufficient to meet the Government's post-"Options for Change" plans. Originally, the Government had envisaged an increase in defence expenditure in coming years rising from £24·2 billion in 1992-93 to approximately £25 billion in 1995-96.

However, the 1992 autumn statement last November provided for a decrease to £23·2 billion in 1995-96, which was widely recognised as an optimistic figure. In reality, the figure will be less. Without a full defence review, the Government will find themselves in increasing difficulty with their crisis management approach, so aptly described on 17 June 1993 by the hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Robathan) as "butchery behind closed doors."

Of course, we have been here before. We were here in the 1980s when, by managing and massaging our activities, we got by. It was achieved by flying fewer hours, spending less time at sea and generally training less. That penny-pinching approach meant that two thirds of our forces in Germany had to be stripped of equipment to provide enough support for the one third of the British Army of the Rhine that fought in the Gulf war.

Now, the situation is different, with postings to areas such as Bosnia becoming much more regular occurrences. Men's and women's lives are at stake, and we cannot afford any slackness on this occasion. We must not allow what happened in the 1980s—although we got away with it then—to happen again in the 1990s.

The answer is blatantly obvious, as the Secretary of State admitted in coded remarks in his speech to the Tory party conference at Blackpool. We cannot continue to perform every defence function. Some specialisation is essential. We need a full-scale defence review so that we can work out which areas of activity we do not need to undertake ourselves.

We are a member of NATO and it is essential that we work alongside our NATO partners in determining what specialisation Britain should adopt and what can reliably be left to our allies. I know that there will be difficult decisions ahead, but I welcome the challenges that we will face.

The debate has quickened of late as it is becoming more and more apparent that the Chancellor is demanding ever more cuts—even greater than the Secretary of State had envisaged. The cuts are deemed essential by the Chancellor to help to offset the massive financial deficit which the Government have created through their mismanagement and incompetence. In a sense, the fact that the Treasury has landed Britain in such a mess only adds to our case that it should not be the determining voice in the shape of Britain's security. Having made such a mess of the management of the economy, the Treasury cannot be trusted with our defences—one hates to think of the long-term damage that it could do.

Almost every country in the west is cutting its defence spending following the collapse of the Soviet Union—understandably so. What is needed in Britain is a full defence review, for which we have been calling for years. Only with such a review can we assess the threats to Britain's security, and only then can we shape our defences accordingly.

5.21 pm

Mr. Archie Hamilton (Epsom and Ewell): I begin by declaring an interest; I have a consultancy with W. S. Atkins, which does a certain amount of work for the Ministry of Defence. I have no doubt that I shall be working with other defence contractors in the future as well.

I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend on his latest White Paper, which spells out much more clearly than before what our forces are doing. That means that, when it comes to negotiations with the Treasury, we shall be able to ask what commitments should be dropped if there are to be further reductions in defence expenditure.

As one who devoutly believes that public expenditure should be cut, I find it difficult to stand here and say that cuts should be made everywhere but in defence. Those of us who want the public sector borrowing requirement to be reduced without raising taxation surely have to accept that the Treasury has a hard task ahead of it at the moment.

I should like briefly to deal with the effect that reductions in defence expenditure will have on our defence industries. The fact is that our exports are running at record levels. We broke the 1992 level, itself a record, early in 1993. Adding defence export figures to MOD spending figures—I admit that this is not a direct like-with-like comparison—shows that demand, in terms of orders for defence equipment from British manufacturers, is at a record level. It is important to bear that in mind when we recall that there certainly have been redundancies in some defence industries. Of course, certain British defence manufacturers are not benefiting from the record levels of demand, but it is important to remember that, including MOD spending and defence exports, demand is higher than ever before. Before we start getting too agitated about diversification, we should always recall those facts.

I wish to talk today about our commitments. In real terms, the defence budget has been declining ever since 1984, with the probable exception of the blip to cater for the Gulf war. We must therefore be careful about continuing to load our armed services with more and more commitments. Since "Options for Change" was announced in July 1990, two more roulement battalions have gone to Northern Ireland, there has been the commitment to Bosnia, and there was the commitment to the Rapid Reaction Corps as part of our commitment to Germany. We have thus been committing our troops fairly heavily around the world, leaving ourselves with little flexibility.

If reports in the papers are to be believed, this view appears to be shared by the Foreign Secretary and by the Secretaries of State for Trade and Industry and for Northern Ireland, who seem to think that there should be no further reductions in defence expenditure. I am sure, however, that they would be the first to accept that the PSBR needs reducing, so perhaps they will volunteer compensatory reductions in their own budgets so that defence can be left untouched. As a realist, I must say that I consider that unlikely.

We must therefore seriously consider asking the Treasury to look into public expenditure survey transfers which reflect the services being received by the Foreign Office and the Northern Ireland Office, to the value of the troops that they are using. We have no defence interest in our UN commitments—having large numbers of men tied up on the green line in Cyprus or in monitoring in the Sinai desert does nothing for the defence of this country. If the burden of expenditure were transferred to the Foreign Office budget, that Department would be given some incentive to reduce our commitments around the world. As

[Mr. Archie Hamilton]

we know from bitter experience, it is easy to get involved in UN commitments and extremely difficult to get out of them.

If we believe in delegated financial responsibility, it is quite logical to talk in terms of Departments paying for the troops they use and having a financial incentive to reduce their numbers or to find other ways of paying for them. Many jobs in Northern Ireland, for instance, currently carried out by soldiers could be performed by others. If the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland had to pay a per capita sum for his troops, he might look differently at the most economical way, say, to guard the Maze prison—a job that could easily be done by locally recruited Ulstermen, and far more cheaply. That would also reduce unemployment in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones (Watford): My right hon. Friend's suggestion is extremely interesting. Does he agree that, if that happened, the strategic needs that Britain faced in the future would be driven as much by the Departments that he has mentioned, among others, as by the Ministry of Defence?

Mr. Hamilton: I am coming to that. The prime job of the Ministry of Defence, a job for which it is well qualified, is the defence of the United Kingdom. I should be very worried if the Foreign Office were given even more input into strategic decisions than it has today——

Mr. Garel-Jones: Surely my right hon. Friend will accept—although no one disputes the ability and commitment of our armed forces to defend the kingdom and its interests—that one of the weaknesses of the past has been that Governments have never had the mechanisms to make strategic decisions about what and whom we are defending ourselves against. Surely my right hon. Friend accepts that not just the Foreign and Commonwealth Office but other political elements in the kingdom could make a valuable input to strategic decisions, which have to be taken before we can decide on troop and equipment requirements.

Mr. Hamilton: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for raising this interesting topic. We would be in some danger if we had to identify enemies all the time. As an insurance policy, it is wise to keep a wide range of technologies and defence capabilities. We never know where the next threat to our national or overseas interests and the security of these islands might come from. Before the Gulf war, some people might have said that there was no longer any need for so much armour, but in that war we fought the first armoured battles since 1945 defending our interests. We must also look carefully at commitments that overstretch us in areas where our direct interests are not so well served.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does my right hon. Friend recollect that during the Falklands war some people questioned the use of the Harrier aircraft and its function? Does he agree that if we had not had that aircraft we could not have fought the Falklands war?

Mr. Hamilton: That is right, and the Nott review, which took place shortly before that conflict, had ambitions radically to reduce the Navy. If those proposals had been implemented we might not have been able to fight that campaign.

It is not possible distinctly to analyse future problems and say where the next threat will come from. That is why, in broad terms, it must be right to keep a range of capabilities. I disagree with the Opposition, who say that we should think about specialisation. The broad range that I propose will inevitably narrow under financial pressures, but it is nonsense to talk about a review because that could not predict any clearly identifiable future threat. We must maintain the insurance policy of a defence industry and maintain the technologies that are needed in sophisticated warfare.

If we do not look hard at the commitments in which we are becoming engaged, we shall be in danger of having more and more people playing a role in a peacekeeping army, which would be to the detriment of many of our high-technology defence capabilities elsewhere.

I wholeheartedly congratulate the Government—and President Clinton—on not being drawn more closely into the conflict in Bosnia. I do not understand reports that President Clinton is blaming the British Government for somehow thwarting his ambitions in Bosnia. He should learn a lesson from what is happening to his troops in Somalia, where the enemy is much less sophisticated and is fighting in less favourable territory than the factions in Bosnia. I am glad to see Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen nodding at that, although they have just said that we should bomb the Serb positions in Bosnia. That would lead to us being drawn into military conflict throughout Bosnia, and in a very short time we should be fighting not just the Serbs but the Croats and the Muslims. The carnage that we would suffer would be nobody's business.

Dr. David Clark: I should like to correct a misunderstanding. I said that there was a time when bombing Serb positions might have been effective. That time is probably past, but the threat of bombing had a major effect on the Serbs and played a large part in getting them to agree to the ceasefire in late July, which lasted until recently.

Mr. Hamilton: I shall follow that through. If we had taken the Opposition's advice about bombing Serbian artillery positions earlier this year, we would have needed a United Nations mandate to carry it out. It is highly likely that, during the time that it took to get the mandate, the Serbs would have removed the artillery. Even if they did not, bombing would not have destroyed it all. Even if all that artillery could have been bombed out of existence—and that would have required a degree of precision bombing that I do not think anyone possesses—what would have happened? The Serbs would have resorted to guerrilla warfare of the type taught by Tito.

Yugoslavia always thought that the main threat was from the Soviet Union, and the Yugoslav national army knew that it had no chance of fighting it out on the plains of Yugoslavia. Therefore, on the day that Yugoslavia was invaded, that army was to take to the mountains and fight a guerrilla war. Bombing would have led to us being drawn into a horrific guerrilla war and, irrespective of the number of troops sent in to try to pacify Bosnia, they would all become bogged down and would suffer appalling casualties.

We must think carefully before increasing our commitment to Bosnia. The British battalion group there is to be congratulated on its fantastic operation and minimal casualties. It is a miracle that we have not suffered more.

I regret that we have been drawn into the war to the extent that we have. What interests do we have in a civil war in Bosnia anyway? Bosnia has been given saturation coverage on television, to the exclusion of many other civil wars. I concede that, the conflict there is much nearer to home than any other, but television seems to include news from there in every bulletin. That is done to the exclusion of the civil war in Angola, about which we hear almost nothing, and where casualties are much higher. We hear almost nothing about Nagorno-Karabakh, Georgia or Azerbaijan. If there were more balanced reporting of civil wars in other parts of the world, there would be less of a desire to do something about Bosnia.

Despite the magnificent efforts of our troops, we must face the agonising and difficult issue that, throughout the conflict, we have been feeding the warring factions in Bosnia. United Nations commentators are rather reluctant to accept that massive stores of United Nations foodstuffs in Bosnia are held by the militia. Therefore, we have removed from the people who want to do the fighting in Bosnia the boring logistic problem of feeding their troops, because that has been done with United Nations food. The aid that we have given to Bosnia may have prolonged the conflict and more people may have died than would have done so if we had had nothing whatever to do with it.

Mr. Eric Martlew (Carlisle): I agree with much of what the right hon. Gentleman says. He was a Minister until recently. Is he suggesting that we withdraw British troops from Bosnia?

Mr. Hamilton: No, I am not. This is not the time to do that, but we must keep the matter under review. The hon. Gentleman pre-empts what I was about to say. I am worried that there is still the possibility that our commitment to Bosnia may increase and additional troops may be drafted in. Even if that is just to police a peace settlement, its effect on our other commitments is a matter of great concern. We could not put in a large force for more than six months without drastically increasing the burden on our already overstretched troops.

The Secretary of State will say that, if that ever happens, he will try to get a guarantee that our troops would not be there for more than six months. As we know from bitter experience, it is easier to send troops in under a United Nations mandate than it is to get them out.

The real difficulty with our troop commitments, especially with the Army and with RAF support helicopters, arises from our commitment in Northern Ireland, where 19,000 troops are tied up in a massive peacekeeping operation. Of course, I fully accept that that is not under the auspices of the United Nations. While I was the responsible Minister, I found no problem with single soldiers being prepared to undertake that task, but it is hard on married soldiers who have done repeated roulement tours in Northern Ireland. We must never forget that we have six Army battalions in Northern Ireland at the moment and that there is a debate about the support needed there. That gives us an idea of the impact on an Army that now has 40 battalions.

I should be happier if there were a direct relationship between the number of terrorist incidents and the number of troops in Northern Ireland, but I can find no such correlation, so we must think hard about whether the number of troops is absolutely necessary and whether, to give ourselves more flexibility, we should consider a withdrawal programme for some of the roulement battalions. I am talking not about peremptory action but perhaps withdrawing one battalion every six or 12 months. That would give us more flexibility if we wanted to undertake peacekeeping operations elsewhere in the world.

Mr. Ken Maginnis (Fermanagh and South Tyrone): Does the right hon. Gentleman recognise that it is not just a question of relating the number of terrorist incidents to the number of security forces in Northern Ireland, but of ensuring that more terrorist incidents lack success? It we contemplate withdrawing some of the armed forces from Northern Ireland, we shall place those who remain in greater jeopardy.

Mr. Hamilton: There is no evidence to support the hon. Gentleman's view. The number of casualties among the armed forces in Northern Ireland has reduced recently. When we last withdrew troops from Northern Ireland, after the hunger strikes, there was no evidence of any rise in the number of casualties among the armed forces. As the hon. Gentleman knows, many other factors contribute to incidents of violence in Northern Ireland, not least intelligence and the capability of the security forces to disrupt terrorist action.

I suspect that the hon. Gentleman would agree that the talks that have been dragging on for such a long time have created great uncertainty, and the very fact that they are inconclusive makes the position worse. The longer we continue to talk to Dublin, the more we give the IRA the impression that with one more push we will leave altogether. At the same time, we unnerve the extremists among the Protestant paramilitaries, because they think that they are about to be taken over by Dublin. While the indecision in the talks continues, we are feeding terrorism. I would be much happier if the whole process could be brought to a conclusion one way or the other. At least that would remove the uncertainty about the future.

As I have said, the number of terrorist incidents in Northern Ireland cannot be attributed solely to troop levels. Many other factors come into play——

Dr. Charles Goodson-Wickes (Wimbledon): I am interested in many of my right hon. Friend's theories, but I have some difficulty with what I perceive to be contradictory arguments in the context of Northern Ireland. If he is suggesting that there should be a phased withdrawal of British troops from Northern Ireland, what sort of message would give to the IRA and other combatant units? I cannot reconcile that with his suggestion that with one more push the IRA might misinterpret our motives. Will my right hon. Friend clarify his argument?

Mr. Hamilton: I am happy to do that, and I will start from the beginning. Northern Ireland is our biggest peacekeeping operation, and it has led to massive overstretch in the armed forces. It leaves us little flexibility to do anything else, yet the demands to become involved in peacekeeping activities elsewhere are insatiable. Therefore, we must think hard about the area in which our commitments are heaviest—and that is Northern Ireland —if we are to have the flexibility to do anything anywhere else.

[Mr. Hamilton]

I take my hon. Friend's point that, if we were to withdraw one battalion, IRA propaganda would claim that as a victory. However, when we put two additional battalions into Northern Ireland that did not make the slightest difference—it did not persuade the IRA that our commitment was so total that it should give up its activities. I have doubts about signals and their effects. Anything that is done in Northern Ireland is claimed as a victory by one side or the other. We must be convinced that the troops there are useful, and some correlation between the number of terrorist incidents and the number of troops might help in that process.

It could be said that, if we had flooded Ulster with 100,000 British troops a long time ago, that would have sorted out the problem. However, we all know that whether the number of troops is 100,000 or 19,000 there will continue to be terrorist incidents—and there are many reasons for that. We must be quite clear that there is not a free option to continue to increase our commitment to Northern Ireland because that simply reduces our capability to do anything else.

Mr. Maginnis: I am sorry to interrupt the right hon. Gentleman again, but the message that he should be sending out from this House is that, while contemplating the possibility of reducing the number of armed forces in Northern Ireland, he does not expect that to be done unless there is some compensatory activity. For example, the courts must be more stringent in the way they deal with terrorist crimes. We need to dismantle the command and control structures, and we may have to accept internment to do so. If the right hon. Gentleman makes those points clear, the message going out from this House will be better understood

Mr. Hamilton: I take the hon. Gentleman's point, but the last time the number of troops in Northern Ireland was radically reduced, after the hunger strikes, none of those commitments was written in as compensation for that reduction. One point that worries me is that, if anything goes dramatically wrong in Northern Ireland—such as riots on the streets and the security position getting out of hand—we increase the number of troops there. That adds to our current difficulties.

We appear to be operating a ratchet system. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is aware that, when my right hon. Friend the Member for Bridgewater (Mr. King) was Defence Secretary in 1987, he sent two battalions to Northern Ireland on a temporary basis. They are still there. Those of us who have observed the position dispassionately have come to realise that it is very easy to put more troops into Northern Ireland, but extremely difficult to get them out again.

We must bear in mind the prime objective of defence expenditure, which is to keep a wide range of capabilities to deal with a threat that we cannot clearly identify. It may be a threat to our interests—such as the Gulf war, which demanded the most sophisticated defence equipment and the highest capability that the world could possibly imagine. We do not know where a threat to the security of these islands or to our interests elsewhere will come from, so it is vital that we maintain our capability.

One question that is constantly raised is our continued membership of the permanent five—the United Nations Security Council. Indeed, the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) raised it during a radio interview at lunchtime today. It is nonsense to talk about Britain leaving the permanent five. The only way to do so would be to vote ourselves off.

The greatest risk we run is that the permanent five will be diluted by becoming the permanent seven or, eventually, even the permanent 10 by the addition of other members. There is no way that we can come off the permanent five unless we ask to do so.

The Foreign Office has gently fed the paranoia that our international standing will deteriorate unless we become involved in endless peacekeeping activities throughout the world. We must nail that complete load of nonsense. From our present involvement in Cyprus and in other places, it is clear that we play a major role in peacekeeping operations. We have nothing to be ashamed of, and I wish that people would stop talking about our membership of the permanent five being under threat if we do not become involved, because that is unutterable nonsense.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): The theme of the right hon. Gentleman's speech is that we must inevitably reduce costs. There is a cost—a price tag—attached to being a member of the Security Council's permanent five. Part of that cost is our involvement around the globe. Would it not make sense to cease being a member of the permanent five and to save the cost of our involvement in those operations?

Mr. Hamilton: That is also a load of nonsense. Another member of the permanent five is China, which has never been involved in any peacekeeping operation anywhere in the world, at any time. It is nonsense to say that there is a price to pay, and I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for allowing me to say so, by raising that point in his intervention. If we wanted, we could remain a member of the permanent five and do nothing anywhere in the world other than in the United Kingdom, and remain a member until we voted ourselves off.

There is also some suggestion that our membership of NATO might be threatened. I find that particularly remarkable so shortly after the Gulf war, when we defended the interests of many European members of NATO—which were much more directly threatened than our own, in that they all depend on imported oil. Any suggestion that our membership of NATO is under threat is also complete nonsense.

Mr. Brazier: Surely the logic of my right hon. Friend's excellent points is that we need a strategic review of the possible dangers facing this country because the lack of such a review led to our defence agenda consisting largely of peacekeeping and other peacetime operations.

Mr. Hamilton: If we had undertaken such a review, intelligence could not have told us that, only days after my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State announced "Options for Change", we would be involved in the first major armoured war since 1945, with an armoured division being sent to liberate Kuwait. We were not in a position to forecast that, and we do not know the direction from which the next threat will come. That is why all talk of a review is absolute nonsense. Our intelligence is not good enough to see into a crystal ball and recognise the next threat.

5.52 pm

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): If popularity were any measure, the merits of a defence review would appear to be unassailable—if not in the mind of the right hon. Member for Epsom and Ewell (Mr. Hamilton). In recent weeks, the notion of a defence review has acquired the support of a phalanx of recently retired generals and of a parcel of Conservative Back Benchers, who produced a pamphlet published in the summer—and such a review has for some time had the support of Opposition parties.

A culture has grown up in which, faced with any difficult defence decision, there is apparently an irresistible urge to call for a defence review. We must place that demand in a proper context. A review will not provide answers to difficult questions. If anything, it will only highlight and identify questions that require to be answered.

The point was made during an intervention in the right hon. Gentleman's speech that a defence review in isolation is meaningless, because defence policies are not a political end in themselves but the means by which political objectives are sought to be achieved. Therefore, any such review must necessarily embrace the foreign policy objectives of the United Kingdom as a medium-ranking power.

The proper way to proceed is to establish our political objectives, assess the military resources necessary to meet those objectives and then allocate the financial resources necessary to provide the military means of achieving our political objectives.

The United Kingdom cannot escape a debate on the financial priority that is to be accorded to defence spending. In the aftermath of the cold war, it is right that we should consider how much we are willing to spend on defence. We must do so against the background of a fairly firm understanding of the proper approach.

Defence expenditure cannot be immune from scrutiny in a period of retrenchment in public spending. Nor is it sensible to approach a reduction in defence expenditure according to a mechanistic formula. It is sensible to make maximum use of existing political and military alliances in helping us to reach conclusions.

In that regard, I have considerable sympathy for the notion of common procurement and force specialisation, which we could most easily achieve through NATO. The right hon. Member for Epsom and Ewell sets himself against force specialisation, but when he acknowledged that financial pressures will continue, he rather undercut his own position. If one accepts that those pressures will continue, surely a point will be reached at which it will not be possible for us to provide the full range of capability.

We should explore also nuclear co-operation through a much closer political relationship with France. That appears to be occurring, because there are hints from time to time in the technical press of discussions between the British and French Governments. That is a way in which we might achieve a substantial reduction in that large component of defence expenditure accounted for by the provision of an independent nuclear deterrent.

We must use alliances to help us to manage the peace as we intended to use them if we had ever had to go to war. The right hon. Gentleman has done us all a service in recent days by showing a willingness, freed of the shackles of office, to think in radical terms. He has allowed his mind to range widely. I was not present for his lecture at the Royal United Services Institute for Defence Studies, but I am told that the heat was considerable—and that not all of it was generated by the right hon. Gentleman.

We all have an obligation to suggest ways in which we believe that it may be possible to achieve a reduction in expenditure without prejudicing the United Kingdom's interests and security. I mentioned the notion of closer nuclear co-operation with France.

We should accept that minimum nuclear deterrence—which is the doctrine that now drives our nuclear provision—can be provided at levels far below those for which the Government have apparently planned. If 192 warheads on Polaris provide an effective minimum deterrent, surely we do not need 512 warheads on the Trident system that is to replace Polaris. There is a substantial opportunity for a reduction in warheads, which must carry through to a reduction in costs.

Mr. Andrew Robathan (Blaby): The hon. and learned Gentleman makes a good point about co-operating with France, which I am sure would be an excellent way of saving a great deal of expenditure. However, the French might not be so willing to share in that expenditure. After all, they opted out of NATO many years ago and have yet to opt back in to the command structure.

Mr. Campbell: I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman stays closely in touch with such matters, but there have been extremely encouraging signs recently of a willingness on the part of the French once again to become part of the integrated military command. The Minister of State for the Armed Forces, who is in his place on the Treasury Bench, can tell the hon. Gentleman that discussions have begun between the French and British Governments on the possibility of nuclear co-operation.

The hon. Gentleman should also bear in mind the fact that, when General Morillon was sent to Yugoslavia, he was supported by the northern army group headquarters of NATO. Although this is only anecdotal evidence, General Morillon was heard going around paying considerable tribute to his NATO headquarters. It would be wrong to minimise the difficulties, but the signs are now more positive.

The Secretary of State received a rather less generous welcome than he deserved for his announcement about the tactical air-to-surface missile. The decision that he announced is entirely sensible, and one which has been argued for with considerable force by my colleagues, and also, from time to time, by some Conservatives.

The Secretary of State assisted the debate considerably in confirming that a conventional stand-off capability is to be maintained for the Royal Air Force. Some of us remember the controversy that surrounded the low-level bombing using the Tornado GR1 in the Gulf war. The need for a stand-off capability was acutely identified at that time. The House will largely be relieved to know that the Government have not abandoned something which many of us regard as extremely important.

We must ask ourselves about the political justification for continuing to station in Germany the present number of United Kingdom troops. We fought very hard for the political advantage within NATO of the command of the allied Rapid Reaction Corps, which was thought to be a reflection of the important part played by the United

[Mr. Campbell]

Kingdom in NATO. In this period of financial retrenchment, however, can the political advantage that we derive be justified against the expenditure?

Like the right hon. Member for Epsom and Ewell, we must ask what is the correct level of deployment in Northern Ireland, without in any way prejudicing overall security. It is surely right to ask what task presently carried out by the military could not just as effectively be carried out by the civilian authorities.

Unlike the right hon. Gentleman, I believe that we should question how many tank regiments the United Kingdom is likely to need in the future.

Only a few weeks ago we finally passed the European Communities (Amendment) Act 1993. I think that it will be not Calais but Maastricht that will be engraved on your heart, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Title V of the Maastricht treaty contains the proposal for a common foreign and security policy. In a period of substantial financial retrenchment, it is right to consider the extent to which acceptance of some of the principles contained in that part of the treaty would assist us to maintain the security of the United Kingdom.

What we need, above all, is a rational debate, and the present rather febrile atmosphere is singularly unhelpful. The heated atmosphere of a public expenditure round is hardly the best means of arriving at sensible and systematic decisions about the United Kingdom's long-term defence needs.

As we know, nuclear weapons occupy a substantial proportion of our budget. It is right to question that expenditure, for financial reasons. Does it place an undue burden on the budget? Some people have a superficial attraction to the argument that by renouncing nuclear weapons we could solve the problems of the defence budget at a stroke. I reject that argument, because it takes no account of committed expenditure.

We should also question nuclear weapons for more fundamental reasons. They have no intrinsic merit. The theory of their deterrence is, if I may be forgiven for putting it this way, exploded if they are ever used; their worth lies only in what they prevent.

An independent nuclear deterrent for the United Kingdom is justifiable only as an assurance policy against the possibility of any withdrawal or dilution of the United States' guarantee for Europe. The level of insurance commonly depends on the level of risk. The risk is very much diminished, so minimum deterrence is achievable at lower levels than seemed possible in the past. However, the risk has not been eliminated and, until then—if that time ever comes—we shall need to retain the insurance.

Surely we should also actively endeavour to reduce the risk through support for the non-proliferation treaty, for a comprehensive test ban treaty and even for START 3, involving the five permanent members of the Security Council. In a practical sense, we should perhaps encourage Ukraine to implement START 1 and offer as our contribution to reducing the risk an undertaking not to deploy any more warheads on Trident than those on Polaris, which it is to replace.

It is clear that those of us who support the maintenance of the independent deterrent have something of a job on our hands to make a positive and persuasive case for its retention because public opinion is rather different from even three, four or five years ago. We shall not win that important argument merely by mouthing the outdated slogans of the cold war.

We should take account of the fact that the United States' attitude towards us, at a fairly high level, is not always entirely favourable. In Congress on 28 September, Senator Dale Bumpers, a Democrat from Arkansas, said that he did not think that the United States should keep footing the bill to keep the line open for the D5 missiles, which American does not need, merely in order to accommodate the British. We must acknowledge that the United States' willingness to provide us with such weapons, which goes back to Harold Macmillan's agreement with President Kennedy, may not necessarily continue.

I deal now with British forces in United Nations operations. NATO should operate as a subcontractor to the United Nations, so that command and control remain with NATO, using established systems which have been tested by exercises and, as was recently pointed out, in the Gulf.

It is necessary to establish some principles if British forces are to be involved. Clear political objectives must be laid down by the United Nations, and agreed by NATO. There must be clear and appropriate rules of engagement laid down by NATO and agreed by the United Nations, and there must also be unambiguous exit criteria, so that one knows when one has succeeded and when it is time to go, but one also knows when one has failed and it is time to go.

Such operations should command domestic political support, which will depend on the public's perception that the cause is just. I should not like to have to stand here at the moment to try to persuade British domestic opinion that it would be right to send United Kingdom forces to Somalia.

Time is short, but I wish to mention procurement. The onus of showing why the EH101 utility helicopter should not be purchased for the support role has now passed to the Ministry of Defence. It is six years since Lord Younger announced the intention to buy 25 of them, and the intention has never been withdrawn. It is surely a matter of sadness to the House that the Dutch have recently decided to purchase the Cougar, a decision which, in the minds of some, may have been influenced by our Minstry of Defence's lack of enthusiasm for the EH101.

In relation to the Army in particular, I am left with the strong feeling that the tasks that it is most likely to face will be of low or medium intensity, whereas the balance of arms that we still propose reflects a requirement to fight a high-intensity war. Given the lack of any direct threat to the United Kingdom mainland and our inability to move large numbers of tanks and artillery because of our lack of strategic transport, we must ask whether the balance is justified.

It is clear that the decisions we take now will have irreversible consequences for a long time to come. I doubt very much whether, in defence terms, a watershed quite as acute as that which we are now experiencing has been experienced in the past. If given up now, some capabilities would never be recovered, because the pace of advance in technology is so swift. If we have a reduction here or a postponement there, the coherence of our policy will be destroyed. That is likely to be more damaging than a set of coherent, related decisions about what we believe we require. That is one reason why we need a review of the kind to which I have already referred, but there is another reason.

We owe it to the men and women of the armed forces —to whom I, along with others, pay my tribute this evening—whose lives are at risk rather more than our own, to see that they have set for them clear political objectives, that they are provided with the means to which to achieve that objectives and that they are not asked to meet commitments for which the resources that they are given prove to be inadequate.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I remind hon. Members that Madam Speaker has ruled that speeches hereafter, between 6 pm and 8 pm, should last 10 minutes and no more.

6.9 pm

Sir Geoffrey Pattie (Chertsey and Walton): I declare an interest as non-executive chairman of GEC-Marconi.

I claim that the present security situation is as dangerous as it has been at any time this century. I say that despite 1914 and 1940, because our country was heading into world wars in those years and, however uncertain the outcome, everyone knew what they had to do and who the enemy was. Now, no one can be sure who the enemy is or will be. We have had the certainty of being opposed for 40 years by the Soviet Union and the Warsaw pact. With their collapse, we now have uncertainty and new conflicts breaking out.

Before I turn to the United Kingdom and the problems and implications of that situation for us, I will say a word or two about central and eastern Europe. I have had several contacts recently with political leaders in the so-called "Visigrad Four" countries—Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia. They are all concerned about their lack of security; they have no cover. We should all agree that the present vacuum is unsatisfactory. I must ask whether the answer is to extend membership of NATO. I am not so sure.

First, the new entrants would have to be clear about and accept the mutual support concept of NATO. Unless that concept was watered down, which would nullify the strength of the alliance, Polish forces, for example, might be called into action because of a NATO-related problem in, for example, Portugal or Norway. There is a tendency to view NATO as a guarantor or as a protector without taking into account the broad mutual nature of the relationship.

Secondly, NATO must consider Russia's attitude. Any action that weakens moderate opinion in Moscow by fanning the anxieties of the military cannot be good news. Perhaps it is better to encourage the Visigrad countries to develop regional security arrangements which can be linked both to NATO and to Russia and which recognise that future conflicts are likely to be ethnically based border squabbles rather than the classic cold war frontal assault. In any event, the Visigrad countries need to rethink their defence doctrine away from their role as junior partners in the Warsaw pact towards an entirely new, perhaps citizen army, philosophy.

I now turn to the United Kingdom. My most fundamental concern is that after 40 years of NATO certainty, with widespread political support, there is an urgent need for the Ministry of Defence to sell the case and to present the arguments that will enable that support to continue. Public regard for the armed forces is higher than that for any comparable institution in our country. Their dedication and professionalism are much admired. That has been linked to an acceptance of their role and is reflected in the majority support in the country for the retention of nuclear weapons, for example.

Now that the threat to our territorial integrity is less obvious and immediate, it is necessary to emphasise that the threats to our economy and to our way of life could be mounted several thousand miles away and would not necessarily involve assaults by tanks and by aircraft on the United Kingdom. If the challenge is to prepare to make important contributions to UN forces or to NATO out-of-area forces, the challenge must be taken up and answered in full.

Our forces must be well enough balanced and trained to be able to contribute to international operations, but they must also be capable of responding in circumstances in which only the United Kingdom is involved. Clearly, such occasions will decrease as we relinquish the remnants of empire. However, I have today the gravest doubts about whether the United Kingdom is capable of mounting such an independent operation. The current overstretch is far too great and there is the usual problem of politicians failing to grasp nettles.

The present position is the biggest change of scenario since NATO began. Now, if ever, there is an unanswerable case for a review. In response to my right hon. Friend the Member for Epsom and Ewell (Mr. Hamilton), I refer not to a review within the Ministry of Defence, but to an overall review of exactly what the Government's strategic targets are. If such a review had taken place, a different view would have emerged about, for example, ballistic missile defence.

We have the curious paradox, that although the Soviet Union is no longer seen, understandably and correctly, as a direct threat to us, there is the possibility—nay, certainty —of the acquisition of such weapons by many extra countries that will not need to deliver them in the numbers or with the accuracy on which the Soviet Union used to call. At the very time that the threat could, in a sense, be said to be increasing, we are deciding to reduce our capability.

Any review would need to take a look at the widespread use that can be made of reserve forces. I am sure that there will be widespread interest in and approval of the announcement today by the Secretary of State about new roles for the reserves and about new legislation to come. However, the underlying position gives cause for serious concern.

There is a real fear that the Army board, to pay for the welcome addback of two Regular battalions, will recommend cutting several Territorial Army battalions. If that is so, it will be a mistake and extremely short-sighted. The volunteer reserves are an outstanding example of a highly motivated and professional group of people. They are extremely cost effective and can and should be used in a variety of home emergency relief roles. For every £1 million spent on defence, the country gets about six and a half times as many trained volunteer reserves as it gets regulars.

The Ministry of Defence still places undue reliance on the ex-regular reservists, many of whom are out of date, unfit, unco-operative and resistant to recall for anything less than world war. In contrast, the volunteer reserve is highly motivated and brings many relevant skills and qualifications from civilian life. To put it into context, savage cuts in the TA would be equivalent to the cost of five or six tanks. We are talking about minute sums in the

[Sir Geoffrey Pattie]

overall context of the defence budget—a tiny proportion. If the signal goes out from the House during this debate or during the next few weeks that volunteers are not welcome, they will drift away and the nation will lose a priceless asset.

All armed forces need to be properly equipped and supported if they are to do their job properly. The British armed forces buy a large proportion of their equipment from United Kingdom companies. Equally important are the working relationships and understandings between industry and Government Departments, never better exemplified than in the combined campaign on Eurofighter, the essential project which occurred at this time last year. However, as the budget pressures continue, I urge that the need for co-operation and the level of co-operation are, if anything, intensified.

One other area causes industry great concern—the reduction in military support for export sales. The United Kingdom has 20 per cent. of world markets in military sales, which is very important for the Ministry of Defence and very important in the United Kingdom balance of payments. The breadth and experience of British operations over many years has given our forces a high reputation for excellence and training and has meant that they have tested and operated equipment in a variety of climates.

Logistic support and training packages run by the Government are essential tools to aid in the winning of contracts. They are now in jeopardy because of budget cuts. The availability of military escorts was down at the recent exhibition and the cost of exhibiting was higher. The opportunities to demonstrate British equipment during Royal Naval deployments were reduced by about 70 per cent. last year. The 1992 task group, for example, deployed in the far east, will not be repeated this year or next year. The dedicated Army sales teams have been cut by 30 per cent. in the past two years. Military training places for foreign customers have been reduced and the numbers of service attachés and overseas advisers are being reduced.

The only people who rejoice at that are our competitors. To them will go the contracts, the jobs and the balance of payments advantages. That cannot be right for UK plc. What is needed is a Government-wide directive to the Ministry of Defence to provide for that essential dimension of activity. The Government should make due allowance in the MOD budget to make that possible.

The support and esteem enjoyed by the armed forces in Britain depend on a full understanding and consensus about their mission. The Government must have a full review in the light of the greatest change of circumstances in 40 years. They must consider ballistic missile defence, the correct use of the reserves, full-scale industrial co-operation and support for exports. Above all, if the Government believe that the United Kingdom can no longer sustain a Falklands-type operation on our own, the British people should be told loud and clear.

6.19 pm

Ms Rachel Squire (Dunfermline, West): I thank right hon. and hon. Members for their good wishes during my illness and on my return.

I am pleased to follow the right hon. Member for Chertsey and Walton (Sir G. Pattie) in his call for a review, for this is a debate about the defence of the realm, the security of the country, and the men and women who both rely on and provide that security. In the time available, I shall concentrate on arguing that the Government's policy is creating not security but insecurity—the insecurity of a maritime nation with its Navy cut close to the limit, and the insecurity caused by the Government's treatment of service personnel, civilian employees and the half a million people employed in the defence industry.

The House will not be surprised to learn that I shall make particular mention of Rosyth naval base and royal dockyard. In his speech to the House on 24 June this year, which, unfortunately, I missed, the Minister of State for Defence Procurement said:

"there is no connection between jobs in the royal dockyard and in the naval base at Rosyth."—[*Official Report*, 24 June 1993; Vol. 227, c. 546.]

I have news for the Minister. If there are no ships, there will be no naval base, no dockyard and no jobs. I give right hon. and hon. Members four examples of the way in which the Government are aparently failing to recognise those connections.

First, the defence estimates show that the number of destroyers and frigates has fallen from 44 in 1990 to "about 35" in current plans. The number of mine counter-measure vessels has fallen from 38 in 1990 to 25 in current plans, with a note saying that it will fall below even that figure for a period. Now we hear rumours of a further £1 billion of defence cuts. It is no wonder that the people of Britain are worried about their security. It is no wonder that the work force of Rosyth dockyard do not believe the promise of allocated surface ship work.

My second example is the work of fisheries protection. In paragraph 318 of the defence estimates, the Ministers stated that the Government had examined the possibility of contracting out fisheries protection, but had decided to continue it with the Royal Navy in 1993-94. That is hardly a secure future for the service personnel and civilians involved in fisheries protection work at Rosyth. What security is there for anyone in a contract which has less than a year to go? As the Select Committee says, the fisheries protection service should remain with the Royal Navy. The estimates say that the training and experience that it provides is invaluable, especially for young commanders.

My third example of the insecurity created by the Government's defence policy is the proposed disbandment of the Royal Naval Auxiliary Reserve. I listened with interest to what the right hon. Member for Chertsey and Walton had to say about the reserves. I recently went out on a training exercise with the Royal Naval Auxiliary Reserve at Rosyth. I was impressed by the skill, enthusiasm and commitment of those men and women volunteers. The Government should foster such qualities in the civilian community, not repay such loyalty with disbandment.

My fourth example of the insecurity which surrounds so much of the Government's defence policy is the announcement today about the complete privatisation of Rosyth and Devonport dockyards. While I welcome the early announcement of the future of the dockyards by the Minister and his assurance that they will not be sold to the same bidder, I certainly do not welcome the decision to privatise rather than to renew the present agency management arrangement. Privatisation will cause more insecurity. It will disrupt the combination of Ministry of

Defence control and commercial management. Why change it? What benefit will there be to the nation and to the defence of the realm? Privatisation will not bring jobs or value for money. It will not advance opportunities in competition and it will not improve defence or freedom.

The privatisation of the dockyards makes it even more important that they are treated equally and that they both receive contractual guarantees of work. For the Government to talk about allocation of ships to Rosyth is not enough, because the only place in the list of forced restructuring where they use the word "about" and create uncertainty is in the references to the number of frigates and destroyers. It is not enough, because, after the broken promises on submarine refitting, neither the Rosyth work force nor the Select Committee believe any promises. It is not enough because, if the Government are serious about healthy competition and avoiding a monopoly, they must give binding guarantees of 12 years' work to Rosyth dockyard to attract commercial interest from bidders.

The insecurity of the dockyard is reflected throughout the defence industry. Where there are ships, naval bases and dockyards, there is a concentration of defence industry. So, in Fife, we have 160 companies employing 14,000 people and more than another 7,000 people who are either service personnel or Ministry of Defence civilians. Since the Government's announcement about the dockyards in June, Rosyth and Devonport have lost more jobs between them than the Government said that they would lose by the end of the century. That makes it even more vital that there is a defence diversification policy.

I welcome the commitment which Ministers gave to the trade unions to enter into a dialogue with trade unions, employers and other interested parties and discuss an industrial policy. That is a crucial recognition of the need for such a policy. Again, I cite Rosyth royal dockyard, which previously had the largest training base in Scotland. It trained half of Scotland's manufacturing apprentices. This year, it has taken in a mere 25. That speaks loudly of the need for proper defence diversification, especially in institutions and organisations of which the Ministry of Defence has been the main employer for so long.

I see from the time that, although I wish to say a great deal more, I must conclude. As it is a matter of considerable public concern, I mention the presence of the decommissioned submarines at Rosyth. We want to know just what will be done with those submarines, especially if the yard is to be privatised and have a nuclear facility available. The people of the area feel strongly that, if they are not to receive the nuclear refitting work, they do not wish the decommissioned submarines to remain there.

The people of Fife, of Scotland and of Britain are concerned that the Government's defence policy consists of a ship captained by an insecure Prime Minister, steered by a questionable Chancellor and supported, below decks, by a motley collection of Treasury pen pushers and bean counters. What a crew.

The debate offers the Government the chance to make some decisions—the right ones. Instead of closures, allocations and privatisation, we want guarantees. We need a secure future for the dockyards. Instead of unemployment, we want productive work. We need a planned Navy and a full-scale defence review.

6.30 pm

Mr. David Martin (Portsmouth, South): It is a particular pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Ms Squire), whom we all respect for her courageous fight back to health. We welcome her wholeheartedly back to her place in the Chamber. She displayed her usual eloquence, although I would not agree with everything that she said.

I am tempted to range more widely in a debate on defence than in one relating to a single service. Given the time available, however, and the risk of straying into matters that have serious implications for the conduct of foreign policy, as my right hon. Friends the Members for Epsom and Ewell (Mr. Hamilton) and for Chertsey and Walton (Sir G. Pattie) have ably demonstrated, it is prudent for me to confine my remarks to matters concerning the Royal Navy and my constituency.

For centuries, Portsmouth has been at the sharp end of decisions relating to our national defence forces. While every citizen has an interest in keeping our defences at a level that properly preserves our security and protects vital British interests, many people in Portsmouth live with the immediate consequences that any changes in defence spending has on their jobs, livelihood and the prosperity of the area.

People have grown to look, with good reason, on Conservative Governments as the most trustworthy to provide the money and political support required to maintain our forces at responsible levels. They are right to distrust the Labour party which, despite the postures of the Opposition spokesman, the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark), voted at its conference to cut £7·5 billion from the defence budget. That cut is worth more than the amount spent on any particular service.

When the Liberals dare to debate defence at their conference—and it is not often—or when they happen to be present in the Chamber, they are no better than the Opposition. They have never reversed the 1990 policy commitment—it was not merely an objective, as they have since attempted to argue—to reduce our defence spending by 50 per cent. It is hard to believe that they had made such a commitment when one hears them speak about jobs and prosperity in Portsmouth, Yeovil or Devonport, but that is the nature of the beast: as many heads as a hydra.

Reasonable savings must always be made wherever possible and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State identified some today. He exploded a few myths as well. In this Parliament, however, the Government must stand against any further cuts to the defence budget which are judged as an easy option compared with confronting sensitive and overblown expenditure in other areas.

I do not believe that there is any room for further cuts in the number of frigates and destroyers. That cannot be envisaged either immediately or within a reasonable time scale when we consider their sea-going duties. I am rather worried about the new term "extended readiness". In practice it seems to mean extended unpreparedness—short of mothballs, but hung in the wardrobe all the same. I do not want to see more and more ships entering that state, but that seems to be the risk in the future.

We cannot reasonably stretch either crews or ships any further than currently envisaged and still expect to meet our commitments and keep morale as high as it should be at all times in any fighting service whether at war or in

[Mr. David Martin]

peace. Morale is the crucial ingredient, because it is much more difficult to keep morale high in times of relative peace, as at present, while ensuring that forces are constantly prepared, whenever duty calls, to fight.

Anything that my hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces can say to reassure me that a destroyer and frigate capability of about 35 ships will be properly backed up with real orders, particularly to replace the type 21 frigates as they go out of service, will be welcome to me and to my constituents. I hope that the next batch of type 23s will soon go out to tender. I agree with the findings of the Select Committee report that that will be a crucial test of the Government's intention to maintain a proper frigate force for the foreseeable future.

I also want definite advances to be made on the replacement of Fearless and Intrepid, the latter still in Portsmouth in preservation by operation—another of those terms which mean out of service—after several years. I also believe that Vosper Thornycroft has a good case in pointing out the need for further orders of Sandown class minehunters to be placed as soon as possible. I should not need to remind the House that the minehunting capability is vital to protect our Trident strategic nuclear deterrent —we have been told today that it will also have a tactical role—to guard against terrorist threats and in terms of overseas deployment. It is sensible to keep abreast of technology and to have a sufficient number of vessels to meet requirements.

In common with the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West I also want fishery protection to be retained as a service supplied by the Royal Navy. That represents a sensible use of men and ships. I seek an assurance as soon as possible that that vital service will be retained beyond the guaranteed period of 1993-94. I hope that those responsible for our affairs agree with me about the importance of that.

The future of the Royal Marine band and the training facilities for bands may not seem an important matter in comparison with some of the great issues that have been aired today, but it is not unimportant to those concerned. In response to my hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, South (Mr. Bruce), my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State spoke about the good use to which redundant MOD buildings are put if they are not put up for sale. The Royal Naval detention quarters at the naval base in Portsmouth will soon be closing. That building will be difficult to sell for civilian purposes because of its site. The Royal Marine school at Deal is likely to close on 1 April 1995 and I believe that the RNDQ building at Portsmouth could be an ideal substitute. People may ask why: the largest Royal Marine band, a 102-piece band, is based in Portsmouth, as is the Royal Marine command.

That proposal is food for thought and should be added to the other issues that I have raised—as briefly as possible in order to set a good example, if nothing else—and that food for thought should feed action on the several issues that I have raised.

6.37 pm

Mr. Bruce George (Walsall, South): The hon. Member for Portsmouth, South (Mr. Martin) spent one minute rubbishing the Labour party and nine minutes rubbishing his own Conservative party, which makes the balance just about right. I should point out to him, and to those foolish constituents who voted for him, that I studied the statement on the defence estimates made by the Labour Government in 1978 and at that time there were almost 70 frigates and destroyers. We now have 36, which, according to me, is equivalent to "about 30" rather than "about 40". Perhaps the record of the old despised Labour Government was not quite so bad as the hon. Gentleman and his many colleagues have argued.

I am sick of being taunted by Conservatives. Over the years they have attacked the Labour Government for being soft on defence. Now that they have been in government for a while, they attack the Labour party by citing various conference decisions. Defence expenditure is set to fall to 3·2 per cent. of gross domestic product, which is below the average expenditure of 4·9 per cent. under the Labour Government of 1974-79. If the hon. Member for Portsmouth, South would like to tell me what type of Navy he will be able to get for 3·2 per cent. of GDP, his constituents and many people in the Chamber will be delighted to know.

We have heard from two former Defence Ministers who have now entered the ready reserve. The Minister of State for the Armed Forces, the hon. Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley), can lick his lips in the knowledge that there is life after the death of dismissal or resignation. No doubt a nice little consultancy or directorship is awaiting him; perhaps he should get his bid in early.

The right hon. Member for Epsom and Ewell (Mr. Hamilton) went off at a gallop, as one would expect bearing in mind the constituency he represents. The hon. Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier) said that he had made some good points in the final two minutes of his speech; considering it lasted 15 minutes, that is about par for the course. The right hon. Member for Epsom and Ewell set an example that other Ministers of Defence should follow. They should all have a truth sabbatical; in other words, they should disappear to the Back Benches and tell the House what they manifestly failed to do when at the Dispatch Box.

If the right hon. Gentleman had had the gall to tell the people of Northern Ireland that he wanted to reduce the Army in the province by one infantry battalion per six months, he might not have been welcome in Northern Ireland. He did not seem to know what he wanted British forces for. Like Frederick the Great, he has a wonderful Army but he does not want it to serve out of the area. He does not want it to serve on behalf of the United Nations, and he does not want it to serve in the United Kingdom. Why have armed forces at all? Let us hire them all out to Group 4 and dispense completely with the Army, the RAF and the Navy.

When the right hon. Gentleman talked about overstretch, I thought, "What an asset Archie would have been on the Defence Committee when we were arguing about that subject." He was the Minister who regularly gave the Committee one bland statement after another about how it would be all right on the night. We would have adequate forces, he said; the Committee was exaggerating the threat to British forces and we could certainly mount another operation such as the Gulf. The right hon. Gentleman should re-read those statements; he may be rather amused.

Politics is about myth, and myths rarely correspond to reality. We have seen many myths bite the dust: the Conservative party was the party of economic efficiency,

of financial planning, of the family, the party in whose hands the national health service is safe, the party of law and order. The final myth to bite the dust is that the Conservative party is the party of defence.

The Government are to reduce defence expenditure to 3·2 per cent. of GDP and that has been approved by Conservative Members. The cuts of £1 billion that are apparently to be announced above the "Options for Change" reductions—those were bad enough—do not reach the figure of 3·2 per cent. Conservative Members who are bleating now about a reduction from 4 per cent. to perhaps 3·7 per cent. will experience more heartache before the Government achieve their target of 3·2 per cent.

I have always wondered how the party of appeasement, of Munich, of Suez, of Duncan Sandys and of Blue Streak and Blue Steel has managed to retain its reputation as the party of defence. Perhaps the reductions that they are about to make will finally nail that lie. It is amazing how the Conservatives are always reluctant to use the "defence review" term. There have been defence reviews before; in 1957 under Duncan Sandys, that was a total disaster, and in 1981 under Sir John Nott. "Options for Change" was another total disaster.

Perhaps the Government, as many Conservative Members have said, should have a defence review. It would not result in people being turned into stone or into salt. It is a sensible thing to do. Let us recognise that resources are limited, that threats and risks are changing, and let us bring a degree of congruence so that the resources available and the forces at our disposal are matched with the risks and responsibilities. A defence review should not be done by stealth. "Options for Change" was obsessively secretive, and experience has shown it to be ludicrous anyway.

I am impressed by what has taken place in Scandinavia on defence matters. The parties in what is called the defence agreement participate in a study commission consisting of Members of Parliament, Ministers, shadow Ministers and outside experts. They produce a report that is adhered to by all parties. We should bring some consensus back into security matters and try to dispense with some of the rhetoric and the obnoxious politics which I myself have been temporarily a party to.

I have been an hon. Member for 20 years and, throughout that time, I have been taunted by Conservative Members on defence matters. However, if we look back to the Labour Government in 1979, we see that Britain had a merchant marine. We had 70 frigates and destroyers, and almost 30 submarines. The latter total is now to go down to 12, and the Ministry is unashamedly hawking around four Upholder submarines. How does one hawk around four submarines? Does one stand on a street corner, whispering, "Do you want to buy a cheap submarine?"

In this turbulent world, we require more than 12 submarines, and that was recommended by the Defence Committee. I would urge hon. Members to read the Committee report carefully, and with more seriousness than they would read any Government defence statement. The report will give a greater understanding of the Committee Members' agreement that the way in which the Ministry of Defence has operated is subject to criticism.

Ministers lectured Committee Members, and we trained our guns on the Secretary of State in two reports that have been produced today. Like some Nintendo character, the Secretary of State jumped over us. Far from being in front of us, he was standing behind us. He was hiding behind us, hoping that the Defence Committee would do the dirty work with his chums in the Treasury.

Clearly, defence expenditure is going down. We are living in a different world, from that of four or five years ago. But it is still a dangerous world, and if defence expenditures are to be cut, they should be cut rationally. The cuts should not be sporadic, or episodic responses to external economic pressures. That is the way that Governments—and not just the present Government—have operated. The results are disjointed politics which mean that our forces cannot do the job with which we entrust them. How close we were during the Gulf war to having that salami-slicing tactic ruthlessly exposed.

If defence expenditure is to be cut, let it be done honestly. Let it be done to ensure that our forces retain adequate weaponry to meet their commitments. I hope that there will be agreement on the matter. Perhaps some of the dissent that has manifested itself in House of Commons politics during the past 10 years will be reversed. We must have full faith in our armed forces and give them the resources that they require. I believe that they are not getting those resources under the present Government.

6.47 pm

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): It seemed that a consensus was emerging in the House until the hon. Member for Walsall, South (Mr. George) addressed hon. Members.

In his recollections of 1978, the hon. Gentleman seems to have completely forgotten what has happened since 1978. Since then, the Conservative Government have taken the decision—against the wishes of the Opposition—to deploy cruise. The Government have also taken the decision to deploy Trident. The combination of those facts and the determination of the other western countries to see of the Communist threat has led to the changes that have come about in the former Soviet Union and in eastern Europe. If that is not a great defence success—it was achieved without a single shot being fired—I do not know what is.

Credit for those achievements must be laid fairly and squarely at the door of the present Government. The Conservative party, and not the Labour party, has the reputation of being ready to defend the country and ready to spend whatever money is necessary to do so.

I welcome the fact that we live in a different world and that we can now act more flexibly and look to divert money into other areas of expenditure. I must congratulate my hon. Friends at the Ministry of Defence on ensuring that the Treasury's demand for a £3 billion cut in Royal Navy expenditure has been kept to £1 billion.

During the past year, I have spent time with the Royal Navy as part of the armed forces parliamentary scheme. I was sorry that the hon. Member for Dunfermline, West (Ms Squire) was unable to join me, as she was also involved in much of the scheme. I learned a great deal from that experience and I wish to share some of that with the House tonight. We have heard in the debate and elsewhere much about the overstretch now being faced by the Army. The Royal Navy is also facing a significant overstretch in its resources.

I welcome the emphasis on mobility and flexibility in the White Paper, but that does not seem to be reflected in what is presently happening to the Navy.

[Mr. Tim Devlin]

The Royal Navy is a unique service: it can poise and loiter in international waters; it does not require overflight or basing rights; and it can pose a real and effective threat of blockading, policing or direct intervention, as dictated by its political masters. In particular, the aircraft carriers represent a wholly self-contained fighting capability, with their own fuel, ammunition, stores and equipment. They have demonstrated that most capably in the Adriatic, where they were able to deploy north or south as required. In August and September, the Sea Harriers embarked on Invincible met every single one of nearly 200 operational sorties with which they were tasked.

The carriers can be augmented with additional aircraft from the United Kingdom in a matter of hours—again, without the need to negotiate overflights, which can be particularly difficult for armed aircraft. The RAF apparently found overflight approval hard to come by even in the Adriatic—even in NATO's backyard.

I warmly welcome the logic of Options 2. I welcome the order for the new helicopter ship—although my worries in that regard were not helped by my reading of the brief prepared for Conservative Members, which refers to the new helicopter carrier as a replacement for HMS Fearless and HMS Intrepid. I hope that that is an inaccuracy. Having been on an exercise on Intrepid recently, I know just how old the ship is, but just how effective a weapon it can be. It would be even more effective if we could build a brand new one in the north of England or in Scotland. We should then have a unique facility, giving us flexibility to augment our new role in the air mobile brigade as and when that was necessary.

The role of the royal naval forces in various conflicts from the Falklands to the Gulf war is relatively well known. Less well known is the 365-days-a-year role that they play as a British presence providing stability and influence, including commercial and trade influence, in areas of the world determined by the Government. The Royal Navy has had a presence in the Persian gulf for the past 13 years, which today comprises two destroyers or frigates assigned to the Armilla patrol throughout the year. The Navy has had a destroyer or frigate plus tanker continuously on station in the south Atlantic since 1982 and in the West Indies for at least the past 20 years.

I recently had the privilege of spending a week on HMS Cumberland in the West Indies—[HON. MEMBERS: "Lucky you"]—during which time, I assure my hon. Friends, there was a tropical storm and no sunshine whatever. That ship fulfils not only its traditional role of providing gunfire support to Belize but other roles in close co-operation with the Americans, from which we gain valuable operational experience for use against drug runners, and valuable information. I should very much like that role to be enhanced, possibly with a second ship.

Ships have also been assigned to the standing NATO forces in the Atlantic and the channel for at least the past 20 years, and in the past 12 months that commitment has been increased to full 365-days-a-year coverage. Since January this year, a carrier and two escorts have been in the Adriatic and a further ship has been assigned to the new standing naval force in the Mediterranean.

In the past four years, the number of ships has fallen from more than 50 to about 35, as announced in March this year. Under Options 1, we would perhaps have gone down to 38 ships, although with 10 out of service at any one time we should in fact have had around 28. Of the 35 ships that we are now discussing, one is permanently at extended readiness and approximately a further 10 are in refit, emerging from refit or undergoing development or new build trials. That means that, to meet the latest level of tasking, the operationally available ships are deployed to directed tasks for up to three cycles in succession.

Allowing for passage time to and from the area of deployment, that means that more than 50 per cent. of individual ship and people time is now committed. The Royal Navy is now therefore being stretched to the elastic limit and separation and turbulence are at abnormally high levels. That compares with the Army—about which we have heard so much—complaining about one deployment of six months every two years.

If we are to search for economies, there are two areas in which I think that we could make them within the defence budget. First, why does the RAF continue to fly half-empty VC10s to various parts of the globe, the service personnel on board mixing with a large collection of what appear to be cardboard boxes? All those passengers and all that freight could be shifted much more inexpensively as commercial traffic. I recently flew back from Washington on a VC10. Apparently the Navy budget picked up the tab for the journey from Belize to Miami and from Miami to Washington, even though it would have been much cheaper to fly us direct from Belize to Miami and from Miami home on a commercial airline.

It struck me as odd that the forces were paying for service personnel from Belize to fly from Miami to Washington and then to stay overnight in Washington when that personnel could simply have met the direct Virgin Atlantic flight from Miami. Why cannot we privatise the facility completely and get Thomas Cook to secure us a large block booking to take all our troops, sailors and freight all over the world?

Secondly, may I ask about our difficulties in providing spares? Spares insufficiency is now resulting in our ships having to go out of the line for extended periods, which cuts into the training programme. We have a large number of half-trained pilots waiting for helicopter spares to be available so that they can continue and finish their training.

There is no slack whatever in the Navy's programme. The dockyard refit extensions have had a domino effect on the whole Navy's programme, which has further aggravated the regime. Furthermore, although warfare skills pertinent to the area of deployment are finely honed, some warfare disciplines now cannot be sustained to the required standards if ships and other machinery are not available for training.

The Royal Navy is operationally lean and mean. It has led the way in the civilianisation and contractorisation of large sections of business in the support areas. There is, however, one respect in which it has not been pruned back, and that is among the higher levels of staff. The entire naval staff at the marine Ministry in France is about the same size as that of the Flag Officer (Naval Aviation) in this country. Why are so many people working in Whitehall when cuts are being sent down the line to facilities such as mine in Eaglescliffe?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order.

6.56 pm

Mr. John Spellar (Warley, West): My hon. Friend the Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) described the speech of the Secretary of State as lacking in content. It was also breathtakingly lacking in any analysis of our strategic and therefore of our defence needs.

I had hoped that when the Secretary of State referred to Russia and Bosnia he would broaden the debate to consider the interdependence of political and defence issues. I had also hoped that some consideration would be given to the interlocking relationship between military requirements and their supplier industries. Yet all that we had was the standard response that we should leave it to the companies —with not even an inkling of an understanding of the role of Government in managing the transition. The Government are fond of bringing supermarket expertise into their affairs. I think that it is fair to say that Marks and Spencer and Sainsbury's have a much deeper understanding of the need to maintain their supplier base than the Government have shown in defence matters.

I realise that the Government may feel to some extent constrained by ideology from taking the position that we might want them to with regard to their suppliers. But what ideological bar is it that constrains them from addressing the wider global issues? The nearest the Minister came to doing that was when he talked about the Labour party conference. One gets the impression that the Government take our conference far more seriously than they take the Tory party conference—and who can blame them?

Instead of moving to an overview, therefore, we moved to a housekeeping report that sounded like a rerun of the debates that the Secretary of State has been having with the Treasury. Frankly, the right hon. and learned Gentleman seemed to be addressing the Chief Secretary to the Treasury rather than the House. "There has been a cut here and a cut there, a small change here and a small change there," he said. Given the dramatic changes that have been taking place around the world, it is quite incredible that we did not hear of some wider vision—perhaps even going back to the basic Clausewitz dictum that war is the continuation of diplomacy by other means.

Our defence configuration is or should be dependent on our assessment of our strategic means. Let me give an example. My hon. Friend the Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark), the shadow spokesman on defence, quoted Senator Lugar's dictum that

"NATO is either out of area or out of business."

With all the implications that that has for our defence configuration and our material requirements, I should have thought that the Secretary of State would, at the very least, have mentioned that. There was no mention at all. Nor did he mention the implications of our continuing commitments in Northern Ireland, the Falkland Islands or even the uncertain situation in Belize, which was mentioned by the hon. Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin), where we may have to rethink our withdrawal because of the attitude of the Guatemalan Government. There was no mention of that.

Nor indeed was there any mention of our role in the United Nations—whether we can sustain our position in the Security Council. It would have been interesting to know how the Government envisage the future organisation of United Nations peacekeeping forces. What commitment is Britain prepared to make in respect of those forces? Do we, for example, envisage a permanent structure, or are we considering ad hoc arrangements, sometimes through NATO, sometimes through temporary arrangements, even possibly with NATO-dedicated forces being temporarily detached, separated from their NATO commitment, and in that instance not under NATO jurisdiction?

Those issues are being discussed in the international defence community, but they were not discussed here this evening. All those questions have considerable implications for our armed forces, but the Secretary of State did not see fit to discuss them. Equally, there is considerable discussion of the future structure of NATO—other speakers have mentioned that. Should membership be widened to include countries in central Europe? What will the reaction of Russia be to that, and why do we seem to be going much more slowly than we were?

We must also reconsider the resource implications. What troops are we prepared to commit to such a realignment? How do our current proposals fit into that? What effective operational role do the Government envisage for the Western European Union, and what are the resource implications? Those matters are being discussed, but they have not been discussed here this evening.

What about the current attitude towards NATO of the new Administration in Washington? Frankly, I am astonished that, on a day when Secretary of State Christopher says that the special relationship is dead and Asia is more important than western Europe, and when President Clinton has been criticising our role in Bosnia, we do not even have a sign whether the Government have considered the question that is certainly being posed in Washington in respect of Bosnia, "You may not care about Bosnia, but do you care about NATO?"

I do not support military intervention in Bosnia—I have made that clear in previous interventions in the House—but I should have liked to see some sign from the Secretary of State that he had given that matter some thought and was prepared to lay out the options which could be considered by the House in our debate. But that has, after all, characterised his approach throughout.

I think that we should be fair and say that we do not underestimate the difficulties that the Defence Secretary is experiencing as he attempts to get out of the problems that have been created by the crisis at the Treasury. Any Secretary of State for Defence would be facing those. However, he is compounding his problems, I believe, by not being more open about them.

The House would be far more sympathetic to a Minister who said, "We recognise that resources do not match up to our current commitments, but until we have the budget deficit under control we have to take calculated risks". That is not an especially happy position to be in. It is certainly not a happy position for our armed forces, potentially facing very difficult circumstances. It would, however, be a far more honest approach to the House and it would enable us to have a proper debate.

By contrast, an element of party political argument kept creeping into the Secretary of State's speech. That may all have been good stuff in the 1983 and 1987 elections and in that period, but given the serious difficulties that we face now, in a rapidly changing world, frankly I think that it is an outdated approach. Many hon. Members on both sides of the House recognise that.

Let us consider where we spend the money that the Treasury will make available. With equipment, there have always been trade-offs on sourcing, location of expertise

[Mr. John Spellar]

and manufacturing. My hon. Friend dealt with the Government's deficiencies on defence diversification very adequately. However, I shall move away from the bangs and whistles of high-tech equipment and consider whether the MOD is looking after British interests elsewhere.

The experience with the new MOD office at Bristol, which has been mentioned in the debate, would suggest not. There the MOD ignored British companies and gave the £14 million cladding contract to a Swiss firm. Indeed, the job was tendered without a single British contractor being allowed on the list. I shall not discuss whether, with all the cuts facing the military, we need that new procurement office in Bristol. It is an extraordinary situation.

Peter Rogers, construction director of Stanhope, said —I think it sums up the views of many people in the building industry—

"It is a huge pity—no other country would do it".

Can hon. Members imagine the French, German, Italian or any other European Governments taking such a position with regard to their own suppliers? It is no wonder that the Jubilee line seems to be going the same way.

When the Minister replies I hope that we get something better than the MOD statement to the press on the subject —that they followed all the procedures correctly. What a firm defence of British interests! I hope that the Minister will not rely on misrepresenting some of the reports on that industry. It may seem only a small contract, but it is symptomatic of an approach that needs to be rooted out of the Ministry.

We must recognise that morale among defence contractors, suppliers and much of the military has been severely weakened by the uncertainty that has been facing them and by the cuts that have affected them. Both groups have served this country magnificently and, frankly, they deserve better. They deserve what has been mentioned by hon. Members on both sides of the House; a proper review of our defence priorities; a proper review of our commitments; a review of what we can pay for; and the needs that those will bring about. Not only did the Secretary of State not know the answer; frankly, he did not even understand the question, as the statement demonstrated.

7.5 pm

Mr. Andrew Hargreaves (Birmingham, Hall Green): I think it fair to say that some consensus has evolved on both sides of the Chamber about several issues that have been discussed since the Secretary of State made his statement.

Nevertheless, I should like to thank my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for a number of meetings that he held with myself and other colleagues about several defence topics that concern us. He has spent a great deal of time trying to explain the strategy and the difficulties that he faces. However, I wish to put it on record that I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill), who spelt out in no uncertain terms his belief that the defence of the realm was the most important obligation of any Government. Furthermore, that obligation is central to Conservative philosophy and the Conservative party takes it seriously. As my hon. Friend rightly pointed out, there is little point in having social security if one cannot ensure national security.

There comes a time, therefore, when those Conservative Members who have concerns about defence have to tell my right hon. and learned Friend that he is in danger of losing credibility when he suggests that further cuts can be made in a piecemeal fashion from the defence budget—especially if those cuts amount to yet another £1 billion.

Further, no Conservative Member and few Opposition Members would deny that when "Options for Change" was devised there was an agreement, by and large, among many people that times had changed and that we needed a new strategy for defence in the next decade. It was realistic, therefore, to consider what we could do to change the balance, and perhaps the size, of our forces if there was no longer a threat from the Soviet Union.

Since "Options for Change" was announced, however, the commitments and the threats that we face have patently changed. Far from being safer, it is, if anything, a more dangerous and complicated world for which we have to devise a defence strategy. Therefore, Conservative Members would argue that our defence commitments are likely to increase, not to decrease. When some of us called for a review of defence and foreign policy commitments, it was with the idea of recognising that defence commitments were likely to increase with those increased and more complicated threats; and that more defence involvement would probably come with increasingly active foreign policy commitments.

For example, troops may need to be deployed in a number of different spheres which were not planned, and for which no contingent supplies or plans were made during "Options for Change". Indeed I would go further. It is my view that the chiefs of staff who discussed "Options for Change" with the Secretary of State at the time were given a firm undertaking that, if there were further commitments than those that were obvious at the time, "Options for Change" would be reviewed.

However, were the Secretary of State, even now, to look carefully again at those commitments, he could only agree that the position has become more complicated, there are further commitments and therefore there will have to be a further review of "Options for Change". Whether those further commitments are in Bosnia, the Gulf, on the safe-havens policy, in Cambodia or even Northern Ireland in the future, they have led and are leading to serious overstretch and the damaging of morale both within the forces—not only in the Army but, as my hon. Friend the Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin) said, in the Navy —and, as we run down our procurement programme, within the defence industry.

A number of my colleagues share my concern that the White Paper simply does not address those increased commitments. We must recognise that defence spending cannot be reduced further. Indeed, we might have to recognise that, in certain circumstances in the future, it will have to increase and, with that in mind—I should not like it to happen at present—we must also recognise that France has decided that that time has come. France is increasing its defence budget by 3·6 per cent. and its equipment budget by 5 per cent.

How does my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State justify Britain's continuous decrease in the defence budget as against France's recognition—by the increase in its defence budget—of a more complicated world and a variation in threats posed to western nations?

The Government's strategy does not add up, and the White Paper that they have produced does not address the

problem. I look forward to my hon. Friends on the Front Bench persuading Conservative Members with these concerns that there will be a more co-ordinated attempt to match equipment and men within the forces as well as the amount of money allocated to the defence budget with the likely commitments made for those forces in the foreseeable future. We cannot foresee everything, but we can plan appropriately and wisely. Recent planning has not been correct and insufficient emphasis has been placed on it within the White Paper. I look forward to listening to my hon. Friends on the Front Bench to see whether they can persuade me that the matter will be dealt with in the weeks ahead and further changes made.

7.12 pm

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): As a former defence Whip who, with his Government counterpart, regularly had to march Members into the Lobby almost at bayonet point to participate in defence debates, I greet the imposition of the ten-minute rule with mixed feelings. It is nice to know that more Members are taking an active interest in defence, but it is galling to be restricted by the ten-minute rule, so I must make progress quickly.

First, may I register with the Minister my pleasure at learning today—I have not yet been informed officially but have, as ever in this place, learnt from the press—that the contract for electronic aerial warfare training has been awarded to the company that has said that it will operate from Teesside international airport. I am pleased, because it will bring a number of jobs to Cleveland and the north-east generally. I only hope that it will go some way towards removing the resentment caused by the non-delivery of the jobs promised with the quality assurance facility that was due to move from Woolwich. If the company goes on to win the contracts for in-flight refuelling, training and target towing, it may remove even more resentment in the future. Anyway, I shall present such a case.

It will surprise no one to learn that, as a member of the North Atlantic Assembly and the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe's parliamentary body, I ensure that our fellow delegates from the emerging nations of eastern Europe know that I am an unrepentant socialist. Furthermore, I am an unreconstructed unilateral nuclear disarmer and a lifelong peace campaigner.

When I first heard the term "peace dividend", my heart leapt with great joy because I thought that it was a wonderful phrase and concept and that we would have a lot of fun with it. Frankly, we have had a little too much fun. I should now like to get my hands on the individual who first coined the phrase, because, male or female, young or old, black or white, I should like to strangle that person.

There was a great burst of enthusiasm at the time, but, as the hon. Member for Birmingham, Hall Green (Mr. Hargreaves) and others have said, the world and the nature of the threat have changed. The threat is much less in degree but much more pressing in terms of deployment and distribution. We do not know from which direction it will come or what form its manifestations will take.

If we put ourselves forward as leaders of a rapid reaction force within or outside the alliance, we must have rapid reaction provision not only in equipment and planning but in rapid reaction politicians. The 1993 estimates do not have that stamp of rapid reaction authority or thinking. They are totally imprisoned in old-fashioned concepts and out-of-date forms of preparation. We must forget about Trident.

I was astounded to discover today that the tactical air-to-surface missile is now the sole nuclear vehicle. I do not know how one explains that. To talk about replacing it, in a sub-strategic role, with a single warhead on a Trident missile seems to be an expensive way of delivering a knock-out blow. If the submarines are not at sea at the time, where will we fire it from? Devonport, Rosyth or Faslane? We shall give Devonport the privilege in the hope that it will reach the target.

The Treasury is exploiting the tacky phrase "peace dividend" and jumping on the bandwagon, hoping that no one will notice when it talks about reducing the defence budget by billions of pounds in the future. The whole concept is patently mad.

If we are to be the leaders within Europe and the alliance in terms of peacekeeping, may I point out that our military personnel have a good training ground in Northern Ireland, where they are trained not only for high-intensity exchange but for more sophisticated forms of political assessment. Sir John Walters, SACEUR No. 2, calls it the corporals' war. By that he means that a young man in charge of a section of eight or 10 men in a rural or urban area and faced with a real threat has no opportunity to refer back to the brigadier or colonel and ask for instruction, but must make an assessment there and then within seconds, deploy his lads and tell them exactly what to do.

It is a corporals' war. Such experience is precious and has stood our lads—and women—in good stead in Bosnia. Sadly, our allies do not have such experience. It is sad in one sense but fortunate in another. Perhaps we can defray to some extent our defence expenditure by offering that experience and training to some of our allies, at least within NATO. I do not suggest that we send the Bundeswehr to Belfast, but we could give it some in-tandem tranining with some of our unites that have worked there.

Year after year, Opposition Members have called for a defence review based on an assessment of foreign policy, commitment and liability. Now, in view of the £1 billion year-on-year cut that is in offing, and our projected role as leader of the rapid reaction cops within the alliance, we must be honest with ourselves and say that we cannot carry out that task without such a review. Either we undertake a review that starts with a full assessment by the Foreign Secretary, followed up by an analysis by the Defence Secretary, or we forget about the pretence that we have a leading role to play. We cannot have it both ways. Let us start again and be honest with one another.

7.20 pm

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): I am delighted to see the hon. Member for Walsall, South (Mr. George) in his seat below the Gangway. Would that he had been sitting above the Gangway as a shadow Minister these many years. He is one of the very few Opposition Members whose claim to be a champion of the defence of the realm stands up to examination. The Labour party talks as though it is the party of defence; that is about as convincing as its claim to be the party of law and order.

Mr. Frank Cook: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. For the record, let met point out that the Labour party sends its sons and daughters to fight for this country just like any other party.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order for me, and the hon. Gentleman knows it.

Mr. Couchman: I hope, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that you will add that time to my allotted 10 minutes.

I welcome my right hon. and learned Friend's comments about our troops in Bosnia, and pay tribute to the enormous courage and skilful professionalism that they have applied to their tasks. Members of the Corps of Royal Engineers have been continuously among the troops in Bosnia, and a new squadron from 38 Regiment will be sent to replace the existing squadron shortly.

Those Royal Engineers will be trained, and continue to be trained, in my constituency. I was delighted to receive a letter on 21 July from my hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces informing me that the only centre for training Royal Engineers in the future will be at Brompton barracks in Chatham in my constituency. It is as well that we in the Medway towns continue to take pride in the Royal Engineers towns because, sadly, the forces for which those towns have been a base for many years are getting fewer and fewer.

When I made my maiden speech in the House 10 years ago, it was to make a valedictory statement about the closure of Her Majesty's Royal Navy base and dockyard at Chatham; it was with great dismay that I heard my right hon. and learned Friend tell me today that the proposals contained in the consultation paper "The Future of Britain's Naval Reserve Forces", which he issued in June, were to be implemented and firmed up. He said that he had received much support for his proposals in that paper; I must tell him that there has been no support whatsoever in the Medway towns that I represent.

As a result of that implementation, with great sadness we shall see the closure of HMS Wildfire, which is the remaining link of the Medway towns with the Royal Navy. We had hoped that my right hon. and learned Friend would tell us that he had given consideration to the consultation exercise and had changed his mind about which units would close and which units would continue as Royal Naval Reserve centres, and that HMS Wildfire would be spared.

That is not to be, and it is therefore beyond any words of mine to persuade my right hon. and learned Friend to change his mind and convince him that he would get a very much better geographical balance by retaining RNR Northwood and RNR HMS Wildfire as the two centres for the Royal Naval Reserve in the south-east.

The Royal Naval Reserve has a very fine and active unit in Gillingham, based in what was the old apprentices' school for the Navy, HMS Collingwood. That building will not really become available for disposal, because it is situated between married quarters for the Royal School of Military Engineering, and no savings will be possible there.

Recruiting for the RNR unit HMS Wildfire has always been good. The jobs and training that it carries out are to continue for the Royal Navy Reserve, and I bitterly regret the decision that has been taken: it will mean the closure of that unit and the Royal Naval Auxiliary unit which also occupies Collingwood.

We in the Medway towns shall continue to support and cherish the Royal Navy. I fear however, that the volunteers now based at HMS Wildfire will not find it easy to transfer their training to HMS President in London. HMS President occupies property on the north side of the river, and it will be difficult for people from my area to get there for training evenings or weekends.

The Medway towns depend for much of their employment not only on direct military personnel: they also have a substantial interest in the employment provided by our defence industries—including GEC-Marconi Avionics, which is the biggest employer in the towns, notwithstanding the substantial cuts of the past few years. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement will be able tomorrow to outline some hopeful procurement decisions that have been reached.

We have received very little reassurance from my right hon. and learned Friend's opening remarks about the helicopter programme or the replacement for the Hercules. I urge my hon. Friend to give some assurances tomorrow that the long overdue decision on the EH101 support helicopter is about to be taken, and that he is looking with greater urgency at the replacement of the Hercules with, perhaps, the C-130J Hercules aircraft. I hope that the attack helicopter for the Army, which is long overdue, will be speeded up and orders placed in the near future.

I was pleased to read reports in the press over the weekend that suggested that the Bell-GEC Cobra Venom is becoming a more attractive option than the Apache, because it is a great deal cheaper. I am sure that that will be taken into account during these difficult days.

It is always tempting to shy at almost every issue of defence. There can be few times when more issues have needed to be discussed.

A lady constituent of mine has suffered a marriage breakdown; I should like my hon. Friend the Minister for the Armed Forces to assure me that the Ministry of Defence will take more cognisance of the incidence of marital breakdowns within the services than has been shown in the case of my constituent.

The difficulties have arisen as a result of the over-strict and inflexible rules regarding, for instance, baggage that is sent to foreign postings and comes back, and the schooling of children of service personnel who are stationed overseas. I hope that, in the near future, those matters will be considered by the Ministry of Defence, as it has caused a great deal of disquiet and discomfort to my constituent. I believe that the time has long since passed for the Ministry of Defence to cease to look at ladies who marry service personnel as camp followers, which still seems to be in vogue.

With that, I should like to hand over to someone else, because we all have a lot to say on many issues.

7.31 pm

Mr. Calum Macdonald (Western Isles): Like many others who have spoken so far in the debate, I too, deplore the obvious hysteria and panic that is surrounding Government decisions on an issue as vital as defence. I deplore it because of the impact on the defence of the realm, but also because of the impact that it has on many of our constituents who now face uncertainty and a great deal of worry about their futures—nowhere more so than in my constituency, where a question mark hangs over the Royal Artillery testing and training range at Balivanich.

I know that the Minister for Defence Procurement visited the range recently and has not yet reached a decision about the review of the valuation ranges.

However, if a decision has been reached to downgrade the range or wind it down, it will be bitterly received by my constituents and throughout Scotland. Nowhere is more dependent economically on the work and the income that the base provides, not only in terms of direct, or even indirect, employment, but also in terms of sustaining the communications, ferries and the air networks that service those southern isles.

The Minister may further be aware that, when the range was introduced in the 1950s, it caused great social dislocation, as he might well imagine, given the nature of the community there at that time. There was much resistance there at the time to the installation of a major military base. However, once the base was installed, the local community began to work with it willingly and harmoniously. After having gone through that process, the local community is now faced with another prospect of major economic and social dislocation. I hope that that is something that the Minister will not contemplate.

I also agree with what was said earlier about the need for a proper defence review. I particularly agreed with what the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) said about the need to conduct the review in a European perspective.

It is absurd that the member states of the European Community should conduct unilateral cuts in the defence forces, and try to salami-cut their existing forces to fit budget restraints, when they could much more sensibly sit around a table and try to work out how best to pool their resources to achieve a much more effective defence outcome. After all, the challenges that we shall face in the future are challenges that we shall share together, right across the Community, particularly after the ratification of the Maastricht treaty. That should be taken into account in our defence planning.

I agreed with the Secretary of State that defence forces have an important role in future, and that now is perhaps a more dangerous period than any since the 1950s. He was right about the consequences had the attempted fascist putsch in Moscow of a couple of weeks ago succeeded. It would have meant the rearming of many states now bordering Russia—Poland, Ukraine and the Baltic states, and probably Romania as well. It would quite probably have led to war before the end of the century.

The fact that that putsch came so close to success shows us the importance of maintaining our defence forces, not just in the United Kingdom but in Europe as well. The dangers are not only potential. War is already taking place in Europe, in the Balkans. I disagree strongly with the claim by the Secretary of State that the policy of the United Nations and the European Community is a success. On the contrary. I regard it as almost a complete failure, and in many respects a sham.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, North-West (Mr. Wicks) said during the Secretary of State's speech, he and I, and my hon. Friend the Member for Vauxhall (Ms Hoey), visited Sarajevo for three days last week. We were immensely disturbed by what we found there. Far from humanitarian aid getting through to the people of Sarajevo, they are getting only 200 to 300 g of food per person per day, which is only half of what the United Nations considers the minimum survival ration. Other enclaves such as Maglaj have received no aid whatever for three months. The first day that we were there, 150 shells fell on Sarajevo, killing two people and wounding seven.

I ask the Minister and the Secretary of State to consider what it would be like if 150 IRA bombs were going off in the centre of London every day, and whether he would have the temerity to call it a United Nations-protected safe area. This weekend, 300 shells fell in one day, and 10 civilians were killed. An important point is that each one of the shells is counted coming out of the Serbian gun barrels by United Nations monitors attached to Serbian forces for that purpose. They are counted out, they land in Sarajevo, they kill civilians; yet nothing is done to prevent it.

I believe that it is possible for the United Nations to do much more to help Sarajevo and Bosnia. It is not a question of resources; it is a question of will. The Government rightly consider it worth while to spend £1·5 billion a year and station 18,500 soldiers in Northern Ireland to ensure that terrorism does not succeed there. A similar commitment by the Governments of the EC and the United States, acting together through NATO, would immediately transform the situation in Bosnia and would be fully justified.

It is as important for Europe that violence and terror do not succeed in the Balkans as it is for Britain in Northern Ireland. Nor can I any longer accept the excuse from Ministers that the military advice has been uniformly against any such intervention. I have it on reliable authority that two successive chairmen of the military committee of NATO have recommended and urged a military intervention by NATO in Bosnia. General Eyde, who was chairman of NATO's military committee, before the present incumbent, General Vincent, recommended early last year that 40,000 troops be put into Bosnia to prevent the situation from exploding.

A major upgrade in the airlift to Sarajevo is urgently required. Again, there is no question of capacity to do that, only of willingness. A comparison with the Berlin airlift of 1949 makes the point. To relieve Berlin at the height of the cold war, the west made 227,000 flights and delivered more than 2 million tonnes of aid over 462 days. The Sarajevo airlift has already lasted longer than the airlift into Berlin—more than 470 days—but in contrast has resulted in fewer than 6,000 flights, delivering only 63,000 tonnes of aid. Nothing could more clearly testify to the failure of will, and the consequent lack of effort to make a genuine attempt to break the siege of Sarajevo and the other Bosnian enclaves.

If we are to break out of the impasse in Bosnia and Croatia, and in the whole of the Balkans, we must do two things. First, we must initiate negotiations that deal not with Bosnia and Croatia separately but with the whole of the Balkans. Secondly, we must redress the balance of force between the various sides. If we do not do that by intervening directly, we should do it, as President Clinton has urged, by lifting the arms embargo. The problem will not go away.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

7.40 pm

Sir Jerry Wiggin (Weston-super-Mare): I am delighted to see my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement on the Front Bench because, as he will recall, on practically the last occasion that the House sat before the recess, he was good enough to come here in the early hours of the morning to answer a debate on the EH101 utility version support helicopter. It seems as though

[Sir Jerry Wiggin]

virtually nothing has happened, although nearly three months have passed. It is time that the decision was made. I am happy to see that one or two of my hon. Friends who were present for that debate are here again now.

My hon. Friend the Minister gave the impression that the internal dispute in the Ministry of Defence had been resolved and that the financiers had allocated the appropriate sums of money. Although I was sad to hear that the decision was to buy Chinooks, all was on course and we were expecting an announcement at the Army and Navy equipment exhibition, which would not only have given much pleasure to the west country but would have secured for the RAF the essential provision of support facilities for the Army, and probably also resulted in a substantial order for the helicopter from the Dutch.

I am sorry to say that the Dutch have now ordered a French helicopter and I am sorry to learn that, within the Ministry of Defence, old arguments are being deployed. We all know the financial difficulties that the Ministry is likely to face, as every other Government Department is likely to face, in the near future. My hon. Friend the Minister must be strong, and be sustained. Can we please have an early and positive decision? This has been going on since 1987. It is shameful that our forces should be deprived of that essential facility.

Not for the first time in these debates, I shall speak about the reserve forces. Since we saw the consultative documents on the naval reserve forces and the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve, both marked, in heavy type, "Consultative" on the front, those of us who have been through anything like this before knew that the documents spelled out the fate of the two reserves. I was sad to hear my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State confirm that he proposes to proceed as planned—that is, as planned by the regular officers of the services concerned.

I bemoan the fact that so few of our admirals, generals and air marshals have understood not only the professional capacity of the reservists but the important part that they play in the community. My hon. Friend the Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman) spoke of the essential contacts between the people of Kent and the Royal Navy through the Royal Naval Reserve. The ships have been taken away, the drill halls are being shut and the RNR as we have known it—I played a part in helping it to expand—is gone.

Furthermore, the Navy proposes to recruit some 500 part-timers to serve on ships at sea. I have no doubt that they will have a good time and earn good money while at sea, but they are not true reservists: they are substitutes, and there is a big difference. I detect here the use of willing people by the Royal Navy as cheap manpower. We must watch any such development extremely carefully.

I have heard an ugly rumour about the Royal Marine Reserve. I hope that it is not true. That is an exceptional part of our reserve forces. The men train virtually to the same standards as the regular Royal Marines and they are well recruited. In many cases, there is a waiting list. The reserve is exceptionally good value for money. I do not know whether it is possible to have any confirmation about its future, but I sincerely hope that the Navy is not tempted to tinker with that reserve force.

The reserves for the RAF were used in airfield defence. It may be argued that that threat is somewhat lessened, but a locally recruited modest army on site who could get to know the area, the people and the ground concerned was always a cheap way to defend airfields. I am delighted to hear that my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro), whom I had the honour to appoint to a post as honorary chair or something like that—[HON MEMBERS: "Inspector general"?] Not quite that high in those days—the position was more modest.

I shall deal now with the Territorial Army. It must be particularly crazy to change that at a time when, as we have heard from Ministers and from many Back-Bench speakers, the regular Army is greatly stretched. We know that the Army has been forced, by sheer necessity of its duties, to restore two regular battalions. What nobody said at the time was that this would be done within the agreed budget, so the Army is looking around for finances and its eye has settled on the Territorial Army. Options for cuts of 5, 10 or 15 per cent. in its strength are being mooted.

It is astonishing how well morale in the TA holds up. However, in a volunteer army, morale is a fragile flower, easily affected. Among both officers and men there is great worry. Decisions are not being made when advertised and I thoroughly deplore that any economy in our reserves should be looked for at all, but more particularly that it should be looked for in the TA.

I have another point about manpower in the Royal Navy—or should I say womanpower in the Royal Navy? I have been told that a problem is beginning to arise with women serving at sea. We who are sceptical, and perhaps rather old-fashioned, always saw the decision to send women to sea as strange. The Royal Navy contract for serving Wrens did not require them to go to sea. However, now when a girl signs on with the Royal Navy, her contract requires her to go to sea if ordered to do so. As a net result, the ladies at sea are very young and have no rank structure or organisation to look after them. I understand that there was recently a frigate at sea with no fewer than 30 young ladies on board, the senior one of whom was a leading cook. If that is not a recipe for trouble, then I do not know much about morale.

I share the dilemma that several of my hon. Friends have expressed. We understand that we have to cut Government expenditure, but we know in our heart of hearts that there is no room for cuts in the defence budget. I have heard today comments from Labour Members that surprised me, because for once they were realistic. We live in a Europe as dangerous as ever and in a world probably more dangerous than ever, but there are people from the Treasury running around with red pens saying that there is such a thing as a peace dividend. I do not believe that.

We have heard talk about defence reviews. What is to be cut out? One hon. Member after another has suggested a defence review. What happens after a defence review—I remember one or two—is that things get cut out, but nobody has said, "Let us stop keeping the peace in Yugoslavia or Cyprus," or, "Let us pull the troops out of Northern Ireland." We all know that that would not be realistic and would not balance the power and need of Britain's position in the world today.

I did not vote for "Options for Change" and I believe that those of us who did not do so have been proved right. Being right does not always make one popular, but at least I had the satisfaction of my own conscience.

I must tell my hon. Friend the Minister that it is no good being threatening and saying that we will not support any cuts. Many of us, especially those who have been in

government, understand the difficulties that we are facing. However, I hope that he will send the message from Conservative Members to the Treasury that if, when the Government expenditure round is announced at the end of next month, there are serious and savage cuts in defence that enables us no longer to carry out our main duties, some of us will strongly question that—and probably in the Lobby.

7.25 pm

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): I shall refer to a few of what should be our international defence obligations. The first is the inhumane weapons convention, which we signed in 1981 and which deals with weapons such as napalm. Our troops could be vulnerable to it in Bosnia or elsewhere while they are peacekeeping. We signed that convention in 1981 but have not yet ratified it. That is a scandal and it should be ratified soon. Indeed, there is soon to be a review convention at which we shall not be present unless we ratify it.

A convention on the dumping of radioactive waste at sea will be held in London between 8 and 12 November. Over 20 countries have already said that they favour a permanent ban on dumping radioactive waste at sea. We have three decommissioned submarines at Devonport and another four at Rosyth which must be dealt with, but the Government have refused to rule out the option of disposing nuclear submarines at sea. They should do so in line with the convention, or at least explain their position.

My main point is that the Government are damaging the good relations between Britain and the United States. Of course, I am only touching the surface of that issue. The strained relations over Bosnia deserve a whole speech of their own and I cannot do that on this occasion. The Government are straining the relations by undermining the United States' efforts towards non-proliferation. In President Clinton's speech to the United Nations general assembly on 27 September, he said:

"I have made non-proliferation one of our nation's highest priorities. We intend to weave it more deeply into the fabric of all of our relationships with the world's nations and institutions . . . We will pursue new steps to control the materials for nuclear weapons. Growing global stockpiles of plutonium and highly enriched uranium are raising the danger of nuclear terrorism for all nations. We will press for an international agreement that would ban production of these materials for weapons forever."

As we reduce our nuclear stockpiles, the United States has also begun negotiations towards a comprehensive ban on nuclear testing . . . I renew my call on the nuclear states to abide by that moratorium as we will negotiate to stop nuclear testing for all time."

Our Government are out of line with President Clinton on those issues. On the comprehensive test ban, for example, President Clinton has set a target date of 1995-96. The British Government have refused to endorse that date and want to continue nuclear testing—they are perpetually lobbying in Washington to use the Nevada site to carry out more nuclear tests. Even in the face of problems with the Chinese, the United States is still trying to achieve that comprehensive test ban treaty. The British Government are trying to undermine those efforts.

The United States also has a policy on the issue of weapons grade fissile material cut-off. Its policy is to try to get a global ban on fissile material production for missile purposes. The British Government openly oppose that—or rather, secretly oppose it, because they will not be accountable for their actions—and want the material for their Trident programme. They should join the United States to get that fissile material cut-off and at least declare their stocks and open them up to International Atomic Energy Agency inspection.

In his speech, President Clinton makes nuclear non-proliferation his top priority. The Government are again moving in the wrong direction. With the THORP scheme, for example, plutonium will be produced on a huge scale into the next century and that could be used by the nuclear terrorists to which President Clinton referred. There have been well-established reports of the United States Administration, the Pentagon and certainly the Congress being extremely concerned at the Government's approach to THORP. They would like to see it killed and it should be. It is a danger in relation to nuclear proliferation.

Trident is a massive proliferation in itself on a number of levels. With Polaris missiles, the United Kingdom had 96 warheads. Trident has a capability of 512 warheads. It has been reported that at the very least the MOD will have around 192 in future after retraining themselves. That is still double the proliferation that occurred with Polaris.

The former Minister, the right hon. Member for Epsom and Ewell (Mr. Hamilton), who spoke earlier, told the House on 18 May:

"No decision has been made . . . But I suspect that it will be more than those that we are carrying on Polaris".—[*Official Report*, 18 May 1993; Vol. 225, c. 147.]

The capability in numbers of fire power is considerably more than Polaris. That proliferation encourages the spread of nuclear weapons in other states.

One MOD spokesman in *Jane's Defence Weekly* pre-empted the Minister's decision about Trident becoming a sub-strategic nuclear weapon. It was described as being capable of giving a warning shot. That shot would be the equivalent of 15 Hiroshimas—some warning. Once that sort of power is introduced, one must ask, who is it aimed at and who do the Government think it will be used against? We deserve an answer if that is the potential weaponry that the Government are prepared to contemplate unleashing on the world. It fails to honour the Government's commitment under article 6 of the non-proliferation treaty.

Greenpeace has said that about £15 billion or more could be saved over the 13-year life of Trident if it were abandoned now. We should be taking advantage of that element of the peace dividend. The sub-strategic role of Trident is just as much a fraud as the Domesday role envisaged for Trident was disastrous.

We must have a peace dividend. The Treasury is right in that respect—although it is in favour of it for different reasons. We cannot run forces at cold war levels. We were told at that time that the position could not get worse, but that we needed that level of armaments. We no longer face the threat of the cold war and it is ludicrous to say that the position is more dangerous now than it was then. I said in 1989 at the end of cold war that we could save £50 billion within 10 years if we planned it properly. That was a modest target—I was criticised by a number of my hon. Friends for estimating that amount, but it could have been done with a proper defence review and by moving away from a nuclear defence strategy. Instead we have a chaotic, unplanned approach from the Ministry of Defence with almost more admirals than sailors.

The *Financial Times* of 13 September said:

"the number of Army privates and their equivalents in the navy and airforce fell by more than a quarter between 1980 and 1992. Officer numbers fell by just 1·6 per cent. over the same period.

[Mr. Harry Cohen]

The number of colonels and lieutenant-colonels rose . . . But nine out of 10 of those were privates; the number of commissioned officers fell by just 630. Over the same period, officers' pay rose by more than 170 per cent., while the pay of privates rose 138 per cent.

A general now typically earns almost nine times the pay of a private, compared with seven times in 1980."

Bad planning has led to the current chaos. We need not only the peace dividend but to meet our international obligations on non-proliferation and peace.

7.59 pm

Dr. Charles Goodson-Wickes (Wimbledon): I welcome the fact that we are debating the defence estimates rather more punctually that we have in the recent past. What is a great deal less welcome, however, is the background against which the debate takes place, especially the widespread rumours of yet more cuts of frightening proportions in the defence budget.

There is general recognition of the necessity in the present financial climate to examine rigorously all aspects of public expenditure. I have the greatest respect for the ability of my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to do so, but at the same time I am much reassured that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence and his ministerial colleagues are being robust in rejecting any tendency to what I gather has been described as a move towards a hollow force.

The Conservative party has always regarded the defence of the realm as the primary responsibility of Government. That is not jingoistic rhetoric but plain common sense. To that extent, there will always be an element of special pleading for the defence budget, because unless we get that right, the security of the nation's interests is at risk and all other departmental budgets pale into insignificance. It is thus my fervent wish that this two-day debate will send clear messages to the Treasury in the lead-up to the first unified Budget next month.

I would be one of the first to acknowledge that it is the duty of my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to challenge all the so-called spending Departments and I know that he will keep matters in proportion. It is probably true that radical examination of the Ministry of Defence's operation and expenditure has been postponed—and thank goodness it has been, or it would have been quite impossible to mount the successful campaigns in the Falklands and the Gulf. Reference has been made to the roles of the Harrier and aircraft carriers in the Falklands and of armoured regiments in the Gulf—east of Suez—of all places where they could have been deployed.

Many of us have never come to terms with some of the so-called logic behind "Options for Change", which was written three years ago in the light of the collapse of the Soviet empire but before the unforeseen Gulf conflict. Its proponents have stuck doggedly to the premise that the world is a safer place, which in many ways it is, but no hon. Member thinks that there is greater stability overall following the disturbance of the equilibrium of the former balance of power.

I should like to use the concept of stability as the theme for my following remarks. As a former regular soldier, I shall concentrate on the Army, but I am well aware that colleagues will speak for the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force with much greater expertise. I am convinced that parallel arguments apply in each respect.

Ever since "Options for Change" the Army has been preoccupied with the painful process of reorganisation—re-roling and relocating; amalgamations and redundancies. We have heard a good deal about such matters in the House in the past few months. But one thing was always apparent—that the objective was clear and the timetable was clear. The new shape was to be in place by 1 April 1995. It now seems that the assurances that were passed on to troops by senior commanders are being thrown into doubt. I find it impossible to convey to the House the catastrophic effect that this is having on morale in the armed forces.

Whatever misgivings there may have been about the policy—the traditional silence of the services is all too often wrongly interpreted as agreement—there was determination to make the reorganisation work. If rumours in circulation are based on fact, the effect of future uncertainty on the most professional Army in the world will be devastating.

There is an awful sense of deja vu about this debate. I make no apologies for raising yet again the basic problem of overstretch. I was most interested to hear my right hon. Friend the Member for Epsom and Ewell (Mr. Hamilton), perhaps freed from the shackles of office, put a rather different interpretation on overstretch than when he was in office. I do not mean that disrespectfully, but perhaps that is one of the practicalities of politics. For a long time the existence of the phenomenon of overstretch was denied, but now it is part of the common parlance. It revolves around the matching of capabilities to commitments——

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): Educating Archie!

Dr. Goodson-Wickes: He may be educating himself.

In every recent defence debate, I have challenged the powers that be to prove their figures to be correct. I have given specific numbers to show a shortfall on existing commitments, let alone any additional and unforeseen ones such as Bosnia. My figures have never been disproved, yet as recently as the last sitting of the other place before the recess the Under-Secretary of State trotted out discredited statistics as achievable even before we withdraw from Hong Kong.

The truth is that a 24-month tour interval, if it were ever obtainable on the "Options" calculations, has been rendered impossible by the necessary increase in troops in Northern Ireland and by our Bosnian commitment. Who can tell what other events will rear their ugly heads in the next four years?

The effect on soldiers and their families is intolerable and I have seen it at first hand. What other occupations that are so rightly respected by the public, such as miners, nurses, firemen and policemen, would put up with the possibility of about seven and a half years' separation from their families in 15 years' work—and all that, at the risk of lowering the tone of the debate, without overtime. It is all too easy to take the forces for granted, despite the high esteem in which they are held throughout the country. Is it surprising that service wives, who are supportive and tolerant to a fault, are now making their feelings known in no uncertain terms as their marriages and their children suffer?

Even given that worrying human problem, the financial restrictions on the Army are such that it is now apparently

impossible to train above unit level, which undermines the concept of a meaningful Army. Smaller will never be better if training cannot be conducted properly.

Mr. Brazier: The Canadian training facility is the most expensive for practising armoured warfare. Is my hon. Friend aware that the first of three extremely expensive exercises that were conducted there degenerated into farce because one had only a small number of infantry and the others no infantry at all?

Dr. Goodson-Wickes: I entirely accept what my hon. Friend, who is very sound on these matters, says. I link his remarks with the speech that was made in the Upper House by my noble and gallant Friend Lord Bramall, which I recommend to the House and in which he developed the problem that arises if troops cannot be trained properly.

Even in the Gulf, it was sheer good luck that the 7th Armoured Brigade was able to train in theatre for six months before it went into action. Such luxuries are unlikely to be available again. The defence directory shows that all our units are at least double hatted, if not triple hatted, and the tolerance of our NATO allies may one day itself become overstretched. There comes a point when the position is untenable, both militarily and politically. That problem will be compounded once the recession is over and people with specialised knowledge in the armed forces redeploy their talents in a civilian context.

It would be foolish to pretend that there were not sectors in which economies could be made in the existing budget. I emphasise the phrase "existing budget" as I am not a member of the school which believes that we can talk about increasing budgets in present conditions. Economies can be made on top of the application of market testing and new management strategies that are already proving successful in lowering costs.

I shall now return to an issue which worries me and, I am sure, many other hon. Members. If we are to reduce defence expenditure to the lowest percentage of gross domestic product since about 1935, with all its historical connotations, we must be careful how we use our available resources. Therefore, will my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State concentrate on specific matters which merit careful study?

I welcome what my right hon. and learned Friend said about the scrutiny of civilian manpower in the Ministry of Defence, but I am as yet unconvinced by the figures. Based on a written question that I tabled in the House, I am certain that, on implementation of "Options for Change" the number of civilians in the Ministry of Defence would be reduced by about 20 per cent., in the Army as a whole, by about 30 per cent. and, most critically, in the teeth arms, by 40 per cent. Those statistics make me uncomfortable and I ask my right hon. and learned Friend to look at the figures again.

I suspect that nobody in the House would describe the former Member for Plymouth, Sutton as uninhibited, but Mr. Alan Clark said to me, after he had retired, that one issue he very much regretted never getting to grips with at the Ministry of Defence was the level of civilian manpower. I explicitly exclude highly specialised civilians who perform jobs that release uniformed soldiers to fulfil their jobs in the armed forces.

Mr. Colvin: We need clarification of the figures. This morning I read a report that, since 1979, the number of men and women in civilian clothes paid by the Ministry of Defence had fallen by 45 per cent. and the number of men and women in uniform by only 16 per cent. Those figures may be partly due to privatisation and contractorisation —I do not know. We need clarification of the impact of privatisation and contractorisation on the reduction of civilian personnel.

Dr. Goodson-Wickes: I suspect that my hon. Friend puts his finger on the important point—the figures are jumbled because of contractorisation. We must make direct comparisons between the bare statistics relating to civilians in the Ministry of Defence and uniformed soldiers. We need further clarification and I should be grateful if the Front Bench team could provide that in the wind-up to the debate.

The second sector in which there is enormous scope for radical examination is that of the defence estate. I do not believe that the defence estate is as well run as it might be. I do not wish to develop that theme tonight, but it is one which extends from the possible rationalisation of headquarters at Northwood and Wilton, through land holdings within the Ministry of Defence, to cosy little functions which are carried out unchallenged, and for which the taxpayer has to pick up the bill.

Will my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State give the House an assurance that no further cuts will be made based on short-term expediency to balance a budget here and a budget there? Any cuts should be made strictly on military criteria. If anyone in the Ministry of Defence says that we have too many armoured regiments, I would immediately respond by saying that we have an inadequate number of armoured reconnaissance regiments. There should be a straight swap between the functions.

As has already been mentioned in the debate, the value of the Territorial Army and the reserve forces has been grossly understated. The cost of this country's reserve forces is about the same as that of running the national health service for three days. That cost is peripheral in the financial context and inconsequential in the wider sweep. To introduce it into the debate undermines the spirit of volunteering in this country, whether military or non-military, which is done for virtually nil personal return.

I welcome the consultation paper on the framework for the reserve forces. I believe that it is to be the subject of a future debate. I want an assurance from my hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces that the Territorial Army Volunteer Reserve Associations will be involved in the consultation, not presented with a fait accompli.

To quote my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence, what is needed is for our armed forces, a priceless national asset, to have a period of stability. They cannot be subjected to continual chipping away so that they no longer provide a credible safety net for this country. Nor should Government policy—in the context of NATO, the United Nations and defence role 3——

"to contribute to promoting the United Kingdom's wider security interests through the maintenance of international peace and stability"—

be prejudiced. Only if the policy changes—I profoundly hope that it will not—can a case be made for a defence review which would not be limited to the Ministry of Defence but would encompass the whole of foreign policy. Only in those conditions could that argument legitimately be advanced.

[Dr. Goodson-Wickes]

The Conservative party and the Government have reaffirmed their commitment to traditional values. Paper tigers have no role in this country's defences. As long as the United Kingdom has superb fighting forces which set standards for the world and has a permanent place on the United Nations Security Council, the world will be a safer place.

8.16 pm

Mr. John Hutton (Barrow and Furness): Anyone who is listening to our proceedings or who has an opportunity to read the report in *Hansard* tomorrow cannot but form the conclusion that the Government and Ministers have had a rough time from their Back Benchers—which they entirely deserve. There has been widespread concern, reflected on both sides of the House, about the way in which the Government are conducting defence policy and defence planning.

I have heard all the Back-Bench contributions to the debate, and not one Conservative Member has given unequivocal support to the Government's defence estimates. One reason for the outbreak of unanimity among Back Benchers in condemning Government policies is that a motion will be tabled in the House tomorrow in the name of the Prime Minister asking hon. Members to endorse the defence estimates. The problem is that none of us knows what the defence estimates are, as the figures seem to change from week to week.

It is clear from press reports—the Secretary of State had to concede the fact implicity this afternoon—that the Chancellor wants further unspecified cuts in the defence budget. We know that there are heavy cuts in the pipeline; today, the Secretary of State announced the cancellation of the TASM project, a decision, incidentally, for which he will have the full support of my party.

Underlying the difficulty in which both Conservative and Labour Members find themselves is the fact that there is a consensus that this is not the way to handle defence policy planning at a time of unprecedented change, when all the circumstances that used to shape defence policy and planning have been scrapped overnight with the end of the cold war and the dismantling of the Soviet Union.

These former threats have been replaced by other, equally menacing threats arising from the outbreak of ethnic violence in the states of the former Soviet Union and a worldwide increase in political violence of the sort regularly witnessed in Africa, for instance.

Against this background of unprecedented change and of a complete transformation of the threat facing the national security of the United Kingdom and our international allies, I wonder whether it is right to hand over the whole future direction of defence policy planning, lock, stock and barrel, to the Treasury. Of course, it is true that the Treasury will always have a decisive say, and we know about the Government's financial difficulties arising from the mess that they have made of the public sector finances. We also know about the industrial problems that they have created. All that has led to a diminution of Government resources, but no coherent strategic case is being made by the Government in defence planning—they are not carefully and cautiously scrutinising Britain's defence commitments.

I am not alone in suggesting that the opportunity has now arisen to undertake a more coherent and strategic review of our defence configurations. For example, the Select Committee on Defence's report says in its second paragraph:

"careful reading of the Statement on the Defence Estimates 93, which is subtitled 'Defending our Future', produces very little idea of which national interests are to be defended and where, in what order of priorities, and in the face of which anticipated threats or dangers."

Instead, we are offered some saloon bar rhetoric, presented as a coherent "Statement on the Defence Estimates". It is not: it is mere rhetoric, more of which we heard from the Secretary of State this afternoon.

I do not want to embarrass the Conservative Members who recently produced a pamphlet on this issue. Many of them are present tonight, including the hon. Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier), with whom I find myself, somewhat surprisingly, in complete agreement on this issue. To quote the pamphlet selectively—I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will correct me if I do him and his colleagues an injustice—

"The general public—and the armed services—are in a limbo . . . morale—is at an historic low point . . . A comprehensive review should take place—In short, a thorough and coherent strategic review".

That is the view expressed by 12 Conservative Members, many of whom have repeated it tonight. There is thus concern on both sides of the House, motivated perhaps by different sets of priorities, because we do not believe that this is a sensible way in which to develop defence policy in the 1990s.

Where is the strategic analysis behind some of the changes that the Government have announced since "Options for Change"? I think particularly of the decision not to maintain in service beyond 1995 the four Upholder class submarines built by Cammell Laird and by VSEL in my constituency, at a cost of £1 billion. In the 1993 defence estimates, the Government simply state that the case for deploying the Upholders has been removed by the changing pattern of Soviet SSN deployments—but that is slightly misleading, to say the least. The Government have themselves identified a whole range of other purposes and functions for this class of submarine besides patrolling the Greenland/Iceland/United Kingdom gap. So much for the Government's justification for scrapping the Upholders.

The taxpayer will lose as much as £900 million because of this decision, and it is transparently obvious to anyone who studies this fiasco that the strategic decision involved was driven solely by financial considerations. That is not the right way to proceed.

I believe that there is a consensus in the House that such events reveal the need for a strategic review of our defence commitments. Such reviews have been undertaken by Labour and Conservative Governments in the past—I think particularly of the outstanding intellectual case contained in the defence review conducted by Lord Healey in 1966. There is an obvious need for a defence review now, but unfortunately the Government show no signs of responding to that need.

If press reports are true, it appears that the Secretary of State for Defence is threatening to conduct a defence review to frighten the Treasury, but that is to put the issue in the wrong perspective. We should be developing a new consensus on defence policy for the 1990s. It would not be

very difficult to develop one, revolving around some of the defence roles identified in the estimates—particularly defence role 3, which I wish to discuss later.

We need to reconfigure our forces to face the new security situation of the 1990s. Regrettably, we are instead drifting along; there is a sense of a vacuum at the very heart of defence policy making. The Government are not properly discharging their responsibility to taxpayers, service personnel or those who work in the defence industries. We do not know where we are going from week to week.

There are some hard choices to be made—it would be foolish to pretend otherwise—but we cannot go on maintaining many of the pretences enshrined in the White Paper. We have to make a better job of matching resources to our vital national interests and new international responsibilities.

A recurrent theme of my speeches in previous defence debates has been the absence of any Government policy on secure employment in the defence industries. My constituency offers a vivid example of that. We have lost more than 7,500 jobs in the VSEL shipyard in less than three years—an unsustainable attrition of skills and expertise. If this country wants to maintain and develop a sensible SSN engineering capability it must do better than that.

Thousands of skilled engineering workers in my constituency have been forced out of their trade and are now driving minicabs or stacking shelves. No sensible industrial policy should force them into such a predicament. It is a ruinous waste of skills and expertise. No other western European nation would do this to its own people, yet our Government do not seem to care.

When we have repeatedly made these points in the House, we have been told by Ministers that we cannot develop a policy on diversification, because that would be telling defence companies what to do. We do not say that the Government should tell them what to do, but the Government have a responsibility to support the initiatives of many defence companies that want to preserve their engineering capabilities but recognise that to do so they need to move into new product areas.

There are a range of ways in which the Government can offer such support without the need for central direction —no one is advocating that. The Government can use their power and influence to support diversification initiatives by encouraging research and development, by the tax system and by other intelligent means. The Government are shirking their responsibility to many of the men and women who have contributed to the defence of this country for many years. That is morally unacceptable and economically insane.

There is no reference in the statement on the defence estimates to the problems of the defence industry. At least in the 1992 statement the Government had the courage to admit that there was a problem. They did not specify any solutions, but at least they identified the problems facing defence contractors in these difficult times. The Government do not have a strategy, and they do not seem to care what happens to the affected communities.

I have already referred to the situation in my constituency. It is with great sadness that I must report that last week another 300 workers at the VSEL shipyard were told that they had no future in the yard. That is a disgrace and it undermines the Government's claim that they alone have a coherent strategy for success in employing people in the defence industries. They do not. Record numbers of defence industry workers are losing their employment.

I shall speak briefly about the future of the Royal Navy, not only because of my obvious direct constituency interest —the Barrow shipyard had built some of the finest ships ever to sail under the white ensign—but because it is clear that the Royal Navy has suffered disproportionately from the Government's programme of cuts. There must be some doubt about the effect of the cuts on the Navy's operational effectiveness. That is a particularly important issue given the importance of defence role 3 in the White Paper, especially in the context of the deployment of amphibious forces.

Today's Select Committee report on the future of the Royal Navy is timely, but it hardly amounts to an endorsement of Government policy in this area. Its principal conclusions could not be more critical of Government policy, and I shall refer to five of those conclusions. Paragraph 17 identifies financial constraints that are affecting the fleet's effectiveness. Paragraph 37 is highly critical of the Government's decision on the future of the Upholder class submarine.

The Select Committee recently reported that the Navy needed six SSKs to maintain a viable diesel electric force in the submarine flotilla, but now there are to be no diesel electric submarines of any kind. I hope that the Government are at least prepared to consider the Select Committee's recommendation that at least one Upholder class submarine should be deployed with the Royal Navy.

Paragraph 59 says that the Royal Navy would be incapable of defending vital sea routes in time of war. We are a maritime nation, and perhaps the most damning criticism that a Select Committee could ever make of the conduct of Government defence policy is that the Royal Navy, the senior service, is incapable of defending this country's vital sea routes. That is a total indictment, if one were needed, of the way that the Government are conducting policy in this area.

Paragraph 48 expresses concern about the future of the Royal Fleet Auxiliary, and paragraph 11 highlights serious delays in procuring the next batch of type 23 frigates and says that that could threaten the ability of the Navy to maintain a surface fleet of about 35 frigates and destroyers. It is also clear from today's report by the Select Committee that the decision to order the next batch of type 23 frigates is at least two years behind schedule. For the shipbuilding industry, that is a ruinous delay, because skilled workers and design teams cannot be held together for that time without the prospect of orders.

Some Conservative Members, especially the hon. Member for Portsmouth, South (Mr. Martin), spoke about the need to proceed quickly with the decision to order two amphibious assault ships to replace Fearless and Intrepid. If Britain is to have an effective role in contributing to UN peacekeeping forces around the globe, which is important to this country, we must have an effective amphibious configuration. That will include not only the helicopter carrier that has recently been ordered, but the two replacements for Fearless and Intrepid. It would be impossible to deploy our forces effectively around the world, often in difficult areas and situations, without those two vital support ships. Those two ships are needed, and I hope that the Government will confirm, despite all the rumours about defence cuts, that those two orders at least will be sacrosanct.

[Mr. John Hutton]

Of direct interest to my constituents is the Government's decision on the future of the batch 2 Trafalgar programme, the replacement SSN fleet for the 21st century. We need at least six of this new class of submarine to maintain the bare bones of an effective SSN fleet, which is 12. There is concern among all hon. Members about whether the role and tasks of the SSN squadron can be carried out by 12 vessels. If there is any slippage in the ordering of the batch 2 Trafalgars or if there is delay—I understand that the Government are delaying the programme—or hesitation in deciding how many of those vessels should be ordered, it will have a negative effect on the operational ability of the SSN fleet.

I hope that, in his winding-up speech, the Minister will send a clear signal to my constituents that at least six batch 2 Trafalgars will be ordered and that there will be no further delay in the procurement of this vital new class of SSN submarine.

The future frigate programme is important to maintain the operational effectiveness of the Navy, and I hope that the Minister will assure the House that the Navy will be funded for a full one-to-one replacement of the type 42 destroyers. That will require a minimum order of 12. I should like to deal with other matters, but I shall not do so because other hon. Members wish to contribute to the debate.

Defence policy is in tatters. There is no coherent view, and the Government are drifting from day to day and from week to week. The hon. Member for Canterbury was right to draw attention to the low morale of our armed forces, which is intolerable. Service in the armed forces is public service of the highest order, but that is not fully recognised by the Government.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. The winding-up speeches will start in about an hour. May we please have succinct speeches.

8.35 pm

Mr. Richard Ottaway (Croydon, South): I shall try to comply with your request, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I hope that I do not spoil the day for the hon. Member for Barrow and Furness (Mr. Hutton) when I say that, while I agree with much of what he said about the Royal Navy, I welcome the defence estimates. I also welcome their presentation. One could ask why the matching and balancing of commitments to resources has not been done before. The presentation gives rise to a different set of problems which, perhaps, are not wholly unexpected, and hon. Members are free to criticise the matching of commitments to resources as they feel appropriate.

Such criticism on my part is constructive. For example, the key diagram in the defence estimates showing the four structures in the mid-1990s admirably demonstrates defence roles 1, 2 and 3, which are best described as national, European and global. It also illustrates the huge overlap in commitments, because three carriers are needed in all three roles.

The division into three defence roles is interesting, in that roles 2 and 3 place NATO at the heart of making that commitment. We are right to question the role of NATO. Its key role is the defence of its members, but it has a secondary, perhaps political, role of keeping the United States bound into a treaty with European members. That was mentioned by my right hon. Friend the Member for Chertsey and Walton (Sir G. Pattie).

Before widening NATO by admitting other countries, we must ask ourselves and them whether they are prepared to protect all NATO members and whether they guarantee to protect us at the same time. If the answer is no, enlargement must be put on the back burner and NATO must be prepared to refuse such applications.

We live in a troubled world. There are about 27 conflicts worldwide, and we face many threats. As was recognised in 1990 in "Options for Change", those threats are different from those of the past. There is no colossal threat from the Soviet Union and, as the cold war recedes, we need a change of style. We need defence across a broad spectrum and we must deliver diversity. In short, we need flexibility.

Like many others, I am concerned about the strategic future. If we have to make cuts, it is right to make them in the RAF. I have no difficulty with today's decision not to proceed with the air-to-surface missile, which has always been of limited strategic value. The Fleet Air Arm is quite capable of filling the gap, and in the 1990s the RAF looks like an increasingly inflexible service.

In recent years, the Royal Navy has been "dumped on" by both the other services, and such political activity in the Ministry of Defence is wrong. I do not quarrel with the decision to reduce the number of frigates, because the submarine threat that they were constructed to meet no longer exists. In future, we shall need mobility and flexibility, especially if there is to be an overlap between roles 2 and 3, the European and global roles that are set out in the White Paper.

Like other hon. Members, I welcome the construction of a helicopter carrier, but I believe that we also need more fixed-wing carriers. Let us consider two scenarios from role 2—the need to attack a difficult Mediterranean country such as Libya or Syria and, perhaps, a maverick east European country. Let us also consider two scenarios from role 3, the global role. Although a big "if" is involved, there is a possibility that we will need to deploy in South Africa at some time during the next few years. Although it is another big "if", we may need to deploy in Hong Kong. The RAF could cope with a strike in the Mediterranean, but not with a strike in South Africa or in the far east.

Mr. Martlew: Will the hon. Gentleman expound on his theory that we may need a presence in Hong Kong? Is he suggesting that we go to war with China?

Mr. Ottaway: The hon. Gentleman is wasting time by painting pictures to which I have not alluded. I am illustrating the sort of situation—and I said there was a big "if"—to which the RAF might have to respond. It shows that a flexible response by an aircraft carrier could meet strategic demands in both the Mediterranean and the wider area. The RAF could not meet all those demands.

Mr. Bill Walker: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Ottaway: I know that my hon. Friend is a supporter of the RAF, so I suspect that his intervention will not be helpful.

Mr. Walker: I assure my hon. Friend that I am more than a supporter of the RAF. Does he understand the point

that he is making about aircraft carriers? Has he carefully studied the cost of an aircraft carrier of the sort that the United States uses extensively? If not, his argument falls.

Mr. Ottaway: I had the privilege of spending four years at sea on an aircraft carrier——

Mr. Walker: Which one?

Mr. Ottaway: It was HMS Eagle, from 1966 to 1970. The modern aircraft carriers, without steam catapults, are a much cheaper option than the old fixed-wing carriers. Once a production line was under way, the costs would be significantly reduced.

There is resistance inside the Ministry of Defence to any strategic future for aircraft carriers. Certainly, none was deployed in the Gulf war. I read General de la Billière's book "Storm Command", in which he explained why an aircraft carrier was not deployed. Frankly, I thought that it was a weak excuse. There is clearly in-fighting on the issue, but the Navy must not be deterred in its wish to have a more flexible and mobile force.

I suggest that the strike capability of the RAF should be reviewed in the light of my remarks. We need greater flexibility in a fast-changing world. We need replacements for HMS Fearless and HMS Intrepid—not by a helicopter carrier, but in addition to a helicopter carrier.

Many hon. Members have spoken of the folly of cutting our reserve forces. I have a Territorial Army unit in Coulsdon in my constituency and I know the commitment of its members. I have served in the Royal Naval Reserve so I know how valuable that force can be. My right hon. and learned Friend the Defence Secretary's opening speech left me slightly confused about the precise future of the reserve forces, so I would welcome any statement on that. Their greatest asset is their low-cost flexibility. When there is an overstretch in the budget and in requirements, as there is at the moment, the reserve forces are good value. It would be madness and action without any reasonable ground to make cuts in the reserve forces when the savings from doing so would be very modest.

I want to say a word on the deployment of Wrens at sea. A number of rather juicy stories have appeared during the summer. I shall quote one or two—such as the couple who deserted HMS Invincible because they fell in love on board ship. Another story stated:

"The Royal Navy was last night investigating a sex scandal after three Wrens and sailors were caught together on a ship moored off the coast of Britain."

Another said:

"Sailors and Wrens on the aircraft carrier Ark Royal have been disciplined for cuddling."

We can only speculate on what the captain's default list must look like when the regulating petty officer charges people with cuddling.

Lady Olga Maitland (Sutton and Cheam): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Ottaway: In a moment.

What on earth has happened to Winston Churchill's Royal Navy of rum, bum and baccy? I spent the summer on board HMS Battleaxe. The Wrens on board were competent, hard-working girls who fulfilled their role. However, I must ask my hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces whether the MOD believes that the operational efficiency of the Royal Navy is impaired by the deployment of Wrens at sea. If so, that deployment should be reviewed, especially as the reason for that deployment was manpower shortage in the late 1980s. That shortage no longer exists and we are now making Royal Navy officers and men redundant.

I believe that the defence estimates are realistic. They very much look to the future and the House should do so as well. I support the estimates.

8.45 pm

Mr. David Jamieson (Plymouth, Devonport): I, too, shall try to observe your stricture on time, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The cold war may have ended, but as a constituent of mine said last week, "I do not feel any safer." At the same time, his job is under threat. Other hon. Members have argued about the changing nature of world security, but I wish to challenge the Government's policy of complacency and drift that is now undermining the vital industries that supply our defence needs.

In Plymouth and throughout the south-west, many people will be following this debate on the Government's spending plans with great interest, because it is the most defence-dependent region in Europe, with 187,000 defence-related jobs. Therefore, any reduction in defence expenditure will have a profound effect in our region.

The House will no doubt remember the recent battle for jobs at Devonport dockyard in my constituency, and at Rosyth dockyard in Scotland. It gave me great pleasure to hear my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, West (Ms Squire) tonight vigorously speaking out for her constituents. I was glad to see her in her place after a period of illness.

After losing 10,000 jobs in the past decade, Devonport felt great relief when it was awarded the Trident refit contract, believing that that would secure the majority of current jobs. Only three months after winning the contract, it was announced last week that the dockyard would shed another 500 jobs by April next year. Several hundred casual contractorised jobs will also go—and there is no promise that that will be the end.

I hope that, when the Minister replies, he will tell the House how the full privatisation that the Secretary of State announced earlier will secure jobs in the Devonport dockyard. Will he tell us how he can keep the undertaking that he made earlier this year to keep a controlling interest in the dockyard that received the nuclear refit contract, when he clearly intends fully to privatise both yards?

In other parts of Plymouth, the Royal Navy armaments depot has been run down, with the loss of hundreds of jobs. Manadon royal naval engineering college is to close in just over two years, with the loss of 200 jobs. The royal naval hospital has closed, with a consequent loss of jobs, and the casualty service that it offered to the local community has disappeared. MOD houses have stood empty for years while the city council struggles to find accommodation for people in the city.

Sadly, that is becoming an all too familiar story. The Tories keep telling us that defence jobs are safe in their hands, yet a few hundred people are laid off here, a naval hospital closes there and buildings are left deserted as the MOD ups camp and moves out with no consultation with the local community.

The truth is that, despite the reassurances from Ministers, thousands of people in the south-west—and hundreds of thousands across the country—have lost their

[Mr. David Jamieson]

jobs in the defence industries. Jobs will continue to be lost unless we stop the futile arguments about which party would cut more defence jobs.

We must acknowledge the seriousness of the situation. A review of strategy and policy is urgently needed to manage future changes. Nobody now believes the Government when they say that defence jobs are safe with them—not just the 10,000 men and women who lost their jobs at Devonport dockyard in recent years but the thousands of service men and women who have given loyal and often gallant service to their country, and who find that their reward is to be handed a P45 and be given six months' notice of the loss of their accommodation, to enter a world of unemployment.

In the early part of this century, and certainly after the first world war, the south-west saw an increasing military presence. The region geared itself to developing and maintaining the country's defence needs, with a large proportion of its businesses undertaking defence work. In the last few years, the military have beat a hasty retreat from the south-west, leaving a trail of unemployment and desolation in their wake. There is no strategy, coherent plan or consultation with local people and businesses, to ensure that changing defence needs will not automatically bring more redundancies and mass unemployment.

Lady Olga Maitland: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Jamieson: Being more gallant than the hon. Member for Croydon, South (Mr. Ottaway), I will give way to the hon. Lady.

Lady Olga Maitland: The hon. Gentleman's crocodile tears over so-called cuts in the defence industry ill suit him. How does he equate his claim with the fact that, for the fifth year running, Labour's annual conference passed a 27 per cent. cut in defence spending, which is the equivalent of £6 billion—more than is spent on any one service in any one year?

Mr. Jamieson: I regret giving way to the hon. Lady, because, as I suspected, her intervention proved to be inane. She ought to visit my constituency and remind the tens of thousands of people there who have lost their jobs in the defence industries that for years they have had a Conservative Government, Conservative city council, Conservative county council, Conservative Member of Parliament and even a Conservative MEP. But still thousands of jobs have been lost in my region. The hon. Lady should speak to my constituents about who caused the loss of their jobs. It was not the Labour party but Conservative complacency over the years.

The withdrawal of the military had a devastating effect on the south-west's civilian population. The capacity of our armed forces has been drastically reduced. Unemployment has greatly increased, and the skills base of companies and workers has been seriously eroded. In Plymouth, we have seen all that happen under the Conservatives.

I hope that some of the Tory Members representing constituencies in the south-west who have protested recently and in the past few days about defence cuts will reflect their feelings in the Lobby—or will they, as is so often the case with south-west Tory Members, behave as lions in the south-west and as sheep at Westminster?

The Government are driven by short-term expediency, with no long-term strategy for defence plans and needs. My region has seen Ministry of Defence houses, Manadon college and industrial buildings sold off to make a quick profit—or more often, left to decay—without any consideration of the long-term use to which those properties could be put to the benefit of those left behind when the military pull out. That is why I join the many hon. Members who said tonight that there is a need for a full review of the country's defence requirements and for long-term plans.

We have been reminded tonight that we live in a quickly changing world. The problems and threats that confront us today are different even from those that faced us two or three years ago. Without some strategy, the Government will continue to make Treasury-led cuts in our military and defence industries, to the point where we will no longer have the resources or industrial base to cope with the changes that the future will certainly bring. If we allow our defence industries to continue their dangerous decline, it will not be long before we will be forced to import essential arms from competitors abroad, because our own capacity to produce them had totally disappeared.

There are a number of ways in which the Government could avoid that unthinkable situation and at the same time help safeguard the jobs of those who are still employed on defence work. It is essential that the Government have a diversification strategy, which would undoubtedly help to maintain our defence capability and to secure the development of skills and technology that would otherwise be lost.

It may not cost the Government much to establish such a strategy, but the overall savings to the country and to its economy would be enormous in the long term—and would be much cheaper than permitting the mass unemployment that has plunged our country deeply into debt.

Labour and other Opposition Members have advocated a diversification policy for at least a decade. The Conservatives have often looked to America for policy inspiration, notably in respect of defence and foreign affairs. I hope that they will take note of President Clinton's diversification initiative. The sum of $19 billion has been set aside to pay for retraining programmes, technology investment and economic development incentives to help companies and communities to convert from a defence economy to a civilian economy.

Contrast that with the actions of our own Government. In the defence industrial base debate on 19 May, the Minister of State for Defence Procurement said that it would not be right for the Government to invent a diversification strategy, and that defence diversification is best left to the companies concerned, not to Government quangos. I hope that that statement will not impede the Minister's progress in Government, because diversification must be the only area of Government not run by a quango.

More worrying is the Minister's complete lack of understanding of the nature of our defence industries. It is sheer lunacy to suggest that market forces should be allowed to decide the fate of thousands of defence workers. The defence industry was artifically created by the Government, and it relies on the Government as its largest customer. The Government control the market, and as such

have an absolute responsibility to manage change, avoid mass unemployment and ensure the survival of capacity for future years.

It is ironic that we have a Conservative Government arguing that market forces alone should determine the fate of defence jobs, yet in America—which has the biggest capitalist free market economy in the world—the Government are spending billions of dollars on diversification, to convert defence industries to civilian industries.

It is time that the Conservatives accepted that their calculations or guesses about levels of defence spending are either hopelessly inaccurate or deliberately dishonest. There is an overwhelming need for the Government to adopt an open and honest policy on defence jobs and defence spending so that the people who work in the industry and those in local communities can plan ahead rather than being laid off at short notice with no prospect of finding other work.

Areas that are heavily dependent on defence must be given funding; either from the Government or from European sources. That is essential to ensure that the communities in which our defence industry is based can adapt to the loss of or changes in employment and the possible knock-on effects on the local economy.

For that reason, the Government should be 100 per cent. behind European Community initiatives such as the KONVER programme, which will release much-needed funds for areas affected by defence cuts. Until now, the Government have been rather half-hearted in their support for the scheme, although we could receive a total of £15 million of aid from it. It is therefore essential that the Government adopt a coherent strategy to ensure that we have the capability to react to any threat should the need arise.

If the defence needs of this country continue to be left to market forces, thousands more defence workers will lose their jobs. We need policies that will ensure that the skills, technology and research and development are transferred from defence to the civilian sector instead of being lost. Without planning, co-operation, investment and a coherent strategy from the Government, our defence industry will wither to the point where we shall cease to be able to respond to our military needs. If the future of our defence companies, defence workers and defence-dependent communities matter to the Government, the Government must act to protect them now.

9 pm

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): I declare two interests. First, I am a parliamentary adviser to Thorn-EMI and, secondly, as a participant in the parliamentary armed forces scheme, I had the privilege of visiting Belize last week under the auspices of 45 Commando Royal Marines.

The role of our armed forces in Belize is a classic example of how well-equipped British troops can maintain the territorial integrity and sovereignty of a weak and relatively poor Commonwealth country with a powerful neighbour which, although it now has diplomatic relations with Belize and has recognised its sovereignty, does not recognise its boundaries. I hope that the British Government will reconsider their abrogation of the defence commitment to Belize and will not only provide training for our forces as envisaged but, if there were a change in international security in the area, would come to that country's defence.

I listened attentively to my right hon. and learned Friend's speech. If I may say so, I thought that it was rather meagre broth. All his colleagues wish him well, but our optimism would have been greater if he had defined the position beyond which he and his ministerial team would not retreat against a Treasury onslaught. That position was not defined, which makes one anxious about the level of the Government's commitment to defence.

My right hon. and learned Friend spoke of classless gongs among other things, but we need to know which equipment programmes are sacrosanct in the eyes of the Ministry of Defence, the force levels below which there will be no further diminution and the roles which will always be maintained by the Government. I am not against savings in the defence budget—far from it. Like some of my right hon. and hon. Friends, I recognise the need for the Government to cut public expenditure, but I believe that greater cuts should be made in social security spending rather than defence spending.

If there are to be cuts in defence spending, two considerations can be identified immediately. The first is the boondoggle of the new Procurement Executive headquarters north of Bristol, which, I am told, is to cost hundreds of millions of pounds.

The second, and more important, is our stationing of 25,000 soldiers and airmen in Germany. If the Government were to announce their intention to initiate a withdrawal from Germany, it would have a wholly salutary effect. It would eliminate the imbalance in our defence dispositions, and would signal to the Russians our belief in their commitment to withdraw their forces from the eastern parts of Germany by the latter part of, I believe, August 1994.

If the Russians reneged on that or stayed in the Baltic states, our phased withdrawal could be reviewed. However, I believe that we should declare our intention to withdraw, and that we should move to a strategy of "défense à tous azimuts", as General Ailleret, the former French chief of staff, described it—an omnidimensional defence strategy.

What would such a strategy entail? First, it would entail a nuclear element, because deterrence is paramount. For deterrence to be effective, it must be graduated deterrence. One cannot have just the upper component—a strategic delivery system or a quasi-strategic system, which is what the Government propose by replacing the tactical air-to-surface missile with a modified form of Trident. One has to be able to offer an appropriate response at every level of the threat in order to be able to deter.

Secondly, there must be the defence of the United Kingdom base, which will require effective air defence and defence of the sea lanes and contiguous seas, involving anti-submarine warfare, mine counter-measures, and maritime attack and maritime air defence.

Thirdly, we shall need appropriate intervention forces, either to intervene on the continent or to act in support of the United Nations or Western European Union, or, conceivably, further afield. That must mean an effective amphibious contribution with not just a landing platform, helicopters, but two new landing platform dock vessels, air transport—perhaps the C130J in the short term and, in the longer term, the Euroflag strategic freighter—and a sufficiency of helicopters, both utility helicopters and dedicated attack helicopters.

[Mr. John Wilkinson]

Fourthly, we shall need an expansion capability—sufficient reserves. I will not go on about that; other hon. Members have spoken eloquently. However, I believe that those reserves should include a flying element for the Royal Auxiliary Air Force.

Fifthly, there is the maintenance of a defence industrial base. To expand militarily in this uncertain world, one needs to expand not only manpower, but material, and to have the industrial capability to do so.

I must return to the element in our defence which I believe to be paramount and which has always been paramount for the Conservative party—our nuclear deterrent. The inviolability of our nuclear deterrent was something of which Conservatives were proud. It was the Opposition, both Labour and Liberal, who were unreliable about nuclear deterrence. I believe that, strategically, we Tories are now being unreliable, and I will say why.

First, an air-launched system, such as TASM, is the only one that is truly flexible. If we wish to remain a serious independent nuclear power on a par with France, regardless of any broader strategic or tactical considerations, to rely on Trident alone is unwise. To put all the country's nuclear eggs in one basket is to run the risk of being overtaken by advances in anti-submarine warfare, in mine warfare or in anti-ballistic missile defence, or of being hit by a sudden technical or mechanical failure.

Secondly, there is visibility. The mere deployment of aircraft that are known or thought to be nuclear-capable close to areas where a threat of chemical warfare or of nuclear attack exists is a clearer deterrent and a clearer signal to a potential aggressor than any submarine-launched system could be.

Thirdly, there is survivability. An air-launched stand-off weapon can avoid both anti-ballistic missile defences and anti-aircraft and surface-to-air missiles. Of course, it also constitutes a major insurance against global anti-missile defences.

Fourthly, there is credibility. If we can only threaten the ultimate—the launching of, in essence, a strategic system—it is not as credible a deterrent in any sense as aircraft.

Fifthly, air launched systems must be adaptable. They must be conventionally capable as well as nuclear-capable. The same cannot be said of submarines.

Sixthly, aircraft have the advantage of mobility. They can be deployed rapidly with air-to-air refuelling to the furthest theatre in a way that submarines cannot.

Last but not least, NATO's new strategic concept specifically calls for an up-to-date mix of nuclear weapons. If we rely on Trident alone, we do not have it.

We should realise that the signs are that our American friends are reducing, at least politically, their commitment to western Europe. It is not the time for us to diminish our defences. I hope that Her Majesty's Government will draw the appropriate conclusions.

9.10 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): We are debating this year's defence estimates a short time after debating last year's defence estimates. That is slightly unusual. We are presented with estimates of £23,401,000,000, or 4 per cent. of gross domestic product. That is a small reduction on past years. In future years we expect a much larger reduction, but it has not yet happened. We still spend 4 per cent. of gross domestic product on military expenditure through the estimates every year.

Tomorrow's order paper will include an amendment that I have tabled to this year's estimates. It calls for new estimates to be drawn up which reflect the need for massive reductions in spending and specifically requests that estimates be presented which bring British planned expenditure down to at least the European average, as a prelude to greater cuts in further years. Crucially, it calls for the establishment of an arms conversion agency to convert jobs in the arms industry to more socially useful work, the concellation of Trident, the decommissioning of nuclear weapons, and the ending of nuclear tests.

The whole strategy of the United Kingdom is wrong. There should be a serious defence review to examine the levels of expenditure. Britain is racked with a debate about the future of the social security system and the welfare state. Health service expenditure is constantly under threat as one local hospital after another closes. There is a decline in the standard of the normal infrastructure in Britain, from drainage to the railways and the roads and every other thing because as a country we have become obsessed with a high level of military expenditure and the direction of skills and research into military might that is not necessary.

In managing the changes in the industries of Britain, the Government have done nothing to look to the skills of those who work in the defence industries. Instead, the Government have allowed market forces to let rip. Thousands of highly skilled workers who in the past made aircraft or other forms of military technology, especially in avionics, are being made redundant. As my hon. Friend the Member for Barrow and Furness (Mr. Hutton) said, they are now mostly driving minicabs or queuing at the unemployment exchanges. It is mad. It is an evasion of all responsibility for the Government to say, "Leave it all to market forces; they will sort the problem out." Market forces will not and cannot sort the problem out.

We must have an arms conversion agency which will look seriously at the skills that exist, the investment that is being made, and the potential for making more socially useful products in those shipyards and aircraft and other factories. It is irresponsible to do anything other than that. The Government simply say that market forces will solve the whole problem.

Market forces are driven by the market and the desire of some people to make a great deal of money. If that money is made by selling off land—as in the case of British Aerospace and Royal Ordnance—that is how people will make the money. They do not give a damn about the skills of the people who worked in those industries. That is why the amendment that I have tabled argues strongly, as my hon. Friend the Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) argued, the case for a serious arms conversion agency that will involve those who work in the industry, local authorities and others. I hope that we shall get that in the future. I must say that, given this Government's approach, I very much doubt it.

Today's debate has revealed that, apparently, it has been decided to cancel the TASM project. If that is so, I wish that the Government at least had the honesty to make that clear. If it has been cancelled, my reaction would be, "So far, so good." The Government should go further, however, and look at the principle behind nuclear weapons.

I object not just to the costs associated with nuclear weapons and their development, but to the principle of

having them. Those weapons have been used only twice in war: in 1945, at Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and 60,000 people were killed in each city. Indeed, people are still dying as a result of those nuclear explosions, which were tiny in comparison with those that would be caused by the nuclear warheads available today.

Mr. Henry Bellingham (Norfolk, North-West): They have not been used again because they have kept the peace.

Mr. Corbyn: That is not so. Those weapons have done nothing but create greater and greater dangers and cause many instances of destruction and cancer arising from nuclear testing. I am glad that the United States Administration are now trying to call a halt to nuclear testing, although the British Government want to continue with it. I hope that we shall have a total ban on such testing in the future.

The Government estimate that, so far, the capital costs associated with the Trident nuclear missile programme stand at £10 billion, but Greenpeace estimates that £16 billion has been spent. The Government also estimate that running costs of £5·7 billion have been incurred, while Greenpeace estimates that £15·2 billion has been spent. We are faced with the most incredible potential expenditure of £30 billion on that programme.

I must ask those who are devoted to nuclear weapons and to the Trident system: who is the enemy against whom this enormous firepower will be directed? Answer is there none, because there is no enemy in sight, but those people need to create one. For that reason, many research institutes look around the world for potential enemies against whom those awful weapons can be targeted.

If such a weapon is used at any time, the result is completely useless because it kills the people who fire it in as great numbers as those against whom it is fired. That was revealed at Chernobyl, and that explosion was tiny in comparison with the explosive power of current nuclear warheads.

We must take nuclear proliferation seriously. Trident represents the greatest proliferation and is contrary to the spirit of the non-proliferation treaty. We should call a halt to Trident now so that the money spent can be used for arms conversion while the money saved in the future could be used to rebuild the social infrastructure and industrial base of our society. That is far better than continuing with mass unemployment and the poverty that goes with it.

There is a poison surrounding the nuclear industry. I think of that poor man, Mordechai Vanunu, who is still in prison in Israel, in solitary confinement, because he dared to speak the truth about the Israeli development of nuclear weapons. What is being done to assist him in gaining his freedom?

The Government are poised to make a decision on THORP. I hope that they will decide not to go ahead with that plant, but I believe that its development is linked to nuclear missiles. I hope that we can turn our backs once and for all on the horrors of nuclear weapons and nuclear wars by cancelling Trident, decommissioning Polaris and declaring ourselves a non-nuclear country. That might assist any moral force that we might like to bring to the non-proliferation process. It would certainly do more in that respect than would be gained by developing Trident.

What hypocrisy it is for us to go around the world and say that we do not believe that anyone else should have nuclear weapons when, by the way, we have duplicated fivefold the number of such weapons that we hold. That is nonsense and hypocritical. If we want to put a stop to nuclear proliferation, we should stop our own nuclear arms production.

We have been told many times that arms exports are the foundation for many jobs and potential prosperity. I would question the effect that high levels of expenditure on arms and defence-related research has had on British industry. We are less efficient and less advanced than those countries which have spent far less on arms development. Money invested in socially useful production would lead to better standards of living and a more harmonious society than that offered by the continued obsession with developing the arms trade.

There are those who say that the development of a revised version of Tornado or of the European fighter aircraft will create markets for the future. It is no good calling for expenditure for exports today if tomorrow we condemn Indonesia for bombing East Timor from planes that have been provided by this or any other country. The link between a high level of arms exports and abuses of human rights by the vile regimes which buy the weapons cannot be denied.

There are those who talk of the end-user certificate system. I draw their attention to an article in *Defence News*, issue dated 27 September to 3 October, by Alessandro Politti. The article describes the present situation in Italy. Following the scandal of illegal arms sales to Iran in 1987, a strict system of end-user certificates for the monitoring of sales was developed. That is apparently now to be cancelled to allow Italy to increase its arms exports. We have seen the effect of arms exports on Iraq. It is time that we called an end to arms exports and started to develop the more peaceful opportunities that are available.

The world is a troubled and divided place. I will conclude with this thought. As we speak, the poorest of the poor countries in the world are getting poorer. There is more unemployment, poverty, homelessness and hunger. Resources are being transferred rapidly from the poor to the rich. Most conflicts stem from poverty and from arguments about resources and power. If one tenth of the money that this country is putting into the defence estimates had gone to the people of Somalia and the other countries that were facing terrible economic strife in the 1970s and 1980s, perhaps there would not be the awful conflicts in that region now.

We should be dedicating ourselves to a peaceful world, rather than arming ourselves for war upon war upon war. We should deal with the basic problems of the planet. I hoped at least that there would be a defence review. The review could look at what is, I believe, the unanswerable case for a large reduction in Britain's military spending to make an example to the rest of the world.

9.23 pm

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside): It is good to hear that the voice of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament is still alive and well on the Opposition benches.

A feature of the debate has been the common theme throughout, and if anything that will send a strong message to the Treasury. The theme struck by hon. Members should be welcomed by my right hon. and learned Friend the

[Mr. Michael Colvin]

Secretary of State and by his Ministers. If that unanimity continues, his arm will be strengthened in his dealings with the Treasury.

Although we welcome the new format for this year's White Paper—it was certainly much easier to understand—the House should be concerned that it was so late in publication. That meant that the members of the Select Committee had to get on their running shoes to digest it and produce a report. We have done so, and in time for today's debate.

It seems that a fundamental flaw in the White Paper, which was also the theme of many hon. Members during the debate, was the absence of an overall defence strategy. I would suggest that, when the White Paper on defence is debated in future, the Foreign Secretary should open the debate and not the Secretary of State for Defence. The Secretary of State for Defence should wind up the debate and comment on hon. Members' remarks.

My right hon. and Learned Friend's new proposition is that the defence of this country falls into three distinct roles. Role 1 is the defence of the realm and of our dependent territories. Role 2 is our obligation in a wider sphere to Europe and to NATO. Role 3 is our international commitment. If we accept that proposition, the third role needs to be defined clearly, and the best person to do that is the Foreign Secretary.

I am concerned that that role is not clearly defined at the moment. There have been calls for a full-scale defence review, but I contend that such a review should be taking place day by day and night by night. It should be constant; it should never stop. I also feel that it would reassure the House if, at the beginning of our defence debates, the Foreign Secretary explained in the broadest terms from the Dispatch Box precisely what our security role is in the world at large.

As regards role 3—our obligation to take part in United Nations peacekeeping and peacemaking activities—we, an international trading nation, have as great an interest as any country in world peace. That is why I believe that our commitment to take part in UN peacekeeping and peacemaking operations is very important to us. A study of the figures in the defence White Paper—and particularly in table 5—reveals that the resources in terms of men, materials and money being devoted to role 3 are zero. That means that such commitments can be fulfilled only at the cost of taking men, materials and resources from our commitment to role 1—the defence of the realm—and role 2. That is very dangerous, especially taking into account the fact that, this year alone, regional defence activities—which would come under role 3—are costing £3,700 million. Where are the money and the resources to fulfil that additional role to come from? That question urgently needs answering.

I welcome the rest of the defence White Paper. I certainly applaud its new format. I also welcome the remarks that the Secretary of State was able to make today. I am concerned, though, about the additional strains on our armed forces and on their ability to fulfil roles 1 and 2. If we are to start taking part in international peacekeeping commitments, we must bear in mind the strains that are being felt by service men and their families—especially those on emergency tours in Northern Ireland and Bosnia—and the profound effect on morale.

Morale is already low, and the impact of low morale on recruitment will be severe. If nothing is done, it will be not the Treasury but the lack of recruits that ultimately cuts our armed forces. I know from experience and from my postbag just how many families are concerned about the impact on morale.

No one has so far paid tribute to a certain lady called Annie Armstrong, the agony aunt in *Soldier* magazine, who died in May this year. I think that it is appropriate to do so at this point. Annie did terrific work on behalf of service men's families, and she will be greatly missed. I very much hope that someone with her courage and determination can don her mantle.

I want to say something about procurement. We have heard a lot of talk about the importance of our defence industry and the need to maintain our defence industrial base. I accept all that, and I realise that, as defence contraction takes place, there is a need to ensure that those factories still maintain viability so that they are there to increase defence output should the need arise. However, I totally reject the idea of Government intervention to help that.

In the spring, I visited the United States as a member of the Select Committee on Defence. We heard from the Americans about their plans for conversion, as they call it—in other words, diversification by the defence industries into civilian output. We have heard reference from the Opposition Benches to a figure of $19 billion, which the American President has committed to those proposals. We found no evidence that that was proving effective, and there was much criticism about the waste of resources. We have to think very carefully about that before we are even tempted to take such a path. It can be wasteful and counter-productive.

In conclusion, I shall mention the EH101 helicopter. In the early hours of the morning during the debate on the Consolidated Fund Bill, I told my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement that I hoped that there would be no more speeches about the EH101 helicopter, yet still no decision has been made.

In *Defence Industry Digest*, which appeared on the bookstalls a couple of days ago, I saw a report which says:

"SUPPORT HELICOPTERS. The wait may be over. At the time of going to press, reliable sources were claiming that the MoD had finally agreed on the purchase of 25 EH101 utility helicopters for the Royal Air Force and moreover was pressing the Netherlands to order 17 of them."

I know that the Secretary of State has been to Westland; he was there only last Wednesday. I hope that what he saw and heard will enable him to confirm that order. I also hope that my hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces, in replying to the debate, will be able to confirm that the specification for that aircraft is exactly as required, which will make his job of confirming the order even easier.

9.31 pm

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): The hon. Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) and I both serve on the Select Committee on Defence. There is a unanimous view in that Committee that all is not well in British defence policy, and the unanimous opinion that has been expressed by hon. Members on both sides of the House during the debate is that United Kingdom defence policy is a shambles and must be put right.

We have the amazing situation in which we have the ability to destroy Moscow—and any other centre with anti-ballistic missile protection—in the certain knowledge that such an attack would achieve global destruction, but our armed forces are seriously overstretched in their efforts to keep peace in Northern Ireland and undertake humanitarian or peacemaking duties for the United Nations in Bosnia or elsewhere. Frankly, the notion of our leading role in the Allied Command Europe Rapid Reaction Corps is now barely credible, and if it is barely credible now it will be even less credible if the Chancellor has his way with further cuts in the defence budget this month.

The idea that an independent British nuclear deterrent was strategically vital always was a bit far-fetched, but, as Russian tanks turn their guns on their own Parliament, it seems unlikely that our Polaris force has much influence on matters in that city today.

The Labour party was right to oppose the acquisition of the Trident system, and I wholeheartedly welcome the announcement by the Secretary of State for Defence today that the tactical air-to-surface missile programme is to be abandoned. The global destructive power of the Royal Navy is beyond our wildest nightmares, without any need to double it up with another generation of RAF nuclear weapons.

Some of my hon. Friends may be deluding themselves, however, about the potential savings that could be achieved by cutting the Trident programme at this state in our career. We have the damn thing, whether we want it or not, and we are committed to paying for it, so I urge the Government to save whatever they can by perhaps reducing the number of boats to be built, and by keeping patrols to a minimum.

Indeed, why on earth do we need to patrol under present circumstances? I agree with the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) that we should explore the scope for sharing a European deterrent with our NATO "colleagues" in France, but I recognise that there is not much money to be saved there—certainly not as much as some people would like to think.

As to the RAF and stand-off missiles, while I do not think that there ever was much justification for a nuclear-capable TASM, manifestly the RAF urgently needs an accurate conventional stand-off capability. We saw the kind of attacks that the RAF had to carry out in the Gulf and we should not expect our airmen to attack well-defended installations from close range in such circumstances.

Therefore, staff requirement 1242 should be a priority. The United Arab Emirates, God bless them, have paid for the development of an ideal family of stand-off weapons by GEC-Marconi to be manufactured in this country, employing not only some of my constituents but also some constituents of the Secretary of State for Defence. So there is a case for considering the acquisition of such weapons urgently, and I hope that the MOD will actively and urgently pursue that option.

I make that point because I am acutely aware of the instability prevailing in Europe and many other parts of the world. I also recognise the proper anxiety of our people that the United Kingdom should fulfil its role within NATO in helping the United Nations to deter and, when necessary, resist aggression and oppression in different parts of the world. We need our conventional forces and defence industrial base, but we are treating them disgracefully. The Select Committee has ample evidence of overstretch in our forces. We have seen it over and again. We also have evidence of the need to sustain and, in some cases, augment our conventional capabilities.

I am concerned about naval ships—destroyers, frigates and particularly minesweepers. We should be looking at that area more. We should also consider the capacity of the RAF. Some hon. Members have referred to the need for a replacement of Hercules transport aircraft and helicopters. I am aware of the problem of the reserves, and my hon. Friend the Member for Dunfermline, West (Ms Squire) talked about the parlous state of employment in the royal dockyards and other defence industries.

I am particularly concerned about the continuing misery caused by overstretch in the Army. As a Scot, I take this opportunity to reassert the overwhelming case for retaining the Queen's Own Highlanders and the Gordon Highlanders. The addback that took place last year was manifestly insufficient in view of the task that we expect of our forces.

I am appalled by the ill-considered salami slicing being undertaken by the Ministry of Defence on the instructions of the Treasury. The House would not let a Labour Government get away with handling Britain's defence in that way. If the House is to do its duty, it will not let a Conservative Government get away with abusing Britain's defence, either. We have heard from both sides of the House again and again in this debate that we need a proper defence review. We should not restructure our forces purely on Treasury diktat. That is what the House should demand.

9.37 pm

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Jeremy Hanley): In his opening speech, my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence spoke of the force restructuring that is taking place to reflect the end of the cold war and of the difficulty of predicting the future. There are new risks and commitments, but there has been a further reduction in the risks to the United Kingdom even since we announced the details of our plans for force restructuring in 1991.

My right hon. and learned Friend mentioned the need to balance our capabilities with our commitments, which was a key theme of the White Paper "Defending our Future". May I begin by reviewing in more detail the commitments element of that balance. First, I pay tribute to the 24 hon. Members who have spoken in the first half of this defence debate. In their way they have all spoken with passion, and the country's defence is the stronger for it.

The global chart on pages 12 and 13 of "Defending our Future" gives an idea of the breadth of our commitments across the world: from forces conducting operations in Northern Ireland, Bosnia and Iraq to forces deployed in central Europe to provide our insurance against the re-emergence of a major external threat in the long term; from the garrison in the Falkland Islands, all the way to exercises in Norway, from deployments in north America to our presence in Hong Kong. For each commitment there is an explicit policy rationale, which has been set out in chapters 3, 4 and 5 of the document.

However, that does not mean that policies cannot be changed or commitments adjusted. We keep all our commitments and their associated force levels under review. Indeed, in the past year or so we have seen a number of reductions in our force levels and overseas commitments.

[Mr. Jeremy Hanley]

Let me mention a few examples. My hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson) referred to Belize, where our military presence is being reduced gradually to take account of the changing security environment in the region. In particular, Guatemala's recognition of Belize as a sovereign state in 1991, which was endorsed by the Guatemalan congress in November last year, has greatly changed the situation.

I can say from personal experience, from my visit to the British garrison last month, that the evolution of our presence in Belize is proceeding extremely well, with tremendous co-operation and good will on both sides. I was able to announce that, in January 1994, the Belize defence forces will assume responsibility for the defence of their own country, and by October 1994 our garrison will have been reduced to a training team of some 100 personnel. We envisage that those personnel will be joined by a company-sized training group of 120 soldiers, who will train on regular detachments throughout the year. That amounts to a total of just over 200 personnel, which is still a sizeable presence.

My visit brought home to me the skill and professionalism shown by our forces there, who are carrying out their tasks of preparing for the changes ahead with enormous dedication and application. That reinforced my experience of the professionalism of British forces elsewhere, a subject to which I will return later.

Our service men are clearly respected and are excellent ambassadors for our country. I hope that the House will join me in expressing our thanks and appreciation for a job very well done. Our service personnel on loan to the Belize defence force are working in a difficult and challenging environment and they are clearly doing an excellent job with great courage and good humour.

The challenge is no less great for the partners and families of British forces in Belize, who cope equally well and for whom I have the greatest admiration. It is a tribute to all their efforts that British forces continue to be made so welcome in Belize.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor (Upminster): While my hon. Friend is on the subject of Belize, will he tell the House whether the British Government are prepared to guarantee the security of Belize after we have left that ex-colony? My understanding is that our present commitments run out in 1994 and I am sure that the Government of Belize will be pressing Her Majesty's Government—if they have not already done so—to continue to support them in the event of invasion. I would welcome my hon. Friend's reassurance on that.

Mr. Hanley: I know that my hon. Friend will be studying Belize in even more detail early next year. Being prepared to respond to changing circumstances means not only being ready to deploy forces where necessary, but, as in the case of Belize, recognising when the time is right for our forces to be withdrawn.

Our forces were sent to Belize and we took on the responsibility when it gained its independence 12 years ago, and we have carried on that responsibility. We were there because of the Guatemalan threat. Belize has come a long way since independence and is justly proud of its achievements and its hopes and aims for the future.

Mr. Home Robertson: Does that mean no?

Mr. Hanley: I am coming to the answer. I am convinced that Belize will carry forward its responsibilities with maturity and determination.

I believe that the international community—this is a serious point, particularly for the people of Belize—and especially Belize's many friends in north and central America, share our pleasure that the relationship between Belize and Guatemala has improved. I am equally sure that the international community will take whatever steps are necessary to ensure that Belize continues to prosper as an independent sovereign state. We will enter into discussions with those interested in the region to ensure that Belize is not let down. We do not let down our friends.

We have decided that we no longer need to retain an armoured reconnaisance squadron within the sovereign base area in Cyprus, and we have been able to reduce our force levels commensurately. That in no way implies a lessening of the importance that we attach to our presence there, but is a sensible reappraisal of what is required in operational and security terms.

Also in Cyprus, we have been able to rationalise our contribution to the United Nations force, reducing our numbers by almost half by the end of this year while maintaining our strong commitment to peace in Cyprus through the United Nations.

The House will be interested to note that our troops will be working alongside an Argentine contingent for the first time, which is a clear example of desirable and improved relationships.

As the House knows, the garrison in Hong Kong will be completely withdrawn by 30 June 1997. In the meantime, British forces are being reduced in stages as local forces assume responsibility for its former operational tasks. To that end we plan to reduce the number of infantry battalions in Hong Kong from the present three to a single battalion by September 1994. Units of all three services will remain there until its handover to China in 1997.

Mr. Frank Cook: As the Minister knows, the Hong Kong garrison supplies a small detachment to South Korea for ceremonial purposes, et cetera—whatever the "et cetera" means. Does the Minister's commitment on withdrawal from Hong Kong by 1997 mean that by then we should have resolved the armistice with North Korea and have signed a peace agreement?

Mr. Hanley: I think that we must solve one problem at a time. As far as the exact answer to the hon. Gentleman's question is concerned, I shall let him know what happens to that particular commitment. I imagine that it would be removed as the commitment to Hong Kong is removed.

We have also carried out overseas United Nations observer mission contributions in Western Sahara, Sinai and Cambodia. We have carried out our work there with great dedication. It is in line with our policy of entering into commitments for a limited time-scale and with the concept that such peacekeeping tasks should be shared between nations.

Other areas continue to make significant demands on our armed forces. In Northern Ireland in particular we continue to support the Royal Ulster Constabulary in the fight against terrorism. We have some 19,000 service men and women currently deployed in the Province, including some 18 units of battalion size in the infantry role. That constitutes the armed forces' largest peacetime commitment.

Much has been said in the House before now on the bravery and dedication of personnel serving in Northern Ireland. I believe that that is a subject to which we shall return regularly and keep at the forefront of our minds. I am fairly well placed to pay tribute to the people who risk their lives every day in supporting the RUC to ensure the preservation of law, order and democracy. After all, in 1992, six soldiers were murdered and a further 320 injured while serving there. There were more than 350 awards for gallantry and meritorious conduct. The Army's bomb disposal teams were called out on 1,544 occasions and neutralised some six tonnes of explosives.

In Bosnia, all three services are contributing to the distribution of humanitarian aid and the peace process as a whole. The battalion group in Bosnia has been a familiar sight on our television screens over the past year. Its white painted Warrior armoured vehicles have come to symbolise hope midst despair. Our soldiers have displayed remarkable professionalism and restraint in dealing with all sides of the internecine conflict in the former Yugoslavia. They deserve the unqualified thanks of the British people for what they have done.

Let us not forget the contributions of the Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force in providing support to forces on the ground in Bosnia, in participating in the NATO maritime and air operations in the area and in playing a major part in the humanitarian airlift to Sarajevo. It is no surprise to me to see that, during his recent talk to the Royal United Services, Institute, General Morillon, the former commander-in-chief of the UN forces in Bosnia-Herzegovina, paid particular tribute to the support that he received from the UK contingent. The British forces in the former Yugoslavia are rightly held in the highest regard by all other nations involved. That was made abundantly clear to me during my recent visit to the region, to which my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State referred in his opening speech.

I found my visit immensely valuable. I was able to see for myself the arduous circumstances in which British forces are carrying out their important tasks, assess at first hand the risks that they face, which are greater than I had thought, confirm that they do so willingly—far more willingly than I had thought—and to confirm that they have all they need to do their jobs, and see what they achieve.

My programme for the four days included a visit to the RAF detachment at Ancona and Gioia del Colle in Italy. I joined a Hercules relief flight into Sarajevo, where I had the brief opportunity to see for myself the appalling humanitarian situation. At Gioia, I visited our RAF Tornado F3 and Jaguar detachments and they are both performing excellent tasks. The Tornados fly around the clock in all weathers to retain the integrity of the no-fly zone over Bosnia and the Jaguars fly training and reconnaissance missions over Bosnia in readiness, if required, to carry out close air support operations.

From Italy, I moved to our forces in Bosnia and Croatia. I travelled by Warrior over the 55 km road between Tomislavgrad and Gorni Vakuf, which the Royal Engineers converted from a mountain goat trail. That that road was constructed in less than six months and now supports the vast majority of aid transported between Bosnia and Croatia is an incredible feat, to which the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) rightly referred. The Sappers may feel that they are not the most glamorous part of our armed forces, but I can tell the House that, without them, little aid would be getting through to central and eastern Bosnia and countless lives would be lost. They deserve our tributes.

There is no doubt that the task facing our battalion group in Bosnia and those who support it is particularly frustrating. Conditions on the ground vary from day to day and sometimes from hour to hour and there are times when little aid can be got through to those who need it. What was also, sadly, quite apparent to me is that there are hardly any innocent parties among the warring factions in Bosnia. Despite this, and despite the risks that our forces face daily, if not hourly, it was also clear to me that their mission remains viable overall. I am also confident that they have the equipment and support that they need to accomplish it. They want to do that.

I also had the opportunity to visit the men and women on board HMS Invincible, on station in the Adriatic. I was most impressed by the manner in which the task group is undertaking its mission. In Zagreb, I was able to have most useful discussions with Mr. Susak, the Croatian Defence Minister, and with General Cot, the commander of UNPROFOR. I was also pleased to have the chance to call on our British field ambulance unit shortly before its redeployment at the end of September after a total of 15 months in which British units have served in this role, and to thank it for a job well done. Throughout my visit, as with many of my visits in September, I was immensely impressed with, and very proud of, the attitude, professionalism and determination of our forces.

Mr. Macdonald: While he was in Zagreb, did the Minister receive any requests from UNPROFOR representatives for the field ambulance unit to be retained in position in Bosnia and Croatia, and, if so, what was his reaction?

Mr. Hanley: Our field ambulance unit was there for 15 months and the United Nations accepted that it would be exchanged for another unit. The Americans are now there. We have left behind, in a supervisory role, four members of the unit. The unit did tremendous work, but it was time for it to come home. I believe that that was the right policy. If the hon. Gentleman meant to ask whether people wanted us to continue doing the job, the answer to that question is yes, because there is no doubt that the unit achieved a great deal of good in Croatia.

The services, particularly those in Bosnia and Croatia, have tremendous leadership but the individual men and women there are tackling thankless and often frustrating tasks with the patience and stoicism that matches their skill and courage. Many of them are regularly in the public eye, but others in support roles are not. My visit to Yugoslavia made clear to me the tremendous professionalism and ability of our troops. Much is said about morale—in particular that morale in the armed forces is fragile—but when one sees members of the armed forces doing what they joined up to do, and when they know that they are saving lives and doing good, my goodness me, one feels proud of them.

It was also revealing, but not surprising, that the former Yugoslavia was a key preoccupation in Washington when I called in there on my return from Belize for discussions with members of the new Administration. I also had the opportunity to discuss the recent review of the United States armed forces—the "bottom-up" review. We discussed some equipment issues and we gained an

[Mr. Hanley]

important insight into the United States views on NATO. The recent review reaffirmed the commitment of the United States to NATO and to stationing United States forces in Europe. That commitment is vital and it was clear from my talks that it remains a heartfelt commitment.

Mr. Martlew: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Hanley: There is not much time, but if the hon. Gentleman wishes to make a small point, he may do so.

Mr. Martlew: I am grateful. The hon. Gentleman said that there have been 24 speeches today. When will he address the issues raised in them?

Mr. Hanley: The hon. Member for Carlisle (Mr. Martlew) will also know that this debate goes on for a couple of days, so there is lots of time yet. I look forward to hearing the hon. Gentleman's more complete contribution tomorrow.

The hon. Gentleman interrupted me just as I was about to mention the special relationship that we have with the United States. The commitment of the United States to basing forces in Europe is vital and it was clear from those talks that it remains a heartfelt commitment. We do not underestimate the importance or value of that special relationship and will continue to work hard to protect it.

Whatever differences there may have been over Bosnia earlier in the year, Britain and the United States have agreed on a policy of trying to secure a negotiated settlement, while sustaining the humanitarian relief effort and working together to promote that. Many nations are trying to help in Yugoslavia and, of course, we should not fall out because we are tackling those difficult tasks together. That special relationship is vital to the security of Europe and is one reason why we have no clear enemy at the moment.

Another part of the armed forces that I was able to see was the west Indian guardship, which is now in the Caribbean. HMS Active is a marvellous frigate and I am grateful for the special welcome that the Americans give our ships when we visit Miami or Key West. I was left in no doubt about the admiration felt by the United States navy and coast guards for the professionalism of the Royal Navy and the quality of the ship and her equipment. Those comments also apply to HMS Cumberland, which has recently returned.

The House will be aware that United Kingdom forces continue to contribute to coalition air operations in the no-fly zones over northern and southern Iraq. The House will also know that while operations in Northern Ireland and Bosnia attract the greatest media attention and are therefore what most people recognise about the armed forces, the forces also carry out a lot of unglamorous work. After all, sometimes the vital functionss that the armed forces are able to perform in the civil community in the United Kingdom are not recognised, but they should be. In the past week, at the request of the Metropolitan police, following severe flooding in the home counties area, the Household Cavalry Regiment, which is stationed near Windsor, provided overnight shelter and breakfast to families who had been evacuated from their homes.

On the following night, at the request of the National Rivers Authority, soldiers from the postal and courier depot at Mill Hill turned out with vehicles provided by the Royal Logistics Corps transport regiment to fill sand bags. There are a lot of roles that we carry out—there are 50 in the White Paper. We carry out those roles with great dedication and use our forces efficiently and effectively.

In the few minutes left, I shall refer to one or two speeches made earlier. I shall, however, refer to some of those speeches tomorrow, should I continue to hold the floor.

One speech that I found especially interesting was that made by the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn). It was unfair of some people to say that his speech was not a typical Labour party policy speech, because exactly what he said and the motion that he has tabled for consideration tomorrow was carried by 79·923 per cent. of the party at its recent conference. Only 15 per cent. of the Labour party opposed his views. It was therefore interesting that the hon. Member for Islington, North spoke of the genuine view of the Labour party.

May I say to my hon. Friend the Member for Portsmouth, South (Mr. Martin) that the future of the Royal Marines school of music is still under consideration and that the study will take account of the overall review of naval infrastructure and of the changing need for training of military musicians.

Also with respect to my hon. Friend, we have announced the numbers of frigates in the defence estimates. Seven type 23s are currently in service and a further six are on order. Further orders are planned, but no decisions have yet been taken on their size or timing. We hope to be in a position to invite tenders for a further batch of type 23s next year.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wimbledon (Dr. Goodson-Wickes) and other hon. Members spoke of our defence commitments. The figures are well known: my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State and I announced them before we broke for the summer recess. Emergency tours will be 19 months for 1993-94, approximately 20 months for 1994-95 and could go up to 29 months in 1995-96.

We are considering our policy on reserves. My right hon. and learned Friend has issued a consultation paper and we should be grateful for replies from hon. Members.

The hon. Member for Barrow and Furness (Mr. Hutton) mentioned batch 2 Trafalgar class SSNs. Following the completion of design options, studies are being considered on the way forward. Subject to the outcome, we expect to invite——

It being Ten o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

Debate to be resumed tomorrow.

European Economic Area Bill *[Lords]*

Motion made, and Question put,

That, in respect of the European Economic Area Bill *[Lords]*, notices of Amendments, new Clauses and new Schedules to be moved in Committee may be accepted by the Clerks at the Table before the Bill has been read a second time.—*[Mr. Conway.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

Motion made, and Question put,

That, if the European Economic Area Bill *[Lords]* be committed to a Committee of the whole House, further proceedings on the Bill shall stand postponed and that, as soon as the proceedings on any Resolutions come to by the House on the European Economic Area Bill *[Lords] [Money]* and [Ways and Means] have been concluded, this House will immediately resolve itself into a Committee on the Bill.—*[Mr. Conway.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

Vietnamese Boat People

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Conway.]*

10.1 pm

Mr. David Atkinson (Bournemouth, East): The dramatic fall of Saigon took place 18 years ago, and to this day Americans call it the end of the war. For the south Vietnamese, it was the beginning of a dark age of revenge, repression and fear as the communists took over. It was, therefore, understandable that many of them should seek to escape in any way that they could, especially those who were associated with the previous regime and American forces. The boat people, as they came to be called, captured the hearts of the free world, which then did not hesitate to accept them, and 138,000 came from Hong Kong alone.

In more recent years, new waves of boat people have been landing in Hong Kong, mostly from north Vietnam, seeking a better life. Because of a growing refusal to accept them elsewhere, Hong Kong has had no choice but to house them in special camps and has had no alternative but to reach agreement with the Vietnamese Government on an orderly repatriation programme for those who have not been screened in as refugees. Conditions in those camps and the enforced return of their inmates to a country that remains a one-party communist state which continues to deny human rights caused international outrage, which reached a pitch four years ago. It encouraged many constituents to write to their Members of Parliament.

In a statement to the House on 12 December 1989, the Foreign Secretary emphasised that the criteria for establishing who qualifies as a refugee, and thus who is to be repatriated, were agreed with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. The matter was fully debated by the House on 19 December 1989 under supplementary estimates and has been raised since, not least in my questions to Foreign Office Ministers.

Concerns about the situation were expressed in the European Parliament and in the Council of Europe. It was feared that, despite the Vietnamese Government's assurances to the contrary, returnees might be persecuted once they were back in Vietnam. Moreover, human rights non-governmental organisations strongly criticised the screening process operating in Hong Kong, as well as conditions in the camps.

In the Council of Europe, those concerns were referred to its Committee for Refugees, Migration and Demography, which held a hearing last March at which three Vietnamese-in-exile organisations submitted representations to us. In response, the Committee produced a report and appointed our late colleague, Ted Garrett, as rapporteur. I take this opportunity to pay tribute to Ted, who was a good friend to all of us on the Council of Europe and whose death earlier this year was so untimely.

When Ted retired at the last election, I replaced him as rapporteur and, with the Committee's approval, undertook a fact-finding visit in January to see at first hand the situation in the camps in Hong Kong and conditions for the repatriated boat people in Hanoi and Haiphong, which is where most have returned. I should like to record my thanks and that of the hon. Member for Liverpool, Riverside (Mr. Parry), who accompanied me, and to our right hon. Friend, Chris Patten, for all the excellent arrangements that were made for our visit, and to pay tribute to officials concerned with the organisation of the

[Mr. David Atkinson]

camps and the screening process for the most difficult and sensitive job that they have to do. I particularly wish to mention Brian Bresnahan, the Hong Kong Government's refugee co-ordinator. I should also like to thank our diplomatic staff in Hanoi for arranging my visit there in such an efficient manner.

I shall not take up the time of the House by referring in detail to my visit, which is recorded in the Council of Europe document 6818, which led to the resolution passed by the parliamentary assembly on 14 May this year. Had I embarked upon the report three years ago or even later, my recommendations would almost certainly have been completely different. Perhaps I would have wholly accepted what many still feel strongly to this day—that forced repatriation deliberately violates everything for which our European convention on human rights stands, that instead of returning the migrants to Vietnam we should offer them an internationally controlled haven until Vietnam becomes a democracy and they are no longer at risk, and that the screening process is so unfair and conditions in the camps so inhumane that they should be radically reviewed and drastically improved.

I hope that I shall not compromise myself now by saying that today such conclusions are no longer realistic because of the dramatic change in the position over the past 12 months. Last year, only 12 boat people reached Hong Kong; this year, to date, 39 have done so, compared with more than 20,000 in 1991. More than 30,000 have been returned and fewer than 37,000 remain. No doubt my right hon. Friend the Minister will refer to the latest figures when he replies.

To seek to stop that process now would not be credible and would be unfair to those who have returned. It is reasonable to say that the Vietnam to which they are returning is not the same Vietnam from which they risked their lives to flee. While it remains a one-party communist state, maintaining many of the hallmarks that we condemned in communist eastern Europe, its commitment to economic reform since the Soviet Union ended its subsidy and the considerable progress that has been made cannot be denied. That progress is encouraging predictions that the country is poised to become the next Asian dragon.

In the light of what I saw and the extensive discussions that I had, I made a number of proposals to the Council of Europe which are realistic and practical, and which will improve the position for the remaining boat people who await the determination of their status as refugees. It is essential that the European Community be persuaded to maintain its assistance programme in Vietnam beyond next year and to encourage European companies to invest in Vietnam.

We must be encouraged that the United States has now partially lifted its embargo. That must be in the interests of a better life for the returnees in their own country. It will help Vietnam to complete its economic reforms in a free market which includes privatisation, and encourage the improvements in infrastructure that are essential for it to develop its vast potential for tourism and to exploit its rich resources.

I urge that there should be better information services for the migrants in the camps so that they may appreciate more fully the opportunities that await them on their return to their country, instead of fearing the worst as most of them do. I want the opportunities arising from the depletion of the camps to be used to improve the conditions for those who remain in them. I want a more sensitive screening process with better legal representation and the establishment of a permanent review body which will being together those who represent the migrants and those responsible for determining their status to avoid injustice.

Can my right hon. Friend the Minister confirm that, to put pressure on the population in the camps to return, the UNHCR is to reduce repatriation grants by one third—from $360 to $240 per head—if they do not volunteer to return by 1 November this year? Can he confirm that adult education and vocational classes in the camps have been cancelled and opportunities to earn money by helping to administer the camps have been cut?

These are not humanitarian gestures for people who live in unacceptable conditions which my right hon. Friend sees for himself regularly—I believe as recently as last week—and we are fearful about their future.

It is clear that no boat person can feel confident about being returned to Vietnam for as long as that country's Government remain associated with its unacceptable past, for as long as it remains a one-party communist state and for as long as it denies democracy and human rights. Thus, we should be calling on the Vietnamese Government to help themselves by putting their guarantees of no persecution to the test of full access by Amnesty International and other non-governmental organisations, to publish their 1992 guarantees to end all censorship, and to close their gulags and release all their prisoners of conscience.

I understand that Catholic and Protestant priests, several of them in their mid-eighties, remain in prison in Vietnam. They include Father Dominic Tran Dinh Thu, sentenced in 1987 to life imprisonment for criticising the regime's attitude to Christian believers. His sentence was later commuted to 20 years. He has refused release until all other priests of his order have been freed as well, and the Government have returned the property confiscated from his order, the Congregation of the Mother Coredemptrix.

We should also urge the Vietnamese Government to enter into genuine dialogue with the Vietnamese exiles to end their mistrust and encourage reconciliation, so that Asia can prosper in the same way as eastern Europe, where people have buried the past and united to build a better future.

Finally, is it not time for the British Council to establish a presence in Vietnam, now that it is coming out of the cold? The council does a great deal of good promoting our heritage and values throughout the world—values in which there is much interest and for which there is much demand. I hope that the Minister will tell the House tonight that the British Council will be established in Hanoi as soon as possible.

10.11 pm

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Alastair Goodlad): I am most grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, East (Mr. Atkinson) for raising the important issue of Vietnamese migrants to Hong Kong, a problem with which I have been concerned since it first arose. My hon. Friend plays a distinguished role in the international efforts to reach a solution to it. I join him in paying tribute to the efforts of

our late friend and colleague, Ted Garrett, who did much to assist international efforts to alleviate the suffering of the migrants.

The problem has been with us for two decades, during which its nature has changed, just as the situation in Vietnam has changed. There are now just over 37,000 Vietnamese people in Hong Kong camps; much work remains to be done, but there has been remarkable progress over the past few years and I am confident that the end is now in sight.

I welcome the opportunity that my hon. Friend has afforded the House, first to underline what has been achieved and, secondly, to correct certain misconceptions about the treatment of those who have been screened out and of the returnees. I should also like to give credit where it is due—to the people and Government of Hong Kong who have borne the brunt of the problem for so long by providing a place of temporary refuge.

I also give credit to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and to the International Organisation for Migration. They have worked tirelessly with us over the years to ensure that Vietnamese migrants who qualify as genuine refugees are resettled and that those who do not are returned to Vietnam under conditions that guarantee their safety and give them the best chance of picking up their lives where they left off.

It was quite understandable, with conditions in Vietnam as they were in 1975, that all Vietnamese migrants arriving in countries in the region were accorded refugee status and offered resettlement in the west. There is no such justification for according blanket refugee status to all those leaving Vietnam today.

Since 1986, Vietnam has pursued a programme of economic reform, described as Doi Moi, along market economy lines. Living standards have improved and foreign investment has soared. With the lifting of the United States block on the normalisation of Vietnam's relations with the IMF and other financial institutions in July, the country's economy is expected to boom. The Vietnamese Government have enacted a number of recent reforms aimed at guaranteeing the legal and human rights of their citizens.

More than 195,000 of those fleeing Vietnam since 1975 have taken refuge in Hong Kong. Until the mid-1980s, the Vietnamese refugee population in Hong Kong steadily declined as the resettlement programme took effect. About 15,000 in all have come to the United Kingdom, but from 1986 onwards, the situation started to deteriorate rapidly and dramatically. The rate of new arrivals began to outstrip the number of resettlement places available to them in the west, and it became clear that the majority of those leaving were economic migrants, mostly from the northern part of Vietnam, rather than genuine refugees with a well-founded fear of persecution. The United States closed its doors on those people.

In response to those new circumstances, the Hong Kong Government decided, with the British Government's full support, that from 16 June 1988 all Vietnamese arrivals would be subject to screening, to distinguish between those who were refugees and those who were not.

That procedure, based on internationally accepted criteria, including the 1951 convention and the 1967 protocol relating to the status of refugees, and the guidelines issued by the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, was developed in close consultation with UNHCR to ensure that it was fair and thorough and that genuine refugees would not be returned to Vietnam. The screening in Hong Kong, as well as having the full approval of UNHCR, has also passed the scrutiny of judicial review.

Other places of first asylum in the region adopted similar screening measures in March 1989. The arrangements for screening, resettlement and repatriation were embodied in a comprehensive plan of action, agreed at the second international conference on Indochinese refugees in June 1989, and were reviewed at meetings of the steering committee of the international conference in 1989 and 1990. A further steering committee meeting is expected to be held next year.

The comprehensive action plan offers a humane and durable solution to the problem of what are called the boat people. Hong Kong will continue to be a place of first asylum. All Vietnamese migrants arriving there will be screened. If initially found to be non-refugees, they have the right of appeal to an independent review board. If the board upholds the original decision, UNHCR retains the right to exercise its mandate. That guarantees that no one whom the UNHCR believes to be a genuine refugee will be returned to Vietnam.

Some 33,000 Vietnamese have volunteered for repatriation from Hong Kong since March 1989. However, it became clear that voluntary repatriation alone could not solve the problem. In October 1991, the United Kingdom, Hong Kong and Vietnam, with the UNHCR's involvement and encouragement, signed a statement of understanding on the principles of an orderly repatriation programme for all non-refugees in Hong Kong.

Under those arrangments, as a first step all Vietnamese arriving in Hong Kong after 29 October 1991 would be screened immediately and those found not to be refugees would be returned to Vietnam without delay. Later, all non-refugees who were in Hong Kong on 29 October 1991 who did not volunteer to return home would also be repatriated. The modalities for that second phase were agreed between the three Governments on 12 May 1992.

The programme is intended to buttress the UNHCR's voluntary return scheme and to show those in the camps in Hong Kong who have been screened out that we have the will and the means to return non-refugees to Vietnam and that there is no alternative but for them to return. It is based firmly on the principle that no one who is returned will suffer persecution. The programme is fully in accordance with the comprehensive plan of action and with normal international practice for the removal of illegal immigrants. It also serves the best interests of those in camps in Hong Kong without hope of resettlement, whose future lies in their own country—Vietnam.

Since the introduction of the orderly repatriation programme in October 1991, there has been an encouraging surge in the rate of non-refugees volunteering to return. More than 12,000 returned from Hong Kong in that way during 1992. More than 7,000 have returned voluntarily so far this year and more than 4,000 more are currently being processed for return. Even more encouraging, as my hon. Friend has said, the outflow from Vietnam has, for the moment, more or less ceased.

The camp population in Hong Kong as at 1 October was as follows: the number awaiting screening, 11,548; those screened out, 23,600; refugees awaiting resettlement, 2,019, making a total of 37,167. As I have said, 4,000 of those screened out have volunteered to return.

[Mr. Alastair Goodlad]

The Vietnamese authorities have reaffirmed that no one returning to Vietnam will be persecuted. They have agreed to facilitate the monitoring of all those who go back, regardless of their mode of return, to ensure that they are able to resume their lives in safety and dignity.

We recognise that Vietnam's record on human rights still contains room for improvement. We raise our concerns about Vietnam's human rights record at every suitable opportunity. I visited the country about a year ago. We also seek to encourage more accountable government in Vietnam. To that end, we invited the chairman of the Vietnamese National Assembly to visit London later this month, to obtain a better understanding of our own parliamentary system. As my hon. Friend knows, the Prime Minister of Vietnam was a welcome visitor to this country a few months ago.

I emphasise, however, that the Vietnamese Government have scrupulously respected their undertakings not to persecute returning Vietnamese migrants. Since the voluntary repatriation programme began in 1988, more than 45,000 people have returned to Vietnam. UNHCR representatives and British officials monitoring their return have not found one substantiated case of persecution. I see no reason why the Vietnamese authorities should not allow Amnesty International access to returnees. They have certainly allowed a wide range of other non-governmental organisations and human rights organisations to visit them.

We recognise the importance of tackling the root causes of the exodus from Vietnam. We have contributed £4 million to the European Community's international reintegration programme, in addition to our share—currently approximately 16·5 per cent.—of the Community's population We also increased our bilateral aid to Vietnam. As my hon. Friend said, the EC programme will come to an end in 1994. However, Community developmental assistance is likely to continue to flow once the EC-Vietnam co-operation agreement now being negotiated is finalised.

My hon. Friend rightly raised the question of the British Council, which has been a concern and an enthusiasm of my own since I took on my current responsibilities. I am happy to be able to tell my hon. Friend that a British Council representative will begin work in Vietnam within the next month. I hope that that will help further to promote an even better understanding between the United Kingdom and Vietnam.

We are still discussing with the UNHCR possible ways of increasing the rate of voluntary returns, including increased information services. There is a natural limit to the number of returnees that the Vietnamese can handle at any one time, but even if only present levels are maintained, the Hong Kong camps could be empty in less than three years. I can confirm that UNHCR reintegration payments have been reduced—the savings made will be used for reintegration projects in Vietnam—and that adult education and vocational classes have been cancelled. With the decline of the camp population, the UNHCR feels that money is better spent in other areas. Essential services such as children's education and medical care have most certainly not been cut.

We hope that the current arrangements, together with improved conditions and prospects in Vietnam, will ensure that the majority of non-refugees remaining in Hong Kong camps will volunteer to go back home. For those who do not, there will need to be further repatriation flights from time to time.

I pay tribute to the people and Government of Hong Kong. One reason why so many Vietnamese decided to make for Hong Kong was that the territory was staunchly maintaining the principle of first asylum, in spite of the refusal of the major resettlement countries to continue to accept economic migrants. The Vietnamese migrant problem has so far cost Hong Kong about £430 million.

It is not generally appreciated that in other countries in the region, the UNHCR meets care and maintenance costs in full, while for Hong Kong those are on a repayment basis. The UNHCR is able to repay Hong Kong only to the extent that it has funds available and, as a result, Hong Kong is owed some £63 million by the UNHCR. It fully acknowledges its moral obligation to repay, and now includes a reference to that debt in its fund-raising literature.

As a Government, we have firmly reminded the major donors of the debt that the international community owes to Hong Kong for having shouldered the burden of Vietnamese migrants for so long, and we will continue to do so. Since 1989, we ourselves have contributed more than £60 million towards a solution of the problem.

I hope that this debate initiated by my hon. Friend will help to bring wider recognition of Hong Kong's admirable contribution to finding a solution to this long-running problem—and that the solution will be timely and successful.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-nine minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 19 October 1993

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

CITIBANK INTERNATIONAL BILL *[Lords]*

UNIBANK BILL *[Lords]*

Orders for Third Reading read.

To be read the Third time on Thursday 21 October.

Oral Answers to Questions

EMPLOYMENT

Low Pay (Lancashire)

1. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what discussions he has had with jobcentres in Lancashire on low pay.

The Minister of State, Department of Employment (Mr. Michael Forsyth): None, Madam.

Mr. Pike: Will the Minister recognise that it is an absolute scandal that in a survey of five jobcentres in Lancashire in September 1992, 45·8 per cent. of jobs on offer paid less than £99 per week? Will not he recognise that the Government's abolition of the wages councils has increased the number of jobs offering less than £3 an hour? Is not it time that the Government started to give workers in the country fair pay for a fair day's work?

Mr. Forsyth: If the hon. Gentleman had gone up the road to the jobcentre in Victoria earlier in the summer, he would have seen a job advertised at no pay at all, placed by his hon. and learned Friend the Chairman of the Select Committee on Employment. That job was to work for two months with expenses and resulted in an individual being placed in full-time paid work. That is the job of the Employment Service and I should have thought that the hon. Gentleman would congratulate it on the splendid work that it is doing.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: My hon. Friend will be glad to know that many fewer citizens of Lancaster will require the services of the jobcentre, because unemployment fell by 179 last month, which takes us below the national average and below the regional average.

Mr. Forsyth: My hon. Friend is right, not only in what she says about her constituency, but in what is happening up and down the country. Unemployment in the past month fell in every region, and Britain is leading Europe out of recession. We are the only country in Europe, apart from Ireland, that has seen falling unemployment this year. That is entirely due to the policies pursued by the Government, which are opposed by Opposition Members.

Mr. Dobson: Referring to the points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike), how can the Minister justify a situation in which many jobs in Lancashire pay less per hour than the £2·50 a minute that is paid to the boss of the privatised North West Water plc?

Mr. Forsyth: As anyone who is involved in helping unemployed people find jobs knows, for those people who have been out of work for a long time it is most important that they should have an opportunity to have a job that will give them experience. The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that when people are on low pay, family credit and other benefits ensure that incomes are maintained. The truth of the matter is that if the hon. Gentleman had his way with a national minumum wage, 2 million people would be thrown on the dole. The people of Britain do not want that, which is why he is sitting on the Opposition Benches.

Mr. Pike: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. In view of the unsatisfactory and insulting nature of that reply, I shall seek to raise matters on the Adjournment.

Mr. Thurnham: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the key to higher pay——

Madam Speaker: Order. I am very remiss. That point of order closes the question. I overlooked that.

Labour Statistics

2. **Mr. Matthew Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people were employed in manufacturing industry in Somerset, Wiltshire, Devon and Cornwall, respectively, in 1983 and at the latest available date.

The Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. David Hunt): The information is not available in the form requested, but I am happy to be able to tell the hon. Gentleman that the number employed in the civilian work force in the south-west between 1983 and 1993 rose by 279,000—the highest increase of any region in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Taylor: But if the Minister had answered the question that he was asked, he would have accepted that manufacturing employment had fallen dramatically in those areas, most of all in Cornwall, and that many local businesses associate that with the Government policies that have given us the highest gas, electricity and water prices in the country, yet lower levels of support than other deprived areas such as Scotland and Wales. Does the Secretary of State accept the case of the business men who feel that it is time that the south-west was given a fair deal by the Government?

Mr. Hunt: I cannot quite follow the hon. Gentleman's question—*[Interruption.]* I know that he is only a Liberal, I shall take the Liberals seriously when they take politics and decision making seriously. I hoped that the hon. Gentleman would pay tribute to the substantial rise in the number of self-employed people in the south-west, which has risen from 215,000 in 1983 to almost 300,000 now. That bodes well for the future of the south-west.

Mr. Nicholls: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the Liberal party is the most federalist party in the House of Commons and has called, throughout, for the full cost of the social chapter to be dumped on British employers? How many jobs would have been destroyed in the west country if the social charter had been implemented in full?

Mr. Hunt: Undoubtedly, thousands of jobs would be destroyed if we were to implement the policies proposed by the official Opposition and the Liberal party. I recall that the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) was once a defence spokesman for the Liberal party.

Mr. Matthew Taylor *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Hunt: The musical chairs stopped in that direction at one stage. Of course, the Liberal party's defence policies would destroy many defence jobs in the south-west, which would be bad news.

Northern Region

3. **Mr. Jack Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what discussions he has had recently with the Northern Development Company about increasing employment prospects in the northern region.

Mr. David Hunt: I met Dr. John Bridge, the chief executive of the Northern Development Company, recently and had a useful discussion with him.

Mr. Thompson: The Secretary of State must be aware of the fact—he should have nightmares about it—that unemployment in the northern region in 1990 was 120,000 and had risen in September 1993 to 171,000—17 per cent. of that figure consisted of those aged between 16 and 18. Would it not be better if he and his Department took a greater interest in the excellent work of the NDC which is supported by local authorities, trade unions and employers in industry in the district? To my knowledge, his Department has shown little interest. It would be helpful for the northern region if his Department would get off its backside and show that it has an interest in reducing unemployment in the northern region.

Mr. Hunt: I am very surprised that the hon. Gentleman did not mention the Wansbeck initiative, which brings together the key players. I had understood that the hon. Gentleman was an observer on the Wansbeck initiative. If he were, and had been attending, he would know that my Department attends and is part of the initiative, as is the Employment Service, the Department of Trade and Industry, churches, trade unions, local councils, the Northern Development Company and the Northumberland training and enterprise council. May I have the hon. Gentleman's support in wishing the Wansbeck initiative every success in future? I believe that that partnership has the determination and skill to turn the problems of Wansbeck into the problems of success.

Mr. Bates: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the latest edition of "Business Survey North"—a quarterly survey of 764 firms in the northern region conducted by the Northern Development Company—was published this morning? Is he aware that it pointed to business confidence being at its highest level for three years, investment in plant and machinery being at record levels and profits at their highest levels since the survey began? Does not that give the true picture of the diverse and dynamic economy in the northern region, which is very different from the gloomy one so often painted by the Labour party?

Mr. Hunt: I agree with my hon. Friend that it is sad that the Labour party does so much to talk down the northern region and the United Kingdom. Our GDP—whole economy output—has risen for five consecutive quarters, manufacturing output is up 1·25 per cent. on 12 months ago and industrial production is up by 2·5 per cent. As my hon. Friend said, we are leading Europe out of recession, through recovery and into growth. It is about time that Opposition Members realised that and paid tribute to the work carried out.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: What can Ministers do to help the Northern Development Company find a tenant or a new owner for the 500,000 sq ft former Leyland Volvo national plant in my constituency?

Mr. Hunt: Create the background environment in which people will find the opportunity to create more jobs and more opportunities. The last thing that we should do is adopt the policies of the Labour party by introducing a statutory minimum wage, and adhering to the social chapter, which would destroy millions of jobs in this country.

Labour Statistics

4. **Mr. Amess:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what were the figures for the last three months for unemployment in Basildon.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Unemployment has fallen in Basildon for the past three months. The figures are 9,149 in July; 9,009 in August; and 8,841 in September.

Mr. Amess: Is my hon. Friend aware that, during the summer recess, in my constituency, I opened Mobil Oil's Pegasus training centre, the United Kingdom headquarters of Cosatto, which makes the finest prams and cots in the world, and the international headquarters of Hay Pollock, freight forwarders? Does my hon. Friend agree that that, together with the downward trend in unemployment, is most encouraging and that, contrary to what the Opposition think, Basildon has a bright future?

Mr. Forsyth: If only every constituency represented by Opposition Members had such a doughty champion as the people of Basildon, our work in the Department of Employment would be much easier.

Ms Quin: Will the Minister confirm that unemployment in Basildon rocketed between 1990-93 by 126 per cent? Does he recall his colleagues saying to the people of Basildon and elsewhere that, if they voted Tory in the general election on Thursday, the recovery would begin on Friday? How was it, therefore, that unemployment in Basildon rose so sharply the following year? In the light of that appalling record, is it not clear that the voters in Basildon and elsewhere will never trust the Tories again, and that the only bright future that they are likely to experience is under a Labour Government?

Mr. Forsyth: The hon. Lady, along with her hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson), is getting a reputation for shooting messengers when they bring good news. The good news is that

unemployment is falling in Basildon. It is typical of the Labour party that it looks back to the past and not forward to the future.

As to the socialists having the answer, is the hon. Lady not aware that a socialist Government in Spain are presiding over unemployment in excess of 20 per cent. and are now abandoning the policies of job protection, which were embraced by the Labour party conference a few weeks ago? The fact is that the Labour party is looking backwards and not forwards. That is why my hon. Friend will continue to represent Basildon for many years to come.

School Leavers

5. **Mrs. Dunwoody:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps he has taken to provide employment for 1993 school leavers.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Miss Ann Widdecombe): All young people aged 16 and 17 are already guaranteed a place on youth training. Figures show that, if one has a qualification, one is more likely to be in employment. Those aged 18 or over benefit from a wide range of employment and training measures. I am delighted to say that, as a result of economic recovery and the YT guarantee, the increase in unemployment in July and August, when school leavers enter the labour market, was fewer than 10,000, compared with more than 90,000 for the same months last year.

Mrs. Dunwoody: When the Minister stops being quite so pleased with herself, would she like to consider the fact that there are 22 people searching for every job vacancy? Will she seriously address the problem of youth unemployment, which is not only a disgrace to the country, but a great waste of human resources for which we shall all pay in the future?

Miss Widdecombe: Dear, dear, dear. What little rays of sunshine the Opposition are. Perhaps I could spread some light and sunshine by pointing out to the hon. Lady that, in her constituency, there are only 33 young people waiting more than eight weeks for their offer. Therefore, youth employment is under considerable control in her constituency. Why does not she encourage the young people instead of trying to depress them?

Sir Michael Neubert: As the matter has been raised by the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody), is not it apposite to point out that the Labour party's proposals for a minimum wage would severely worsen young people's prospects of employment? Has not that been the experience in France? Is not youth unemployment there higher than here?

Miss Widdecombe: Indeed. We have considerably lower youth unemployment than several countries in Europe and we are below the European average. If we were to sign up to a national minimum wage, or to the social chapter of which the Opposition are so fond, we should probably find ourselves on the European average or even worse. So once again, our policies have proved to be the best for the young people of Britain and my hon. Friend is right.

Ms Eagle: Will the Minister admit that only one of the 22 people chasing each vacancy will be successful? Will not the hon. Lady also admit that when the Secretary of State for Employment left school there were more jobs than there were people looking for them? When will the Tory Government give our school leavers the same job opportunities that the post-war Labour Government gave them?

Miss Widdecombe: I need no lectures from the Opposition on opportunities for the young, because when we took over in 1979 only 28 per cent. of them stayed on in further education in schools. Today the figure is 56 per cent. We are devoted—*[Interruption.]*—The Opposition have summed up their view beautifully. They see education and training not as skilling for jobs but as optional. That is the philosophy of the dark ages. Training and education are essential if we are to have an internationally competitive work force. Our record on training and education is second to none. The Opposition merely have that of which they should be thoroughly ashamed.

Mr. John Townend: Does my hon. Friend agree that we should make education more relevant to the needs of the workplace? Is not the best help that we can give school leavers the elimination of illiteracy and innumeracy? Our education reforms are more likely to do that and is not it a scandal that they are opposed by the Opposition?

Miss Widdecombe: My hon. Friend is right. Our education reforms are crucially designed to ensure that people are equipped to enter the world of work. The training and enterprise councils that we have set up and which are operating so successfully exist specifically to bring business and education closer together and our education and business partnerships are doing just that. What have the Opposition to show? Have they one single initiative, one single proposed policy, that would do more than our policies are doing at the moment?

Unemployment, West Yorkshire

6. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he last met representatives of local authorities in West Yorkshire to discuss unemployment.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has not had a request to meet representatives of the local authorities in West Yorkshire.

Mr. Hinchliffe: Is the Minister aware of the great anger within West Yorkshire among local authorities and the public in general at the way in which the House was conned by the Government over the coal closure programme? Even before the present closure programme the Wakefield district had lost 20,000 mining-related jobs. Bearing in mind that the coalfield areas fund is based——

Madam Speaker: Order. I must have a question from the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Hinchliffe: Bearing in mind that the coalfield areas fund was based on the assumption that 12 pits would be saved, which clearly will not happen, what steps will the Minister and the Government take to generate employment in areas such as Wakefield which have been devastated as a direct result of the Government's policies?

Mr. Forsyth: I am very sorry that the hon. Gentleman did not find time in his question to point out that the

Government have made available £75 million to create new jobs where jobs have been lost as a result of colliery closures. I am also surprised that the hon. Gentleman did not find time to refer to the new jobs that have been created in his constituency, such as——

Mr. Skinner: There are none.

Mr. Forsyth: The hon. Gentleman says that there are none, but what about the 420 recruited by the jobcentre for Morrisons in the Wakefield constituency? There are a number which I shall not detain the House by listing. The Labour party must recognise that the only way to have secure employment is by being able to produce goods and services that people wish to buy.

Mr. Batiste: Will my hon. Friend join me in welcoming the fact that unemployment fell last month in every one of the 23 constituencies in West Yorkshire? What assessment has he made of the further prospects for job creation in the area, and the welcome change of policy by the European Community which enables areas such as the city centre of Leeds to qualify for objective 2 status?

Mr. Forsyth: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for pointing out the good news of falling unemployment as businesses take advantage of the economic conditions created by the Government in the teeth of opposition from Labour Members. The news on objective 2 status is welcome and is something for which the Government have campaigned long and hard. I am delighted that at least there is one Conservative Member who is prepared to take a positive and optimistic view of the future.

Mr. Cryer: Will the Minister tell the leaders of local councils in West Yorkshire, including Bradford—who are suffering because of the loss of assisted area status brought about by the Government—when the current level of unemployment in Yorkshire and Humberside of more than 10 per cent. will be down to the level of April 1979, which was 4·1 per cent? When does the Minister expect to equal the record of the last Labour Government?

Mr. Forsyth: I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman has noticed, but unemployment is rising all over Europe and is approaching 18 million. Unemployment is highest among the young. Unemployment is also growing in those countries that have had the "benefit" of socialist Governments.

Workstart

7. **Mr. Clappison:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what progress has been made in setting up the workstart pilot projects.

Miss Widdecombe: The programme is now under way in all four pilot areas. The first long-term unemployed people were recruited under the programme and started work with employers in July.

Mr. Clappison: Does my hon. Friend agree that this innovative scheme, which is rightly aimed at helping the long-term unemployed, will have to be carefully monitored? Does she further agree that, in monitoring the scheme, a great deal of weight should be attached to the benefits to society of getting the long-term unemployed back into work?

Miss Widdecombe: I thank my hon. Friend for his kind remarks about the scheme. At the moment, it is going extremely well and it is thought by employers that long-term jobs will be created after the temporary period of employment is over. This is a very welcome initiative. As my hon. Friend said, the crucial thing in dealing with the long-term unemployed is to make sure that they have work experience and get back into the labour market, which is what this scheme is intended to do. I have high hopes for it.

Mr. Flynn: Is not this just a new name for an old confidence trick? Does the Minister agree with her predecessor, who said that the main intention of her Department is to create almost entirely useless schemes in order to get the unemployed off the unemployment register? Does the Minister agree with Mr. Alan Clark?

Miss Widdecombe: My predecessor, as the hon. Gentleman describes him, was in the Department of Employment a decade ago. The hon. Gentleman may not have caught up with events since then, but the unemployed have.

Labour Markets

8. **Mr. Jenkin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what initiatives his Department has pursued to increase the flexibility of labour markets in the United Kingdom.

Mr. David Hunt: My Department is taking a wide range of measures to improve labour market flexibility. I and my right hon. and hon. Friends are doing our best to convince our European partners to follow the same policies. I certainly tried to do that at the Social Affairs Council last week.

Mr. Jenkin: I thank my right hon. Friend for that response. I congratulate him on as successful an outcome as may have been hoped for at the Social Affairs Council last week. In particular, I congratulate him on the veto that he applied to the works council directive, as he said he would at the Conservative conference. Is it not the case that the works council directive will be applied to the other 11 member states under the arrangements of the Maastricht treaty? How will we make the veto effective in the United Kingdom if British multinationals operating in Europe have to set up works councils as if they applied in the United Kingdom as well?

Mr. Hunt: My hon. Friend is right to raise that issue. First, on the veto that I applied, I made it clear that we were not prepared to contemplate the imposition, under the treaty of Rome, of statutory works councils in Europe. As my hon. Friend is aware, the social protocol, which Opposition Members would have us sign, exists and it now remains for the Eleven to consider how to proceed. I must tell my hon. Friend, however, that there is increasing evidence that our partners are coming round to our point of view. [HON. MEMBERS: "Where is the evidence for that?"]. Wait a moment. There is, however, also evidence to show that all our companies must deal with the home laws of each country in which they trade, including the Community. What is clear is that a directive of the Eleven will not apply in the United Kingdom.

Opposition Members have shouted for the necessary evidence and I highlight today's edition of *The Guardian* —I do not often do that—which reports:

"Jacques Delors has admitted that he is close to becoming a lame-duck president of the European Commission, unable to stop the community drifting towards 'an English-style Europe'."

That is very good news for the United Kingdom and for the rest of the Community.

Mr. Boyce: In Rotherham we have a steel plant that is recognised as one of the best in the country, if not in Europe, with a flexible work force second to none. It is proposed, however, that the Templeborough steel works will close at the end of December. What message of comfort can I take back to the 260 workers who will lose their jobs?

Mr. Hunt: I regret any job losses anywhere in the United Kingdom, but I must tell the hon. Gentleman that job losses would be threatened for thousands and millions of people if we were to adopt the policies that he and his hon. Friends urge on us in trying to make us sign up to a social protocol that would mean a more inflexible labour market. He must ask himself why more inward investment is coming to the United Kingdom than to any other part of the European Community. It is because everywhere else in the world sees the United Kingdom as a haven for inward investment.

Training

9. **Mr. Anthony Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he last met representatives of the TEC movement to discuss training initiatives.

Miss Widdecombe: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State meets TEC representatives frequently to discuss the work on which they are engaged. Only yesterday, he and I met a group of TEC chairmen to discuss recent developments.

Mr. Coombs: Has my hon. Friend had the opportunity to discuss with the Central England training and enterprise council the success of the training offered at Kidderminster college in my constituency, which has attracted a record number of entrants to its training programmes this year? The vast majority of those students are taking national vocational qualifications to a much higher level than ever before. Is that not evidence of the huge investment that the Government have been making in training programmes in the past 10 years and of the higher level of training that is now being attained through NVQs?

Miss Widdecombe: Yes. My hon. Friend is right. I congratulate the TEC on the initiative in his constituency. It is certainly true that the Government place a great deal of emphasis on proper skilling of the work force through training and vocational qualifications. The local example that my hon. Friend has given is just one of many national examples, but it is an outstanding one.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: With graduate unemployment at 13 per cent. and with the Government actively encouraging more students to undertake further and higher education, does the Minister agree that that poses a serious problem? Can she tell us what initiatives she proposes to take through the TEC system to ensure that there are adequate jobs for those who complete further and higher education?

Miss Widdecombe: It is still overwhelmingly the case that graduate unemployment is much lower than that experienced by those in general employment. For example, 5 per cent. of all graduates are unemployed, as opposed to the national unemployment level of just over 10 per cent. It is still overwhelmingly the case that if one is a graduate one has a better chance of employment. Nevertheless, the fact remains that we are concerned that graduates, along with everyone else, have had to bear their fair share of pain, but, along with everyone else, the number of unemployed graduates is falling and opportunities are growing. I will encourage TECs to find schemes and training that are suitable for graduates as well as all other unemployed people.

Mr. Rathbone: Is my hon. Friend satisfied with the Government's efforts to encourage company training schemes such as those that are being so admirably encouraged by Brighton university in Sussex? I believe that that is the largest company training scheme centre in Great Britain.

Miss Widdecombe: Yes, we are very keen that employers should not only train new recruits but train throughout life. We are encouraging lifelong training programmes through the investors in people programme, through company training initiatives and through our NVQs. We have made immense strides. Unlike the Opposition, we do not divide the functions of education and training from employment; they are interlinked and the Opposition should recognise that.

Mr. Dobson: What representations has the Secretary of State received from training and enterprise councils about the Government's most dramatic trainiing initiative, the privatisation of skill centres? Before privatisation there were 60 skill centres, training more than 100,000 people. Just 27 are left, 13 of which have been sold to Mr. Patrick Doyle. Why have they been sold to Mr. Patrick Doyle? It cannot be because he has a reputation for integrity, because he was imprisoned for forgery and fraud; it cannot be because he has experience of running training schemes, because he has none. Is it because he has raised fuunds for the Conservative party? That he certainly has.

Hon. Members: Answer.

Miss Widdecombe: If hon. Members are keen to hear the answer perhaps they would like to listen.

First, the hon. Gentleman asks what representations we have received from TECs. TECs have told us that they are satisfied that they can supply all the traininig that used to be supplied by the Astra outlets that have been closed. Secondly, 16 Astra outlets have so far been sold, and they have been sold as going concerns. We have no legal power to tell the receiver to whom he should sell the assets of a private company.

Training

10. **Mr. Richards:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received since 28 May about apprenticeships and the provision of training for 16 to 19-year-olds.

Mr. David Hunt: Several, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Richards: Can my right hon. Friend confirm that the recently introduced general national vocational

qualifications have been an outstanding success and that they are popular with 16 to 19-year-olds as well as with employers, who regard them as being especially relevant and important at the workplace?

Mr. Hunt: My hon. Friend is right that the pilot scheme for GNVQs was extremely popular, and it is hoped that by 1996 one in four 16-year-olds will participate in GNVQ courses. GNVQs or vocational A-levels will provide an excellent grounding for the place of work, and many of the students attaining those qualifications will be able to build up their skills by obtaining NVQs as they progress through a lifetime of work.

Mr. Grocott: Will the Minister cast his mind back to the heady days of the 1970s, when there was hardly a motor component maker or a motor manufacturer in the west midlands that did not have an engineering apprenticeship school? One of the privileges of being a west midlands Member of Parliament was to attend the annual award ceremonies at apprenticeship schools. Can he confirm that since the Conservatives have come to office those schools have progressively closed and that few now exist? When does he hope to give school leavers the kind of apprenticeship opportunities that they had in abundance in the 1970s?

Mr. Hunt: The hon. Gentleman must recognise that there are serious unemployment problems in the European Community, especially those of youth unemployment. Youth unemployment in this country is less than the European Community average. In, for example, Belgium, France and especially Spain, where youth unemployment is more than 30 per cent., there are some very serious problems. I have to recognise that I should like a return to the traditional form of apprenticeship and have said so on several occasions. I should very much like it to be based on learning rather than merely on time serving. The hon. Gentleman will know that we are considering various proposals. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and I are considering the subject at the moment.

Mr. Ian Bruce: First, may I say what a wonderful job the Dorset training and enterprise council is doing to encourage apprenticeships and skills training. Can my right hon. Friend tell the House whether he will vigorously defend his budget and that of the TECs, as there is worry that more money might be switched to the academic education of that age group rather than to vocational training, which I believe all hon. Members value?

Mr. Hunt: I recognise that there is a need to maintain a work-based vocational training scheme and readily accept what my hon. Friend has said. I join him in paying tribute to his TEC. I sometimes wish that Opposition Members would spend a little time, sit down with their TECs and give them the support that they need, in the way that my hon. Friend has said that he does.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: When the Government abolished the right for 16 and 17-year-olds to claim benefit, the previous Secretary of State said that young people would be guaranteed a training place. Since that time, 18,000 has been the highest figure that the Government have accepted for youth unemployment. The Department's labour force survey made it clear that more than 125,000 16 and 17-year-olds had no jobs and are not in educational training —they were the unemployed. Can the Secretary of State tell the House what happened to those 107,000 young people who were denied benefit, training and a job? Did he mislay them or simply fiddle the figures?

Mr. Hunt: The Opposition have to think seriously about the way in which they approach this serious subject. If the unemployment figures go up, they shout, "Bad news". When they go down, they shout, "Bad figures", which is a disgraceful imputation on the independent statisticians in my office. Every time that we hear that accusation I know that it greatly upsets those who work in my Department. They have invited the shadow spokesman to the Department of Employment so that he can hear the truth. As I understand it, that invitation had still not received a positive response from the hon. Gentleman before I came to the Chamber this afternoon.

Labour Statistics

11. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment in what areas unemployment has fallen over the past six months; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: Every region in the United Kingdom experienced a fall in unemployment last month and, in eight out of 11 regions, a fall in unemployment so far this year.

Mr. Greenway: I welcome that news very warmly as will all right-thinking people. Is my right hon. Friend aware that at a conference with Sir Ron Dearing and heads, teachers, parents and pupils in my constituency last week it was unanimously agreed that the education of children in schools has to be geared to prepare them for a very competitive world? Does he think that the Labour and Liberal parties are aware of that need? They do not seem to show it.

Mr. Hunt: I could not agree more with my hon. Friend. The stream of doom and gloom that comes from the Opposition Benches does much to mar the achievements of the British people, in particular that of leading Europe out of the recession. Britain, as he rightly points out, is in very good shape to benefit from the recovery, with manufacturing productivity growth in 1993 the highest for six years and growing faster than in any other major country, and with earnings growth the lowest for 25 years. Unemployment has already fallen by 84,000, and that bodes well for the future.

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: Is the Minister aware that in my constituency of Blyth Valley unemployment has increased, so it must be one of the few areas where, according to him, that is happening? Is he aware that this afternoon we delivered a petition from the trainees of Blyth Valley to the Prime Minister, expressing the lack of hope among, and the lack of a future for, young people in my constituency? What will he do about that? When will the Government get off their backsides and do something about it?

Mr. Hunt: Those young people will lack hope if they listen to the hon. Gentleman. He and his hon. Friends bear a heavy responsibility for trying to talk down the prospects for this country of ours. With unemployment having fallen in every part of the United Kingdom last month, the prospects are good. With strikes at their lowest for

60 years, the prospects are good. With GDP whole economy output up for five successive quarters, the prospects are good. They would be even better if people listened to my right hon. Friends and me instead of to the siren voices of gloom on the Opposition Benches.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Mandelson:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 19 October.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning, I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Mandelson: Does the Prime Minister agree that the task of the Budget is to raise revenue without preventing recovery? Does he also agree that at least £5 billion worth of revenue is being avoided by individuals, companies and wealthy foreigners who are abusing the tax system? As that is twice the amount that would be raised if VAT were applied to fuel, will he give an assurance this afternoon that, in the forthcoming Budget, he will ensure that the interests of pensioners and families are put before those of tax dodgers?

The Prime Minister: We have done a great deal in recent years to try to cut out tax avoidance. In each and every Budget my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor will examine that matter to see whether there is more to be done. It is right that that should be done; it will be done.

As for the recovery, I think that the hon. Gentleman will concede that it seems to have taken root—the evidence for that is becoming unmistakable. The hon. Gentleman does not dispute that, but if some of his hon. Friends care to dispute it perhaps they should look at the forecasts by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, by the International Monetary Fund and by the European Commission—quite apart from domestic forecasts.

Q2. **Sir Thomas Arnold:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 19 October.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Sir Thomas Arnold: Can my right hon. Friend assure the House that the deregulation Bill that the Government propose to introduce in the next Session of Parliament will be both tough and effective? Is not that the best way to strengthen the successful supply side measures of the 1980s?

The Prime Minister: Yes, I agree with my hon. Friend about that. We made great strides in the 1980s in supply side changes and in making the economy more competitive, and we now have to build on them both at home and abroad. I can confirm that there will be a deregulation Bill in the next Session; a Bill which I believe is of the utmost importance for British business and in particular for British manufacturing industry.

We know that the route to more jobs is less regulation and less Government red tape, and we propose to introduce legislation to achieve that.

Mr. John Smith: Does the Prime Minister have the remotest appreciation of the overwhelming hostility throughout the nation to imposing VAT on domestic fuel? In addition to its obvious unfairness, is there not now evidence that the Government's tax increases imperil consumer confidence and any hope of a recovery? In these circumstances, will the right hon. Gentleman now abandon these foolish proposals?

The Prime Minister: I think that the right hon. and learned Gentleman knows—both I and my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer have made the position clear—that the extra VAT is a vital part of our policies to reduce public borrowing, but we will offer help to vulnerable people.

If the tax is as obnoxious as the right hon. and learned Gentleman claims, why did the Labour conference vote "for a general shift in taxation . . . towards energy resource use". What is that other than VAT?

Mr. John Smith: Let me remind the Prime Minister that during the last election campaign he claimed that the difference between the parties was that he would not increase taxes; in particular—he must remember this point—he would not increase or extend VAT or impose taxes on income.

Does he deny that he has now imposed swingeing increases on VAT, and is increasing national insurance contributions from 9 to 10 per cent? If the latter is not a tax on income, what is? Will the Prime Minister now apologise for the Conservative party's deceit at the last election?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. and learned Gentleman has been caught out, and everyone will have noticed that he did not respond remotely to my question.

It is high time that there was a sensible debate on the issue, during which the Opposition could tell the public the truth about their policies on VAT and domestic fuel. As the Labour party's own journal made clear in summer, the party has been quite clearly considering "energy tax and taxing polluting activities". However much the right hon. and learned Gentleman wriggles to make cheap party political points, he cannot escape the reality of his party's commitments.

Mr. John Smith: Will the Prime Minister explain how he has escaped from the reality of his promise to the public that there would be no tax increases when, within months, he has increased them? Does he accept that a result of the Government's tax increases is an increase in the burden on ordinary families by £8·50 per week? Why does he not close tax loopholes that cost billions of pounds before he puts burdens on ordinary families?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. and learned Gentleman is slipping around a little this afternoon, and he has been slipping around rather a lot on this policy for a few months. However, he cannot wriggle out of the fact that what I have quoted to him was Labour party policy. It was only after we introduced the policy that he opportunistically changed his mind and his policies and moved to an all-purpose attack on politics generally. We need to cope with the fiscal deficit and we have the courage to do so.

Rev. Ian Paisley: The Prime Minister will remember that, time and time again, he has emphasised in the House and elsewhere that he would not negotiate with those who engage in or support violence. He will be well aware today that the IRA violence is continuing and that Gerry Adams last weekend became an apologist for that violence.

Why has the Prime Minister of the Irish Republic announced that the right hon. Gentleman will engage in discussions with the Taoiseach at the end of the month concerning the agreement reached between IRA Sinn Fein and the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume)?

The Prime Minister: I know nothing of the details of the agreement reached between the hon. Gentleman and Gerry Adams. Whatever statement may have been made by the Taoiseach in the Irish Parliament has not been cleared with me. I have had regular discussions with the Taoiseach covering a wide range of issues. If the Taoiseach wishes to raise with me matters that he believes will bring the violence in Northern Ireland to an end, I am compelled to listen.

I repeat to the hon. Gentleman and to the House that we do not negotiate with terrorists or with people who deal with bullet and bomb. We will not surrender to their violence, either now or in the future.

Mr. Ashdown: As the Prime Minister is personally responsible for intelligence matters, will he tell the House whether the Minister for open government was correct in his statement that intelligence on the sale of British arms and equipment to Iraq went into the state machinery but did not appear to come out at the right place?

The Prime Minister: As the right hon. Gentleman knows, I set up a very wide-ranging inquiry under Lord Justice Scott to look at the whole question of United Kingdom arms exports to Iraq, including the use of third countries as channels. While that matter is under discussion and consideration by Lord Justice Scott, it would be prudent for me and the right hon. Gentleman to wait for the outcome of that inquiry.

Q3. **Mr. Nigel Evans:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 19 October.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Evans: Does my right hon. Friend agree that a platform on law and order which included the policies of fining the victims of crime, legalising dangerous drugs and keeping criminals out of prison would find a suitable home only in the Monster Raving Loony party, perhaps led by one of our High Court judges?

The Prime Minister: I do myself believe, as I have made clear, that prison is effective. I certainly support its use, where appropriate. None of us seeks an antiquarian prison system, but I want an effective prison system. *[Interruption.]* Unlike the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), who undoubtedly cried out, "Oh, oh", I believe in prison as a punishment as well as a deterrent. I am far more worried about innocent people having to barricade themselves in at night than I am about the guilty being locked up. That, I must say to the hon. Gentleman, is not only my view and that of the police. I think that it is the overwhelming view of people in this country.

Q4. **Mr. Spellar:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 19 October.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Spellar: When does the Prime Minister intend to stop hiding behind procedure and come clean about the secret sources of Tory party funding?

The Prime Minister: I must let the hon. Gentleman into a secret. There are a great many secret sources and they are all cheese and wine parties up and down the country.

Q5. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 19 October.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Evans: Is my right hon. Friend aware that, in stark contrast to the shambles of the lot opposite at their conference, we want to congratulate our leader on a billiant speech at our conference? Could he tell me whether members of our Front Bench are all sponsored by unions and whether it was our conference that voted to reintroduce nationalisation? If it was not us, was it the lot opposite, led by the buddha from Monklands, East?

The Prime Minister: I can certainly undertake to my hon. Friend that, so far as I am aware, none of my hon. Friends is sponsored by the trade unions in the manner of the Labour party. But I believe that at Brighton we saw the true face of the Labour party: in favour of clause 4 and seeking to abolish grant-maintained schools and GP fund holders, to renationalise the water industry, and to scrap Trident. The leader of the Opposition gave the trade unions everything that they asked for. A minimum wage—he did it. Wages councils—he would keep them. The social chapter—he would adopt it. More Government spending —he wants it. For what? The unions still control 70 per cent. of the Labour party's policies, one third of the right hon. and learned Gentleman's election and 100 per cent. of the right hon. and learned Gentleman's policy.

Q6. **Mrs. Roche:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 19 October.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mrs. Roche: As the Institute of Management survey has found that three out of four managers do not believe that the recession will end in 1994, will the Prime Minister tell the House why British managers do not accept his Government's economic policies?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Lady was obviously otherwise engaged a few moments ago when I stated in reply to an earlier question the number of external sources that now say quite clearly that the recession ended some time ago and that the recovery is proceeding. To remind the hon. Lady, I shall add to that list. She may have missed the latest survey from the London Chamber of Commerce, the 3i survey, the fact that unemployment has fallen again, the OECD survey, the Commission report and the IMF report. If she has missed all that, I am surprised, but I hope that others have not.

Sir Anthony Grant: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the Select Committee on Trade and Industry has just visited west Germany where we heard again and again complaints that high social costs were causing rising unemployment there? We also heard again and again how wise Britain was under my right hon. Friend's leadership to opt out of the wretched social chapter.

The Prime Minister: I think that it is clear right across Europe that people want decent social provision. That is not the point at issue. The point at issue is whether social provision is increased to such an extent for those in work that it keeps others out of work and renders the whole of Europe uncompetitive with the Pacific basin, Japan and the United States. Everybody who criticises the Government's stance should bear in mind that, with the same amount of growth in the last quarter of a century the United States has created four times as many jobs as have been created across Europe. Those who care about employment would do well to ponder that statistic.

Welsh Development Agency

3.31 pm

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. John Redwood): With permission, Madam Speaker, I will make a statement on the Welsh Development Agency.

In July this year, the Public Accounts Committee published its report on the 1991-92 accounts of the Welsh Development Agency. It was critical of the agency, finding a number of irregularities. The Committee concluded that the standards of the agency were well below what the Committee and the House had a right to expect. A number of recommendations were made to put matters right.

There were irregularities in the behaviour and conduct of the agency in its internal affairs. I believe that, when things have gone wrong, the important thing is to find out why, to identify the problems, and to put them right as quickly as possible.

The new chairman of the Welsh Development Agency, Mr. David Rowe-Beddoe, decided to set up an inquiry into the findings of the PAC to see what action should be taken. The inquiry was headed by Sir John Caines, recently retired permanent secretary for the Department for Education. The other two members were Mr. Clive Beck, who was until recently deputy chairman and joint managing director of John Mowlem and Company, and Mr. Geraint Davies, partner at Grant Thornton, chartered accountants.

They were chosen for their independence and their understanding of public and private sector standards and practices. Their report, together with a report on the action that the agency proposes to take in response, has been sent to the Public Accounts Committee today, and copies are available in the Library. The report makes 43 recommendations.

The board of the Welsh Development Agency has agreed to accept all the recommendations which apply to the agency. Many of them have already been implemented, and action is under way on the others. Procedures and practices have been tightened up and revised. There is now greater emphasis on audit and on ensuring that proper procedures are followed. Welsh Office approval will be sought and obtained for activities when necessary. A committee of the board has been set up to deal with audit matters.

The board has also decided to make a number of changes in the composition of the senior management of the agency, of which the chairman gave details this morning. I believe that the chairman and the board of the Welsh Development Agency have taken tough action to deal with the criticisms in the PAC report and to ensure that in future the importance of compliance is understood. It is clear from the report that my predecessors were not to blame, and that the primary responsibility lay at executive level in the WDA. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"] I suggest that Opposition Members read the report, so that they see for themselves what is clearly stated therein.

The inquiry also made several recommendations to the Welsh Office in relation to administration and appointments. I am happy to adopt the administrative ones and, in making future appointments, I will take full account of the other recommendations. The Government are publishing this afternoon their response to the PAC report in the form of a Treasury Minute. Responsibility for the internal affairs and activities of non-departmental public bodies rests with their boards and with the accounting officers, but ultimate responsibility is with the Secretary of State, which is why I am here to make a statement to the House.

I have reminded all Welsh public bodies of the need for the highest standards of probity and fairness in the conduct of public business and of the requirement to comply with rules and guidance. My Department is reviewing the authorities and approvals given to each of its public bodies and their compliance with them. An efficiency scrutiny to assess the effectiveness and efficiency with which the Department exercises its sponsorship function is also under way.

The Treasury has issued guidance to all Departments covering expenditure on staff benefits in non-departmental public bodies, severance terms for their staff, and the need to have in place arrangements designed to ensure that they do not act beyond their delegated authorities. The Treasury is also producing a memorandum setting out the duties of an NDPB accounting officer, is consulting Departments on whether the approach recommended in the Cadbury committee's report could be adapted to meet the needs of those bodies, and is considering whether further measures are required to strengthen the financial framework within which they operate.

The present system can combine great detail with unsatisfactory standards of compliance. My intention is to achieve a more strategic and effective style of monitoring. I want to strengthen the audit of compliance, set targets and review progress annually, with more frequent meetings only if there are problems. If that framework is right, then I should like to increase the delegated limits for expenditure by most Welsh NDPBs. I wish to approve only the larger capital projects, leaving more decisions to the board, subject to the rules about conduct and the strategic guidance given at the time of the review of the annual corporate plan review.

Everyone who operates in the public sector has a clear responsibility to be scrupulously correct in all his or her dealings and to be seen to be above reproach. It is easy to become so obsessed with rules and procedures that a body forgets why it is there in the first place, or a body can become so preoccupied with achievements that it overlooks some of the fundamental principles that must govern its behaviour. I do not wish to see Welsh public bodies making either of those mistakes.

It is easy to look only at the criticisms that have been levelled against the Welsh Development Agency and to neglect its very real achievements in recent years. I am sure that Opposition Members will agree with me that the Welsh Development Agency has made a significant contribution to economic development in Wales. Through its activities, the dereliction of decades of industrial use has been swept away as landscapes have been transformed. The property building programme of the agency has resulted in affordable modern factories, which have brought employment to many areas. The urban regeneration programme is making its mark on towns all over Wales, and the agency has played a central role in attracting inward investment. I wish to reinforce all that work on a firm foundation of good management.

If the Opposition wish to help Wales, after this examination of the WDA's affairs, they will give the new team at the agency a chance to show its worth and show that, like its predecessor, it is winning for Wales.

Mr. Ron Davies (Caerphilly): I am grateful to the Secretary of State for his statement, and for the constructive and, for this Government, almost contrite response to most of the PAC's findings. The new chairman and staff of the WDA have our support and good wishes. However, the events of the past couple of years have cast a shadow over the work of the agency. That is a cause for regret, and an unfortunate distraction from the job of economic regeneration in Wales with which the agency is charged.

The Secretary of State today has clearly acknowledged the extent to which the agency ran out of control, and I hope that it will be possible for it now to redirect its energies to its proper functions.

Does the Secretary of State accept, however, that the current shadow has been cast by his predecessors as Secretary of State—Peter Walker and the present Secretary of State for Employment? They were responsible for the now notorious party political appointments to the board, and it was they who forced the agency to serve their own publicity-seeking antics.

Nothing more clearly shows that preoccupation with party propaganda and self-promotion than the demands made in the run-up to the monthly ritual of Welsh Questions for news of jobs or investments. Maximum publicity, not accuracy or regard for the truth, was always the object of that exercise. If the Welsh economy had been as prolific in its production as the Welsh Office was in its production of photo opportunities and press releases, we would not now have 130,000 unemployed in Wales.

Is it any wonder, given such casual leadership from the Welsh Office, that standards in the agency itself fell to such unacceptable levels? If the present Secretary of State really wants to put the matter to rest, why has he failed to grasp the nettle of Operation Wizard—a botched attempt at privatisation by the agency's top management? It was a one-way bet. Had it been successful, those public employees would have collected millions of pounds in profit; but it was not, and the stake of hundreds of thousands of pounds was taken straight from public funds.

How on earth, given the PAC findings of deliberate deception and incompatability with parliamentary accountability, can the Secretary of State gloss over the matter? If he does not reconsider his decision to do nothing, does he not realise that he will be tainting himself in an unacceptable cover-up?

Both the chairman, Gwyn Jones, and the chief executive, Philip Head, have now resigned. Will the Secretary of State now assure us that the WDA's own internal inquiry will be thorough in its review of all those involved in malpractice, and will he be resolute in implementing his findings?

In addition, is it not inappropriate for Dr. Jones to continue to hold public office? Should he not be dismissed forthwith as a governor of the BBC and removed from the board of S4C? Is it not clear, however, from the whole sorry affair that government in Wales is dependent on patronage and devoid of public scrutiny, and that parliamentary accountability is in need of radical overhaul? What is true of the WDA is true of the 80 other quangos in Wales and the billions of pounds they spend each year.

Open government and public scrutiny are the best defences against corruption and the abuse of power, but clearly the Government will not concede to the people of Wales control of our own affairs. Will the Secretary of State therefore consider amending our existing parliamentary procedures to provide more penetrating scrutiny?

I believe that there is now an overwhelming case for an additional Select Committee with oversight of Welsh quangos, charged with reporting regularly to special sittings of the Welsh Grand Committee.

The present Secretary of State is still relatively new to his job and he has the reputation of being a radical.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): A bastard.

Mr. Davies: That too, perhaps.

Let us hope that he realises what his predecessors did not, The WDA and all the other quangos exist to serve the interests of the people of Wales, not the vested interests of his or any other political party.

Mr. Redwood: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his opening remarks and I am glad that he and his colleagues wish the new chairman every success for Wales. They will need the support of all people in Wales and I am sure they will do an excellent job.

I cannot agree that we are looking at a shadow cast by my predecessors. They were the people responsible for the successes during the period under review—£4,000 million of investment was won for Wales. Let us not lose sight of that. They were the ones who had the vision and strategic direction. I have made clear in my statement what did arise and where the fault lay, and that is the result of an independent inquiry by men of stature.

Nor is it true to say that the former chairman of the agency was appointed for his politics. Lord Walker chose him for his business skills and his enthusiasm for Wales —something that he showed throughout his energetic term of office. It is interesting to look back at the record of the time when Dr. Jones was appointed. Nothing was heard from the Opposition then about how that man was unsuited to such an important post. They, too, thought that he was a great catch and were pleased that someone was prepared to take a cut in salary to run the WDA and to bring with him the benefit of his business skills. I would take the Opposition's criticism more seriously had they said then tht they thought there was something wrong with the appointment.

Of course I want to put the matter to rest, and anyone who wishes Wales well will also want to put it to rest. It has been cleaned up, and we now want to go forward on a firm basis.

On Operation Wizard, the report shows clear understanding of why the matter was treated with confidentiality. If the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) knew more about the conduct of Government, he would be aware that there are often reviews of the status and the future of such bodies as the WDA. It is the perfectly normal business of Government—although, if the hon. Gentleman is framing a supplementary question, I assure him that I am not currently planning the privatisation of the WDA. No doubt he will be pleased to know that.

As the hon. Gentleman said, the chairman and chief executive are no longer with the agency. There has been an extensive inquiry, which has shown that there has been no malpractice at the Welsh Office, so the point of the hon. Gentleman's question is not immediately apparent.

Dr. Jones tenure at the BBC is properly a matter for the Secretary of State for National Heritage, who sees no

[Mr. Redwood]

reason why the problems encountered by the WDA should affect Dr. Jones's ability to discharge his responsibilities as a governor of the BBC.

The hon. Member for Caerphilly will find me only too willing to allow scrutiny of public bodies. There is already good public scrutiny through the PAC, through the parliamentary process, through debates and through sessions such as this. I chose to make this statement because I thought that it was a matter of public interest. I intend to continue to make statements or to make opportunities available to the Opposition so that Wales can see what its public bodies are doing and debate that fully.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. After those initial exchanges, I must draw the attention of the House to the fact that this is a question period, during which questions must be asked of the Secretary of State. I ask for brief questions and brief answers, because many hon. Members wish to ask questions.

Mr. Jonathan Evans (Brecon and Radnor): Is my right hon. Friend aware that people in Wales, especially the many thousands who work in businesses that have been supported by the excellent work of the WDA, will be appalled by the laughter this afternoon at the work undertaken by that agency? Whatever the position on the internal affairs of the agency—matters that have been exposed and are properly the subject of serious criticism —it is important that the work of the WDA is recognised. I urge my right hon. Friend to reassure the House——

Hon. Members: Question.

Madam Speaker: Order. I must give hon. Members a little instruction. This is not a time for statements—they can be made outside the House, on television and in the press. This is a time to elicit information from the Secretary of State. It is a time to ask him questions.

Mr. Evans: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the WDA's budget will not be reduced as a result of the events that have been discussed in the House today? Will he further confirm that he will recognise the WDA's important role, notwithstanding the exposure of some difficulties in its internal affairs?

Mr. Redwood: My hon. Friend is right to say that the WDA's work has been most valuable. He is also right to think that I will not reduce its budget because of the events that we have discussed today.

Mr. Denzil Davies (Llanelli): Will the Secretary of State give an assurance that the search for a new chief executive will be widely advertised and canvassed? Will he give a further assurance that a prerequisite for holding that post will be a track record in manufacturing, engineering and industry? Without a concentration on manufacturing and engineering, by both the WDA and the Government, there will be little chance of lifting the economy of Wales from being the poorest region in Britain, as it is at present.

Mr. Redwood: I can certainly reassure the right hon. Gentleman that the post will be widely advertised—this debate will help in that task. We will of course be looking for a person of stature with a great deal of relevant experience. However, I do not want to limit applications in quite the way that the right hon. Gentleman suggested. Much will depend on who is forthcoming in response to the advertisement.

Mr. Rod Richards (Clwyd, North-West): Can my right hon. Friend confirm that strong action was initiated immediately the Public Accounts Committee reported?

Mr. Redwood: My hon. Friend is quite right. We took action as soon as we could in the light of the report.

Mr. Alan W. Williams (Carmarthen): Does not the experience with the Welsh Development Agency show the awful shortcomings of the quango aspect of government in Wales? Such quangos, with their Tory placemen, lack accountability to Welsh people.

Mr. Redwood: That deduction cannot be made. On occasions, there are irregularities in local government—as there are, regrettably, in central Government and in bodies such as the agency. It is quality of leadership and attention to the detail of the rules that matter.

Mr. Mark Robinson (Somerton and Frome): As a former Welsh Office Minister, I can inform my right hon. Friend that the Welsh Development Agency's contribution to attracting inward investment is widely recognised, not just in Wales but even in the west country region that I now represent. I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his response to the inquiry. I seek his assurance that he will give every encouragement to the WDA's new leadership to continue on its proven track record of success.

Mr. Redwood: I happily give that reassurance.

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): Is not this sorry, sad saga a clear warning to the Government of the dangers of removing whole tracts of public policy and expenditure from local government in Wales and from Parliament? Is not the almost inevitable result of political patronage a danger of corruption and lack of accountability? Will not the Secretary of State at least try to examine objectively the dangers that arise from the Government's increasing tendency to create quangos?

Mr. Redwood: That is rather rich, given that the Labour party set up the WDA. The hon. Gentleman should have directed his question at some of his Labour party colleagues. He can rest assured that I am not shy of public debate on such matters. It is legitimate that there should be proper public debate of the actions of such important bodies.

Mr. Christopher Gill (Ludlow): Is my right hon. Friend aware of the serious commercial damage done to bona fide businesses in my constituency, which are not eligible for any Government grants, by grants made by organisations such as the Welsh Development Agency to feckless people running non-viable businesses in industries that have over capacity? Will my right hon. Friend give an assurance that there will be much closer scrutiny of the way that such money is made available to commercial enterprises in future?

Mr. Redwood: It is always useful to have helpful questions, is it not? I reassure my hon. Friend that, if he has a specific complaint about a particular investment that he considers is anti-competitive and ill-judged, I will of

course investigate it. I believe, however, that the WDA's overall performance has been extremely beneficial to Wales.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): Does the Secretary of State accept that right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House hope that the WDA is opening a new chapter, because of the vital role that it plays in Wales? It is ironic that the right hon. Gentleman's friends voted against the agency's establishment when it came into existence in 1975.

Does the Secretary of State accept that the overwhelming majority of the people of Wales find it difficult to believe that there was not a nod and a wink in the direction of the WDA from the political chiefs when there was a question of possible privatisation? If there had been scrutiny on a month-by-month and quarterly basis by an elected, all-Wales body, we would not have waited as long as we have to get to the bottom of the issue.

Mr. Redwood: There will always be some things which are commercial-in-confidence and which have to be treated in that way. There are occasions when investigations or studies have to be made of the future of bodies when it would not be wise at an early stage to share information with all the staff and the public because it could damage morale and yet might not lead anywhere. That was the case in this example.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): Would my right hon. Friend care to confirm that the regeneration of industry in Wales has been one of the great success stories, much to the envy of the rest of the United Kingdom? May we rest assured that the chairman of the WDA will take disciplinary action against those who have made glaring mistakes?

Mr. Redwood: Yes, I can reassure my hon. Friend and agree with his first point. The chairman has today announced disciplinary action against those who are still at the agency and who are held culpable for what has taken place.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): Can the Secretary of State explain how years of unprecedented incompetence, impropriety and deception went undetected by his Department and by his predecessors? Can he explain why, when the National Audit Office report revealed that deception and impropriety, and when the Public Accounts Committee hearing proved all the allegations, his predecessor reappointed the chairman, who should have been sacked, and made him a governor of the BBC.

Mr. Redwood: I have already covered that point. As the report makes clear, the former chairman is not held primarily to blame for those events. Blame is attributed first of all to the executive and the named members of it —some of them are no longer in post, and one has been removed from post—the remuneration committee and the internal audit service. Of course it is a pity that the matter did not come to light earlier through the audit process, but it is good news that it did come to light and that it has been handled in that way.

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): Is it not vital that we refocus the agency on the continued industrial and manufacturing regeneration of our communities? Would not the best signal of that be the appointment of a chief executive with the relevant experience that my right hon. Friend the Member for Llanelli (Mr. Davies) has suggested?

Mr. Redwood: It is quite possible that such a candidate will come forward, and I would be delighted if a good candidate with that background were to emerge. But we cannot rule out, in a fair and free competition following public advertisement, people with slightly different skills, who would also be able to offer a great deal for Wales. The hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) should remember that an important part of the task is clearing the ground, making property available and developing property transactions that can lead to industrial rejuvenation. Those are also skills that we need to take into account in the executive management of the agency.

Mr. Roy Hughes (Newport, East): Does the Secretary of State appreciate that all Opposition Members recognise that that body was intended to be the engine room for the regeneration of the Welsh economy? Instead of that, we find that it is riddled with fiddles. When will the Government accept responsibility for that state of affairs, and when will successive Secretaries of State recognise their responsibilities in these matters? Does the Secretary of State appreciate also that, if Wales had had an elected Assembly, the agency would have been much more rigorously scrutinised?

Mr. Redwood: I do not agree with the hon. Gentleman's latter point. Parliament is quite capable of scrutinising that body, as these questions and the papers before us demonstrate only too well. I have described where independent experts thought that the responsibility lay, and the chairman has set out what the board proposes to do about it. He has taken tough action with his board, and I should have thought that the House would respond favourably to that.

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): The Secretary of State makes a most unconvincing Pontius Pilate. Instead of continually washing his hands of responsibility in the matter, he should read a little history. This is not the first time that the Public Accounts Committee has drawn the Secretary of State's attention to problems within the WDA.

In 1985, when I was on the Public Accounts Committee, we investigated the Parrott Corporation. It had received millions of pounds from the WDA, but no one was censured and no one was brought to book. Instead of the Secretary of State and his predecessors washing their hands, why does he not have the guts to resign and accept responsibility?

Mr. Redwood: I have already answered that point. The responsibility has been clearly attributed to layers of management within the WDA, and tough action has been taken as a result. I am not trying to be Pontius Pilate: I am trying to be the Secretary of State, telling the House what firm action has been taken, and building a good base for the future.

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that the agency has become a world-class agency that is much admired throughout the western world? Does he remember that many of his hon. and right hon. Friends tried to prevent the agency from coming into existence? Does he accept that Lord Peter Walker's arrogant and cavalier use of his massive powers

[Mr. Barry Jones]

of patronage have led to this sorry state of affairs? Why did not he come to the House today with measures to democratise appointments to public bodies in Wales? That is what is required. The Secretary of State, as the right hon. Member for Wokingham, has too much power in terms of appointments in Wales.

Mr. Redwood: I do not agree that it was Lord Walker's fault in the way in which the hon. Gentleman describes. I have taken action to democratise appointments in Wales. I have placed public advertisements asking for more good people to come forward on to lists. I have reassured the House that I will look carefully at the merits and talents of such people, and I will take up references. I will ensure that the best people in Wales are appointed to the jobs available. That is, of course, open to scrutiny by the House, and I am sure that Labour Members will not be shy about exercising that scrutiny.

Mr. Terry Davis (Birmingham, Hodge Hill): Given that the Welsh Development Agency is only one of several Welsh bodies to be criticised by the Public Accounts Committee in the past few years, can the Secretary of State give an assurance that we have seen the last of these scandals?

Mr. Redwood: I can give no 100 per cent. assurance along those lines. I have set out how I intend to proceed. I have told the House how I wish to monitor these bodies, how I wish to agree their strategy with them, what delegated powers I wish them to have and how I intend to audit their practices carefully. Therefore, I reassure the House that I will do all in my power to prevent a recurrence. One can never give a 100 per cent. guarantee that there will be no recurrence, any more than Labour Members can guarantee that there will never be a scandal in a Labour local authority.

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): Does the Secretary of State agree that this sorry state of affairs came about directly as a result of the Government's 14 years' stewardship of government in Wales, corrupting it by introducing quangos in every walk of life and filling them with toadies, acolytes and placemen of the Conservative party almost exclusively? Does he agree that nothing will change until those quangos become democratic, accountable and representative?

Mr. Redwood: The quangos must be very accountable, which is what this debate is about. I resent the implication that the talented people on many of these boards are toadies or Conservative lackeys—it simply is not true. They represent the best of Welsh experience, business and commercial and public life. I am open to suggestions from Labour Members for other people who can take on some of the jobs and who will further strengthen those skills.

Dr. Kim Howells (Pontypridd): Will the Secretary of State accept from a member of the Public Accounts Committee that, like me, many other members of the Committee were appalled by the evidence that came out during the investigation? Welsh Office officials, up to the permanent secretary, appeared to know nothing about the hundreds of thousands of pounds that disappeared from public funds into the pockets of consultants and merchant bankers during the whole sordid Operation Wizard business. If the officials did not know about it, what has the Secretary of State done in the Welsh Office to ensure that such lapses of responsibility do not recur?

Mr. Redwood: I can reassure the hon. Gentleman that, under my stewardship, senior officials will know about my dealings with the agency in considerable detail, and we will observe all of the due procedures. I repeat what the report said about Operation Wizard. There was a case for keeping something confidential, or keeping it tightly between a few people, because it might not lead anywhere. If the matter was leaked, it could have been damaging to morale. As it turned out, it did not lead anywhere, so it was better that morale was not undermined at the time by a public statement.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): Why are all the failures of the WDA the result of the activities of the staff and all its successes the result of the activities of the politicians?

Mr. Redwood: I did not say that—I said that the leadership and vision of the politicians are most important in developing the energy in attracting inward investment to Wales. However, I also gave due credit to the staff and the chairman of the WDA. They did all the hard work to deliver the vision. My predecessors set out what the staff should do. The staff followed up the leads and negotiated the transactions. I pay full tribute to them, and I trust that Labour Members will do the same.

Mr. Peter Hain (Neath): Will the Secretary of State resist the temptation to downgrade the WDA function in favour of a Thatcherite, hands-off approach to economic policy, because the relative success of the WDA has been achieved despite Thatcherism in England? Will he instead take this opportunity to refocus the thrust of WDA activity away from environmental upgrading and property development, necessary though that is, in favour of a serious strategy for rebuilding Wales's industrial and manufacturing base, providing long-term, low-cost finance for business and regenerating the much neglected Welsh valleys?

Mr. Redwood: I have announced today the next five-year programme for the Welsh valleys initiative. I am an admirer of what has been achieved in the past five years, and intend to build on it. Of course we have a vision of how we wish to see development unfold. We wish to see many more jobs and businesses come to south Wales and other parts of Wales. I am glad that the hon. Gentleman accepts that there have been successes at the WDA. He can rest assured that I think that there is an important role for the WDA in encouraging the clearance of dereliction, in urban renewal and in winning new investment for Wales.

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): Will the Secretary of State assure me that there will be the same intense investigation where evidence is presented to him of a scandal in the private sector affecting the collapse of companies in Wales?

Mr. Redwood: There are a number of ways in which that is undertaken by my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade. The hon. Gentleman will be aware that, under the companies legislation, there are substantial powers for investigation and, where necessary, for public investigation and public report. Often, these also become matters for the law courts, which is another way in which

they get extensive media coverage and public probing. I have also noticed that Opposition Members are not shy about raising these matters across the Floor of the House.

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): The Secretary of State referred in his statement to the poor standards of professionalism and integrity of a number of WDA officers. Does he realise that, because of that lack of professionalism and integrity, several former WDA employees at lower levels find themselves severely financially disadvantaged, as the redundancy terms that they were offered have turned out to be possibly illegal? Will the Secretary of State guarantee that those people will be properly compensated for the failures of more senior officers?

Mr. Redwood: I cannot give that guarantee, because we are talking about payments that were improper or perhaps illegal. The agency has clear guidance as of now that any redundancies must be agreed under the terms of the local government scheme, which is what should have happened in the past.

Mr. Rogers: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. In an answer, the Secretary of State said that he had announced today a five-year programme for the valleys of south Wales, which has caused us great concern. I am a representative of one of those valleys, and I have not heard of this.

Successive Speakers have asked that Ministers should give their news or announce progress or policies to this House rather than to the press outside. May I ask you, Madam Speaker, to put pressure on the Secretary of State to come to the House immediately with a statement so that we know what is to happen in our constituencies over the next five years?

Madam Speaker: I am in equal ignorance. I do not know whether the Secretary of State has made a statement in a written answer or whether he has made a press statement about this matter. Perhaps he would like to add to the point of order.

Mr. Redwood: I am grateful for the opportunity. I meant to say that I would make a statement tomorrow. I shall ensure that hon. Members are properly informed.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): Does the Secretary of State accept that things have come to a pretty pass when, from the most powerful, high-profile quango in Wales under his control, the chairman, chosen at a Tory party fund-raising lunch, resigned last July, the chief executive resigned yesterday, the finance director went today, the marketing director was demoted today, the rural affairs director was reprimanded publicly today, the international marketing manager and the north Wales area manager were dismissed last week, and the north America marketing manager is in jail for fraud?

I am sure that the Secretary of State accepts that it is fair to say that this is a sorry tale about an agency that is off the rails, although it has pulled in some big names in world industry terms into Wales, including Bosch, Toyota, British Airways, Trico and Sony. Will the Secretary of State therefore accept that today is perhaps the day for saying "Le WDA est mort; vive le WDA"? We need the agency. Does the Secretary of State accept that all Opposition Members wish to help the chairman to put it back on the rails?

At the Conservative party conference, we heard a cry of "Let's get back to basics"—a principle that may be susceptible of wide and flexible interpretation, but one that, undoubtedly, can mean only one thing in connection with the WDA and the Secretary of State: restoring the agency to its rightful position as the powerhouse of industrial development and job creation in Wales.

Mr. Redwood: I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's support for the new team. I look forward to observing more tangible support from the Opposition as its members go about their successful task of winning for Wales.

NEW MEMBER

The following Member made the Affirmation required by law:

Mrs. Diana Maddock, for Christchurch.

BILL PRESENTED

Human Rights (No. 3)

Mr. Graham Allen presented a Bill to provide protection to individuals and in the courts of the United Kingdom for the rights and freedoms specified in the European Convention of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms; to entrench those rights and freedoms; to establish a Human Rights Commission; to make further provision with regard to the protection of civil, political, economic and social rights; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 22 October, and to be printed. [Bill 251.]

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Madam Speaker: With permission, I shall put together the motions relating to statutory instruments.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(3) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

Interests in Shares

That the draft Disclosure of Interests in Shares (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 1993 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

Value Added Tax

That the Value Added Tax (Payments on Account) Order (S.I., 1993, No. 2001) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

Question agreed to.

SCOTTISH GRAND COMMITTEE

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 97(1) (Matter relating exclusively to Scotland).

Child Care

That the Matter of Childcare in Scotland, being a matter relating exclusively to Scotland, be referred to the Scottish Grand Committee for its consideration.—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

Question agreed to.

Pardon for Soldiers of the Great War

4.12 pm

Mr. Andrew Mackinlay (Thurrock): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to pardon soldiers convicted of, and executed during the Great War of 1914 to 1918 for, the offences of cowardice, desertion, sleeping at post, throwing away arms and striking a superior officer; and for connected purposes.

The Bill would facilitate the granting of pardons to 307 soldiers of the British Empire forces who fought in the great war of 1914-18 but were executed by firing squad, having been found guilty of charges that ranged from cowardice to desertion, sleeping at post, throwing away arms and hitting a superior officer.

Many of those soldiers were young men—teenagers. They were drawn from every corner of the United Kingdom. Many were not conscripts but volunteers, and some spent not months but years in the trenches enduring constant shellfire, sniping and lack of food and sleep in the constant wet and cold. It is hardly surprising that, in many cases, their spirit broke.

All 307 soldiers were, in my submission, denied the operation of rules of natural justice. They were not given the opportunity to prepare a defence; in many cases there was no advocacy whatever, and when there was it was not conducted by a legally qualified person. Above all, none of the soldiers was given the opportunity to appeal against the sentence of death: invariably, they were given only 12 to 24 hours' notice before that sentence was carried out. That shows that those men have endured grave injustice, and it is time that the record was put straight.

We now know from the documents that have become available, following the crazy 75-year public records rule, that many of those men were sick, traumatised and suffering from shell shock. For that reason, the House should begin to put the record straight to ensure that the men are held in high national esteem.

I am motivated to bring this Bill before the House because many dependants of those men seek redress, and because there are still among us a few thousand veterans of the great war, in the evening of their lives, to which nothing would give greater satisfaction or contentment than knowing—albeit late in the day—that their comrades in arms were finally exonerated. I was pleased to see the support in the press of my noble Friend Lord Houghton of Sowerby, a veteran of Passchendaele, who endorses my view.

It has been suggested that I am seeking to rewrite history—I reject that. I am seeking to ensure that history is written with clarity and precision and that those things that are uncomfortable to the establishment are brought into the open.

In a few weeks' time, Her Majesty the Queen, the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition will be at the cenotaph, and other right hon. and hon. Members will rightly be at their local war memorials. We attend such memorials not to remember veterans of the Crimean war, the Napoleonic wars or the Cromwellian wars, but to remember soldiers of the great war because they are of our time.

All of us have had grandfathers, fathers and uncles who were in the great war. We have all seen, spoken, touched and loved them. That is something which cannot be ignored. They are not merely history. It is long overdue that a remedy was sought to heal the reputations of those men that were broken during the sham trials in the great war.

My Bill provides two options: either to grant a blanket pardon for all 307 soldiers, which I and Lord Houghton favour, or, if that is not appropriate, that the Secretary of State be able to refer each case to a panel of High Court judges to test whether or not there has been injustice and whether or not there should be a pardon. I cannot see what can be wrong with that, other than that some people might not like the truth coming out.

The measure is universally popular. My postbag and those of many hon. Members show overwhelming public support for it. I shall go further: the difference between now and 18 months ago, when the pardons campaign began, is that, we now know that, in a sense, the soldiers have already been pardoned by the highest court in the land —British public opinion. My Bill would facilitate an official way in which the nation could collectively say sorry.

My Bill could be a matter of national pride for our generation and this House of Commons. We could draw a line under the unhappy events of the first world war, do all we can to repair the damage done to the reputation of those men, to heal the wounds of the families and to allow the veterans of the great war who are still alive to go to sleep tonight content in the knowledge that their comrades are now deemed to be brave soldiers.

I ask nothing more than for the opportunity for these cases to be tested by the normal criteria that operate in the land. Have the rules of natural justice been applied? Were those men sick and traumatised, as I believe they were? My Bill would facilitate a test by which their cases would be put before High Court judges. The documents are now available and they speak for themselves.

The demand for this remedy is like a cry from the grave. It is time that the House of Commons took hold of the matter, put aside the objections of the establishment and said that those soldiers of the great war who were executed are deemed worthy to be among those we will remember on Remembrance Sunday.

4.19 pm

Mr. Roger Evans (Monmouth) *rose—[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must be heard.

Mr. Evans: The speech of the hon. Member for Thurrock (Mr. Mackinlay) was plausible and emotional, but fundamentally misconceived and wrong in principle. History is littered with injustice, and it is entirely inappropriate at this stage in the century to examine what happened between 1914 and 1918. If ever there was an argument against open government and in favour of keeping the files closed for ever longer, it could be made now. What are we hoping to achieve by the measure?

If the scheme of the hon. Member for Thurrock is designed to give a blanket pardon, it cannot be right, as a matter of principle. It will be not an examination of the historical record, but a mere expression of opinion, without any reference to the particulars of the cases. It would be a case of wasting time with a sort of war crimes tribunal in reverse at the end of the century. That would be a monstrous procedure and wholly wrong. The matters are for historians, not the House now.

To seek to lay blame by using the word "establishment", as the hon. Member for Thurrock did, was an extremely unfortunate way of attacking the British state. The fact remains that we are the beneficiaries of the sacrifices made by our grandparents' generation, and it would be wholly wrong to continue with the scheme.

Madam Speaker: The Question is, That the hon. Gentleman do have leave to bring in the Bill. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Monmouth (Mr. Evans) must call "No."

Mr. Roger Evans: No.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. You will recall that on previous occasions it has always been argued that, when an hon. Member speaks against a 10-minute Bill, his or her vote should always follow his or her voice. Is the hon. Member for Monmouth (Mr. Evans) going to put up Tellers? Has he been asked?

Madam Speaker: The hon. Member for Monmouth (Mr. Evans) is not obliged to put up tellers. I think that the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) did not hear me tell the hon. Member for Monmouth, who opposed the Bill, that his voice recording "No" must follow his speech. The hon. Gentleman gave the word "No", which is sufficient under our procedures. Even if he wishes to oppose the Bill, he does not have to put up tellers.

Question agreed to, pursuant to Standing Order No. 19 (Motions for leave to bring in Bills and nomination of Select Committees at commencement of public business).

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Andrew Mackinlay, Mr. Peter Bottomley, Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody, Mr. Don Dixon, Mr. John Hume, Mr. Ken Maginnis, Rev. Ian Paisley, Mr. Allan Rogers, Mr. Alex Salmond, Sir David Steel, Mr. Dafydd Wigley and Mr. Paul Flynn.

PARDON FOR SOLDIERS OF THE GREAT WAR

Mr. Andrew Mackinlay accordingly presented a Bill to pardon soldiers convicted of, and executed during the Great War of 1914 to 1919 for, the offences of cowardice, desertion, sleeping at post, throwing away arms and striking a superior officer; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 11 November, and to be printed. [Bill 252.]

Orders of the Day

Statement on the Defence Estimates

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on amendment to Question [18 October]:

That this House approves the Statement on the Defence Estimates 1993 contained in Cm. 2270—*[Mr. Rifkind.]*

Which amendment was: to leave out from 'House' to the end of the Question, and to add instead thereof:

'believes that the Government's plans, set out in the Statement on the Defence Estimates, CM 2270, do not effectively address the long term security needs of the United Kingdom; congratulates local authorities, trade unions and progressive defence companies for their work on defence diversification; calls for the immediate establishment of a Defence Diversification Agency; welcomes President Clinton's decision to continue the moratorium on nuclear testing; calls for the early signature of a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and the extension of the Non-Proliferation Treaty after 1995; and demands that the United Kingdom fully participates in moves to enhance international peace and security, in particular by strengthening the United Nations.'.—*[Dr. David Clark.]*

[Relevant documents: The Ninth Report from the Defence Committee on the Statement on the Defence Estimates 1993, HC 869 of Session 1992-93; Eighth Report from the Defence Committee on Royal Navy: Commitments and Resources, HC 637.]

Madam Speaker: I should inform the House that I have had to impose a limit of 10 minutes on the length of speeches between the hours of 7 and 9 pm. Those speaking outside those hours should use voluntary restraint, so that I can call as many Members as possible.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. On today's Order Paper you will see the substantial amendment, supported by 17 hon. Members, which was tabled to give the House an opportunity to decide in a vote what many people in this country would like to hear discussed: whether this country should possess nuclear weapons and cut its arms expenditure. I appeal to you to allow the amendment to be put to a vote at 10 pm.

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman raised the matter with me yesterday. I have looked carefully at the amendment standing in his name, but I cannot allow it to be put to the vote. However, it can—and I am sure that it will—be referred to during today's debate.

4.24 pm

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Jeremy Hanley): Yesterday's debate focused on the broader defence issues raised in "Defending Our Future". Today, I should like to respond to a few more of the points from last night's debate and also take the opportunity to make some important announcements.

But first the White Paper. I am pleased to say that "Defending Our Future" has had a positive reception in the House and the press. We have placed our cards on the table and we have a winning hand.

"Defending Our Future"presents critics of Government defence policy with our case for the defence. Those who argue for increases in force levels across the board—because, they claim, we cannot meet our commitments—are given evidence that we can. "Defending Our Future" demonstrates the principle of multiple earmarking,

[Mr. Jeremy Hanley]

whereby individual force elements are attributed to two or three tasks that are unlikely to require simultaneous fulfilment. I should stress that multiple earmarking is nothing new. It is the only rational way to devise a force structure and has always been practised by both ourselves and our NATO allies.

We have been able to demonstrate that we have a sustainable set of commitments with an effective force structure to meet them. Naturally, we must keep them under review to ensure that they do not grow beyond our ability to fulfil them and to ensure that our force structures and capabilities are adjusted as necessary. That includes ensuring that the high quality of manpower, equipment and support is maintained.

There is still more. We have often been asked to state explicitly the kinds of conflicts in which we anticipate possible British involvement. We illustrate that in table 1 of the White Paper. I accept that that does not amount to a definitive list of scenarios, but it would be neither politically nor militarily sensible to stand here and give a list of countries that we might have to fight.

When it comes down to it, there are no easy alternatives to the defence policy that we are pursuing. Indeed, I must say that I have yet to hear a genuine alternative—even during yesterday's debate—properly argued and taking into account all the aspects of British security requirements and international interests. I believe that "Defending Our Future" makes that clear. It again underlines the fact that we have a sound defence policy, a sustainable range of commitments and the effective and flexible force structures that we need to meet them.

As an excellent example of that flexibility, I am pleased to tell the House that I have today agreed the deployment of HMS Active to Haiti to help our allies in the enforcement of United Nations sanctions against Haiti. HMS Active is currently serving in the Caribbean as the West Indies guardship and is able to divert to Haitian waters without affecting her other commitments. That clearly demonstrates the ability of the armed forces to deploy at short notice to conduct operations and enforce the will of the international community. HMS Active will be working in close co-operation with the United States navy and others enforcing the sanctions.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence yesterday touched on the changing face of the world and the situation within Russia, particularly its historic transition down the democratic path. He mentioned also the initiatives that we have in hand to continue the improvement in defence relations with central and eastern European countries and to draw them closer to the west. As an illustration of the change in the security environment, I was pleased last week to pay an official visit to Hungary for discussions with my counterparts in the Hungarian Ministry of Defence and meet Mr. Jeszenszky, its Foreign Minister.

As a member of the North Atlantic Co-operation Council, Hungary is a country of strategic importance to the future development of Europe. It is in the vanguard of the process of reform and restructuring taking place throughout central and eastern Europe and has set a fine example for others to follow. Hungary has made great strides in breaking down the barriers of the cold war and in developing public and parliamentary consensus in the role of the armed forces in a pluralistic society. I am pleased to say that Her Majesty's Government have been able to contribute to the process of democratisation and civilianisation and I hope that we are now looking to deepen our contacts and the programme of co-operation, not only with Hungary but with other north Atlantic co-operation partners. It is in their interests and ours.

On leaving Hungary, my impression was of a country totally committed to the development of armed forces founded on the rule of law and trained and equipped to co-operate effectively in the future with the international community on the difficult challenge that we face in security and defence. I think that that will enhance the security and stability of Europe. It is also clear that Hungary holds our forces in high regard.

In yesterday's debate, the hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Macdonald) referred to the test and evaluation ranges in his constituency. As part of our continuing rationalisation of support areas, we are reviewing all test and evaluation ranges. However, I stress that no decisions have been taken and they will be taken only after full consultation with trade unions and other interested parties. We are conscious of the importance of those establishments to their local economies. My hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement visited Benbecula and St. Kilda and saw that at first hand.

The hon. Member for Western Isles takes a close interest in the safety of the Scottish fishing fleet, as do a number of hon. Members. "Defending our Future" rightly includes a substantial section on the subject of fishing vessel safety. The House will recall the tragic incident in November 1990 in which a Clyde-based trawler, the Antares, was sunk with the loss of her crew after a submarine became entangled in her nets. I know from my discussions with hon. Members how much concern that unfortunate accident engendered in fishing communities around the country and, in particular, on the Clyde. I place considerable importance on ensuring that everything possible is done to prevent a recurrence.

Some have suggested that the answer is to ban dived submarine operations in inshore water, but that is not an option. If our submarines cannot train in shallow waters, they will not be able to perform their operational role safely or effectively.

The Royal Navy has found ways of cutting the number of dived operations in waters used by fishing vessels. Where possible, training and exercises in areas such as the Clyde are carried out at weekends when fishing does not take place and transits are now routinely conducted on the surface.

When there is a requirement for dived operations in fishing grounds, submarines now follow revised operational procedures designed to ensure that the risk to the safety of fishing vessels is kept to an absolute minimum. Those revised procedures have been worked out in close consultation with representatives of the fishing industry and I am grateful to them for the constructive approach that they have adopted in their discussions with the Navy.

I am delighted to tell the House that we have now formalised those revised procedures in a code of practice. That has been published today in order to make clear to a wider audience the rules that the Royal Navy now follows. I have arranged for a copy of that document to be placed in the Library of the House.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): The code of practice will be welcomed by all those living along the lower Clyde. Will the Minister assure me that all foreign submarines will come under Royal Navy control here and that that stipulation will apply to American submarines? What consultations have taken place with the United States navy, especially in the light of the recent incident in the Minch involving an American submarine?

Mr. Hanley: I am well aware of the hon. Gentleman's keen interest in matters involving the safety of the fishing fleet and I am grateful for the consultations that I had with him and some of his colleagues earlier. I can give him the assurance that, if any foreign submarines of any nation wish to sail in United Kingdom waters, they will abide by the code of conduct, to which most of them already adhere. That has been agreed with other nations and I am pleased to give the hon. Gentleman the assurance that he seeks.

Mrs. Ray Michie (Argyll and Bute): I congratulate the Minister on the publication of the code of conduct, which, as he said, is the result of long discussions following the tragedy involving a vessel from my constituency. I am particularly pleased that the hon. Gentleman managed to reach an agreement with the Department of Transport that the subfacts should still be broadcast by the coastguards. That will be welcome to fishermen.

Can the Minister give me an assurance that any amendments or changes to the code of practice and the subfacts broadcast will always be discussed with the fishing industry before any such changes take place?

Mr. Hanley: I pay tribute to the hon. Lady, who has played a leading part in the consultations that led to the successful publication of the code of conduct. This is a non-party issue. It is the safety of men at sea about which we care. I can assure the hon. Lady that the code of practice is intended to be a dynamic document, to which we hope to add in the light of experience. Close consultation between the Royal Navy and the fishing industry will continue.

In taking such measures we have broken new ground and other nations may be able to benefit from our experience. Therefore, we intend to bring the code to the attention of the International Maritime Organisation. Time forbids me from going into any more detail about the code, but, as I have said, it will be published and it is available to hon. Members from today.

Subfacts will continue under the current arrangements for the time being. We intend to extend the subfacts scheme to the Minch and other areas off the west coast of Scotland. Later this year we will also be introducing a subfacts scheme in the Plymouth exercise areas, which have not hitherto been covered, using a British Telecom system. There are ongoing discussions with the Department of Transport, the coastguard and the fishermen's representatives on how best subfacts information should be broadcast in the future.

Mr. Nick Ainger (Pembroke): I have just seen the annex to the code of practice. I am surprised that none of the Welsh coastal areas or St. George's channel are covered by it, because both Welsh and Irish Republic fishing vessels have come into contact with submarines in those areas. Why are not the Welsh coastal areas and St. George's channel included?

Mr. Hanley: The hon. Gentleman has seen the map on the back of the document which shows the areas covered by this code of practice and by the subfacts system. Those are areas where we have seen a proven need for the system, but we are always ready to consider an extension to it. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will give me chapter and verse about the incidents to which he refers.

I know that a number of hon. Members take a keen interest in the Merchant Navy. As demonstrated during the Gulf crisis and more recently in the deployment of forces to the former Yugoslavia, merchant shipping continues to play an important role in military operations.

In July 1992 my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement announced the conclusion of a review by Government Departments of the defence requirement for merchant ships in times of crisis. This established that there were still sufficient vessels on the British registers for defence purposes. It did, however, identify the need for further study into the availability of British seafarers to man those vessels.

Mr. Andrew Robathan (Blaby): This morning the Select Committee on Employment has been investigating the employment consequences of the decline of the merchant fleet. Whatever my hon. Friend may be about to say, there is very little optimism among the merchant shipping contingents—the unions, the Chamber of Shipping or anybody who has submitted evidence to the inquiry—that the merchant fleet will be able to sustain operations in support of the Royal Navy in the future.

Mr. Hanley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his comments.

The further work that the Ministry of Defence agreed to carry out, together with the Department of Transport, took into account the figures provided by the Chamber of Shipping from its latest fleet and manpower inquiry of federated vessels and a survey conducted by the Department of Transport of the number of British seamen employed in the non-federated sector.

From all the evidence it is clear that there would be no difficulty in manning strategic chartered or requisitioned ships with British crews if that were necessary. Some 12,000 British officers and 14,500 British ratings are employed in the British shipping industry on federated and non-federated ships. The Select Committee will know that from the evidence given to it. That is hugely in excess of the numbers that we would require, even on the most cautious assumptions.

That takes no account of the Merchant Navy Reserve, which itself would be able to provide a substantial part of our manning requirement in an emergency. Of course, where we would be operating in conjunction with NATO or other allies there is no reason why friendly tonnage and crews should not be considered for logistic movements, as we have done in the past.

My hon. Friend the Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman) expressed his regret and sadness that the Royal Naval Reserve unit HMS Wildfire is to close. I share those sentiments—as I do about a number of other RNR units which will also be closing—but it is simply not in the interests of the nation or the reserves for the roles and structures to be frozen in the shape required by the cold war. I note, however, that my hon. Friend recognises that

[Mr. Hanley]

the links between the Army and the Medway towns will be strengthened, with Royal Engineer training being largely concentrated in Chatham, at Brompton barracks.

Mr. Spencer Batiste (Elmet): Many of us were prepared to support "Defending Our Future" on the basis that the match which it made between commitments and resources and the procurement programme that was financed under it would be implemented. We are now concerned that important features of that programme might be under threat. For example, I am worried about the future of our tank forces and the procurement programme for them, and many colleagues on the Conservative Benches are worried about other elements of the programme, which we believe to be integral to the White Paper. What comfort can my hon. Friend offer us? When will he be able to make announcements about the procurement programmes, which are long overdue?

Mr. Hanley: The House has heard what my hon. Friend said and Government spokesmen have heard what he has said. The issues are complex. It is a sensitive time for decisions about finance. The time for decisions will arrive, but I am grateful for his comments.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): Does the Minister accept that there are many Conservative Members for whom a further cut of £1 billion would not be acceptable?

Mr. Hanley: I can confirm that there are Conservative Members for whom a cut of £1 billion would not be acceptable. *[Interruption.]* I do not intend to identify individual Members or individual Benches.

Let me mention our internal initiatives to increase efficiency and obtain the best value for money from the taxpayer, to which several hon. Members referred during last night's debate. I can today confirm additional proposals aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of the support area and ensuring that the size of the support organisation is appropriate to the size of the front line.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Hanley: Would my hon. Friend allow me to make some progress?

We have no intention of bolstering the size of the support area at the expense of the front line. We are determined to make all necessary efficiency savings that are commensurate with operational requirements and effectiveness.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: I wish to make a somewhat oblique argument on the subject of cost-effectiveness. There is no more cost-effective force in the country than the reservists. Although we all appreciate the enhanced role that some of those have been given, it would be a great pity if, in parallel to that, their numbers were to be reduced. I know that the document says that a reduction is not necessary, but a reduction in that cost-effective force —which occupies our young people so effectively in their spare time—would be regrettable and I hope that it will not be contemplated.

Mr. Hanley: The hon. Lady is taking advantage of the consultation period to state her views about the structure of the reserves. The reserves play a valuable part, not only in the history and tradition, but in the present formation of the armed forces. They are very valuable, but we must assess, in the light of changing circumstances, the proper military role for our reserves and then we must assess the numbers that are necessary to meet that commitment. That is part of the debate that is going on.

Mr. Edward Garnier (Harborough): I shall refer to one aspect of the support service—the Army Records Office in my constituency, which, sadly, has had to be closed so that all the offices can be relocated in Glasgow. Can my hon. Friend confirm that those who are to be made redundant in South Wigston in my constituency will receive the best possible redundancy package, outplacing, counselling and so forth, so that those who have worked so hard for the Ministry of Defence will be properly compensated when the time comes for them to give up service with the military forces?

Mr. Hanley: I can give the assurance that my hon. Friend requires. I will return to the subject of the Army personnel centre later if I am given the opportunity to do so.

Mr. Keith Mans (Wyre): Does my hon. Friend agree that the efficiency savings that the Ministry of Defence has made during the past few years have been within a very small percentage of the targets that it set itself and much better than those achieved by virtually any other Department of state? Does he agree that if other Departments of State had done what the Ministry of Defence has done, we would not have quite such a large public sector borrowing requirement?

Mr. Hanley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his tribute to the Ministry of Defence, which is wholly justified, but no single Government Department could not do more, could not do better and could not continue that process. We must always root out inefficiency, especially in the armed forces. The vital aim of our armed forces is not to provide a job protection scheme for the support services, but to ensure that we have an efficient and effective sharp end. We must have effective armed forces and for that we must not waste a penny that should be spent on making sure that our people are better trained and equipped.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Hanley: I have not made as much progress as I would like. I shall give way later.

The House will recall that, on 25 May this year, my right hon. Friend the Member for Epsom and Ewell (Mr. Hamilton) announced a proposal to discontinue in-service first degree engineer officer education for naval officers at the royal naval engineering college at Manadon in Plymouth in preference to a pre-entry engineering degree sponsorship scheme based in the civilian university sector. That proposal stems from a reduction, from about 90 to only 60 students per annum, in the Navy's requirement for engineer officers entering service. About 30 of those already are, and will continue to be, recruited from private sector universities, but that reduction in numbers clearly affects the cost-effectiveness and efficiency of maintaining an expensive "university" facility.

I received many powerful representations about our proposals, in particular from my hon. Friends the Members

for Plymouth, Sutton (Mr. Streeter) and for Plymouth, Drake (Dame. J. Fookes), who made a forceful case for the retention of RN officer training at Manadon. I considered those representations carefully, but concluded that the proposals should be confirmed—as those hon. Members, and hon. Members with a constituency interest, will know from the letters that I wrote to them last month informing them of my decision. The sponsorship scheme will save money frm the defence budget and will take advantage of high-quality education available through the university sector.

Mr. Christopher Gill (Ludlow): What attempt has been made to sell the wonderful facilities that this country has for training naval and other personnel to our NATO allies? Might not other countries be interested to send officers to Manadon and more trainees to Portland, for example, thus reducing the need to cut those facilities so drastically?

Mr. Hanley: I assure my hon. Friend that every effort is made to provide those facilities. There is great demand for courses of all lengths and at all ranks from nations throughout the world. Our education is second to none. However, there is a requirement for 30 engineers only to be trained in the Royal Navy by those means, plus the other 30, whom we shall manage to recruit from the university sector.

Mr. Gary Streeter (Plymouth, Sutton): I am grateful to my hon. Friend for clarifying the situation with regard to those engineering courses at Manadon college. I congratulate him on his full consultation exercise. Will he tell us something about the premises? They command a central position in Plymouth and are a magnificent asset. We want them to be transferred to the university of Plymouth so that they will be retained as an asset to the city and used for education. Is his Department prepared to go down that route?

Mr. Hanley: I repeat my tribute to my hon. Friend for the efforts that he made. He is right about the quality of the building at Manadon; it is superb and has been rightly defended by all those who have had anything to do with it or who know it. The Ministry of Defence has a responsibility to make the best use of its resources and assets, but the city council has made it clear to us that it regards the building as being of great importance. Having first investigated any possible further use of the building for military training purposes, we shall consider further and hold discussions with the council about a continuing educational use. That would seem to be sensible. We cannot rule out anything, nor should we rule out anything at this stage, but we are well aware of what my hon. Friend has said.

I am now able to tell the House that we have decided to select the university of Southampton for the sponsorship scheme. All the universities under consideration were of a very high standard. Indeed, there was a shortlist of about eight universities, but the university of Southampton emerged as offering the best course content and quality relevant to the Navy's requirements in the marine, weapon and air engineering disciplines. The university was also judged to offer the best academic reputation, marketability and geographic location to meet the Navy's specific needs. In no way do I want to run down any of the other seven, but we decided that Southampton was the best location for those 30 students. The Navy is engaged on work with the university to ensure that the campus is absolutely fit for the autumn 1994 intake.

As part of our continuing rationalisation of the Royal Navy, we have also looked at the requirment for berths, known as Z-berths, that are approved for occasional visits by nuclear-powered submarines for rest and recreation or operational reasons. The current number of Z-berths and their locations were derived from assessments carried out in the 1980s, when a larger fleet of nuclear-powered attack submarines was envisaged than is required today. Given the reduction of our nuclear-powered attack submarine fleet to 12 boats and the changing operating patterns of our submarines as they measure up to the new challenges of an unsettled world, it is now clear that not all the berths currently designated as Z-berths will be required. We have therefore decided that Z-berth status will be withdrawn from the following locations in Scotland: at Loch Fyne, Lamlash, Loch Torridon, Loch Na Beiste and Thurso bay; and at Barry and Swansea in Wales.

Approved locations for visits by nuclear-powered warships will remain at about 25 to 30 general locations around the United Kingdom. While we are confident that the remaining berths around the coast of England, Scotland and Wales will be sufficient for the needs of the Royal Navy, the situation will be kept under review.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the local authorities and communities around our coasts that have hosted visits by our nuclear submarines during past years.

Turning to the Army and the question asked earlier, as many hon. Members with a constituency interest will recall, we have been considering improving the cost-effectiveness of the Army's personnel management organisation. A study was carried out last year which concluded that a single integrated Army personnel centre should be created and housed in an existing commercial building in Glasgow—Tay house. It was said that that would allow staff savings of 38 per cent., by comparison with the current organisation—a very useful reduction in support costs.

Subsequent events, in particular the identification of an alternative existing building in Stockport, are well documented and I will not dwell on them now. I shall, however, take this opportunity to thank all those hon. Members who contributed so usefully to the debate, especially my hon. Friends the Members for Harborough (Mr. Garnier), for City of Chester (Mr. Brandreth) and for Exeter (Sir J. Hannam), who advocated alternative solutions so forcefully, and the hon. Members for Stockport (Ms Coffey) and for York (Mr. Bayley) and the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner).

I assure them that a number of those options, particularly those for new build, were most attractive indeed and I examined them very carefully. However, over a 25-year period, the option of going to the eventual destination of Kentigern house in Glasgow will produce savings of about £150 million when compared to the costs of the organisation as it stands today. That seems to me to be absolutely certain as far as acceptance is concerned.

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North): First, I welcome the fact that the original choice of hierarchy for the personnel department has been confirmed, despite some delays. Secondly, I would like some clarification on the number of new jobs. Various figures for the exact number have been given to different organisations in Glasgow. In

[Dr. John Reid]

May this year 700 new jobs were spoken of, but it seems that they might not all be new. They might be taken by people who previously worked in other areas or departments of the Ministry of Defence and the number of new jobs could be as low as 200. Can the Minister say how many new jobs will be created in Glasgow by the move?

Mr. Hanley: The hon. Gentleman will be aware that we have said that if anyone wishes to remain within the Army personnel office they will be given a job. The number of places available in Glasgow will therefore very much depend on how many people want to move there. Our estimate is unchanged from the figure of 700 that he mentioned, but that is merely an estimate and if Glasgow sells itself to the people who work throughout the rest of the United Kingdom there may not be as many new jobs as he mentioned.

Dr. Reid: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for that reply. He has narrowed the possible take-up of slack to the people who work in the personnel office and it is only fair that they should have the opportunity to go to Glasgow. However, will he confirm that people who work in other departments of the MoD and who may be superfluous to needs, either because of agency status or efficiencies in their departments, will also have the right of first call on the jobs in Glasgow—or is that rumour unsubstantiated and untrue?

Mr. Hanley: I am not aware of any guarantees, but I can certainly clarify the position for the hon. Gentleman. I was not aware that he was going to raise the matter and I am not sure of the terms of service of people throughout the Ministry of Defence. It is my understanding that those people in the personnel centre have been given guarantees on relocation and costs for going to Glasgow. The matter is very much in the lap of the gods, but I shall clarify it subsequently with the hon. Gentleman if he wishes.

There are now about 16 defence agencies employing about 40,000 service and civilian staff. Our plans envisage the Ministry of Defence police—which comprises some 5,000 staff—being the next support organisation to become a defence agency. Plans are also well advanced for launching the RAF training group as a defence agency.

I should like to mention civil servants and to pay a tribute to all those who work in the Ministry of Defence, both those who support me and my Front Bench colleagues so ably in London, and those at our units and establishments around the country. We must not lose sight of the fact that this is a difficult time not only for the service men and women affected by the changes in the armed forces, but for all the civilians affected by the disruptions and uncertainties of management and efficiency initiatives.

The House will be aware that there have been several media articles recently about the number of so-called bureaucrats in the Ministry of Defence, comparing numbers and functions unfavourably with those in the armed forces.

"As many officials as soldiers",

is one such quote. Let us hear another.

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): The Minister is very patient. May I remind him that the Secretary of State and the Minister of State both visited RAF Sealand in my constituency. I have heard them mention the word efficiency in connection with the Royal Air Force. There is a great concern at RAF Sealand about the impact of market testing on jobs. Will there be a level playing field and a guarantee of a fair and proper chance to compete? Will tenders be evaluated independently and objectively?

When those Ministers visited RAF Sealand they were very impressed by what they saw. I want a commitment from the Minister that there will be a level playing field. Will he accept that my constituents are very willing and that, ideally, he should not go forward with market testing?

Mr. Hanley: The RAF benefits considerably from market testing, but there will be independent evaluators on the assessment panel. I assure the hon. Gentleman that the level playing field that he wants is there. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State and my hon. Friend the Minister of State were both murmuring their appreciation of RAF Sealand as he spoke. It is an impressive facility, but the RAF must look for improvements and efficiency in all its operations.

I used the quote about there being as many officials as soldiers, which is terribly misleading. Indeed, my hon. Friends the Members for Wimbledon (Dr. Goodson-Wickes) and for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) last night referred to the cost of civil servants and their apparently large numbers. I am afraid that the figures that have been published in some of the articles are totally misleading.

Last April, the totals were 156,500 civilians and 274,000 serving members of the armed forces. It is somewhat unfair to pick just soldiers in the regular Army. Since 1979, there has been a 48 per cent. reduction in the number of United Kingdom-based MOD civil servants. Headquarters' numbers, which include civilians and military, are being reduced by about 20 per cent. and top civilian posts have already been cut by 13 per cent.—top service posts by 12 per cent. Nor, despite the civilianisation of posts, has the proportion of civilians to military staff increased. On the contrary, the civilian-service ratio has reduced since 1980, from 86 per cent. to 57 per cent.

Mr. Julian Brazier (Canterbury): Does my hon. Friend accept that large numbers of jobs have been privatised—for instance, people working in the royal ordnance factories and the royal dockyards used to appear as civil servants? The more important factor is surely not the aggregate total of civil servants—including scientists, technologists and so on—but the proportion of people involved in bean counting. That proportion has increased in many areas as a result of the introduction of executive responsibility budgets. In just one area, the training establishment, 70 extra posts of this kind have been created.

Mr. Hanley: I am afraid that in a previous life I, too, was a professional bean counter, so I understand what my hon. Friend is saying. The total number of what we might classify as pure bureaucrats or pen-pushers, like Sir Humphrey or his acolytes, is 30,000 in the MOD—quite a slimmed-down total, given the service that they provide. When I talk about reductions in support areas I am also talking about reductions in the MOD. We are continually looking at that matter.

It is equally wrong to talk of civilians in the MOD as a separate arm unrelated to the services. The fact is that a high proportion are recruited and managed by the services

themselves and provide them with essential support. Many of them are scientific, technical and engineering staff. I have found the civilian staff in the MOD utterly professional and highly competent. Perhaps it is the competition with their armed forces colleagues that helps to bring out the best in them—I am sure that the armed forces would say so. I happen to think that it is the high quality of the civil servants that brings out the best in their armed forces' colleagues in the MOD.

It is no coincidence that the services are enthusiastic about the civilianisation of posts that do not require to be filled by service manpower, because that frees service men to do the job that they are meant to be doing.

I am delighted to announce a number of positive developments in the employment of women in the armed forces, a matter to which my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, South (Mr. Ottaway) referred in colourful language last night, not to mention my hon. Friend the Member for Western-super-Mare (Sir J. Wiggin)——

Mr. Ian Bruce (South Dorset): I echo my hon. Friend's words about the high quality of the people whom we employ, many of whom realise that there must be large numbers of redundancies. But perhaps what I have been saying has been misinterpreted: they are telling me—the Minister paid tribute to their professionalism just now—that they do not think that the savings made from their salaries should be spent over 15 years on putting up new office blocks. I have been told today that the Treasury is providing £1·143 billion over and above the £1 billion for defence refurbishment. Staff want that figure to be cut, not the number of our forces.

Mr. Hanley: Every new project needs an investment appraisal and MOD Ministers will look carefully at such appraisals. The accounting officer at the MOD, the permanent under-secretary, will ensure that the most cost-effective option is the one selected.

To return to women in the armed forces: as from 1 November, the Women's Royal Naval Service will be fully integrated with the Royal Navy. This move is aimed at enhancing the career opportunities for women and the way is now open for women to reach the highest ranks in the Royal Navy. Indeed, the move can be said to pave the way for the first woman member of the Navy Board.

Some people may perceive integration as the disappearance of a broad and historic tradition, that of the Wrens, but I do not believe that it will be. With some few exceptions, men and women in the services will be recruited, trained, developed, promoted and paid in exactly the same way and they will have the same rank titles. Integration is the inevitable and logical culmination of a series of changes made since the 1970s, when women first came under the Naval Discipline Act 1957, and then in 1990, when women went to sea. It should be viewed positively, as a means of ensuring that women can compete on fully equal terms with men, without any artificial barriers to promotion on merit.

Contrary to what some media stories might lead the uninitiated to beleve, mixed manning at sea has proved a real success story. Increasing numbers of women are serving at sea and all new surface ships are built with facilities for women. There are now nearly 800 women serving on 27 surface warships. It would be foolish to pretend that incidents do not occur on board ships between men and women—indeed, it would be surprising if the Navy were the only workplace where they did not occur. But the great majority of men and women in the Navy are going about their jobs in a responsible, disciplined and professional manner.

Mr. Mark Wolfson (Sevenoaks): I congratulate Ministers, naval officers and other service officers on their real progress in this area. It has shown how equal opportunities can pay off in terms of efficiency and opportunity.

Mr. Hanley: I am most grateful to my hon. Friend. The policy of the Royal Navy is that all areas of work should be open to women, and that has been achieved in all but a few areas, such as the submarine flotilla and the Royal Marines commando forces, where there are real practical obstacles. The decision not to employ women in the current classes of submarine will be revisited in about five years' time and the potential for further employment with the Royal Marines—as RM bandsmen—is already under review.

Dr. Godman: Can the Minister estimate the number of Wrens or women sailors or female members of the Royal Navy who have been dismissed in each of the past 20 years on the grounds of pregnancy? In the light of the findings of recent industrial tribunals in the cases of women dismissed from other services, have naval commanding officers in bases and on ships been given a new code of practice?

Mr. Hanley: I have to admit to a deficiency: I do not carry in my head the exact numbers of women dismissed for pregnancy from ships in each of the past 20 years. With cries of "shame!" ringing in my ears, I assure the hon. Gentleman that I will reply to him in detail with the information he requires.

Mr. Winston Churchill (Davyhulme): At the risk of trespassing once again into the field of political incorrectitude, I must tell my hon. Friend that I suspect that he and his defence colleagues, and senior serving officers, would take a different view of the idea of putting women in the front line if they thought there was any serious prospect of an imminent major war.

Mr. Hanley: I cannot accept that. Some people may live in a different age or may have been born in a different age, but I would think it wrong if the armed forces refused to recruit a woman who had shown ability and a desire to serve in the Royal Navy and who was competent so to serve. After all, as my hon. Friend knows, we have had a woman Prime Minister and there is no reason why we cannot have women doing everything.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Does my hon. Friend accept that it was every bit as dangerous for the women who served on RAF stations during the last war as it is to serve in the Royal Navy now?

Mr. Hanley: I agree absolutely. I seem to recall that some of the stories of the greatest bravery to come out of the second world war involved women who served in the Special Operations Executive and in various undercover roles. They suffered far more than did many of our serving men operating in more conventional roles. I believe that women can grasp the opportunities offered by the modern armed forces. I pay a great tribute to my right hon. Friend the Member for Epsom and Ewell (Mr. Hamilton) for his

[Mr. Hanley]

leadership in introducing women into the armed forces. The armed forces will be grateful to my right hon. Friend for years to come.

It was decided earlier this year that women should in future be able to serve as officers and ratings in the Royal Fleet Auxiliary. There was no immediate reason to recruit any personnel into that service, male or female, but now there have been recruits. The RFA has been brought into line with the Royal Navy and the merchant service and that will be implemented progressively.

The most recent recruitment campaign has resulted in three women being selected as officer cadets and I have every expectation that that number will be increased as future recruitment opportunities arise. The three women cadets commenced training last month and they have now embarked on a RFA vessel for a five-month seagoing course.

It has also been decided that female staff of the Royal Navy Supply and Transport Service should be eligible for temporary postings on board RFA vessels as part of their career development, in the same way as their male colleagues. I am pleased to say that the first two female staff have already been appointed to RFA Fort Austin.

Since the disbandment of the Women's Royal Army Corps in April 1992, women have been fully integrated into their employing corps. The integration continues to go well, as I saw myself in Germany earlier this year. All soldier recruits are now trained in mixed-sex platoons in the Army training regiments. Apart from some aspects of physical training, the recruitment programme is identical for men and women. More than 100 career employment groups are now open to women and they are proving successful in areas previously open only to men. The first two female helicopter pilots have now qualified and are serving with their units.

At present women in the regular Army are excluded from the Royal Armoured Corps and the infantry on the grounds of operational effectiveness, but as part of its initiative to employ women more widely, the Army is continuing to devise and validate gender-free testing. The testing, which it is hoped will be introduced in 1995, will help by determining suitability for a particular specialisation according to physical capacity rather than by gender.

Women in the Royal Air Force compete on equal terms with men for appointments, training places and promotion and are now eligible for nearly all branches and trades. There are now eight female pilots and 17 trained female navigators. A further 21 pilots and six navigators are undergoing training. Of the eight trained pilots, two have qualified as fast jet pilots and will be undertaking Tornado training. The remaining six are serving either as flying instructors, as search and rescue helicopter pilots or as co-pilots in Hercules transport aircraft.

I must say to my hon. Friends who are mumbling in the background that that is not because of political correctness, but through self-interest and trying to get the best people into the armed forces.

Mr. Thomas Graham (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): Will the Minister reassure the House that the ladies who are to be trained as helicopter pilots will not be used in the way helicopters were used in Scotland—to service a Conservative party theft? Will the Minister assure the House that the women will be put to better things than raising money for the Conservative party?

Mr. Hanley: I would rather take a woman on a helicopter than the hon. Gentleman; unless, of course, one were to use a Sikorsky heavy lift.

Hon. Members will recall that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence announced the award of battle honours to those ships, regiments and squadrons that took part in the campaign in the Gulf. At that time, the Army regiments and corps and the RAF squadrons had not been selected for battle honours.

I am pleased to be able to tell the House that Her Majesty the Queen has approved the award of battle honours to the Army regiments and corps and RAF squadrons which took part in the campaign to liberate Kuwait. The list of the units to receive honours has been set out in my answer today to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland). The House will wish to join me in welcoming the award of battle honours as a permanent record of the contribution made by the Army and RAF to the liberation of Kuwait and in passing on our congratulations to the men and women involved.

Finally, yesterday the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) raised the matter of our long-term ammunition orders. As my hon. Friend the Minister for Defence Procurement pointed out, as the tender period had not yet expired, the hon. Gentleman was rather—as it were—jumping the gun.

Happily, I can now say more on that important subject. My hon. Friend announced to the House on 20 January that our intention was to offer longer-term contracts for ammunition. The aim was to both secure the sources of supply for key types of ammunition and to give industry greater confidence with which to plan ahead and invest. Tenders for the long-term contracts have now been evaluated and I am pleased to be able to tell the House that it is our intention to offer Royal Ordnance plc a contract worth almost £200 million for a package of ammunition requirements covering the period until 1998. The package covers all ammunition requirements in the long-term buy. It includes small arms ammunition, tank training ammunition and charges and some other minor requirements. We expect that the contract will maintain almost 1,000 jobs.

The House will agree that that is excellent news both for our armed forces and for the company. Royal Ordnance's impressive win against an array of top-class international opposition demonstrates clearly the remarkable efficiency improvements that have been made since privatisation. Our policy of long-term ammunition buying makes clear our commitment to achieving value for money to make the best of the sharp end of our armed forces. I also believe that it shows our understanding of the needs and concerns of the developing defence industry.

Dr. David Clarke (South Shields) *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Has the Minister given way, or has he finished his speech?

Mr. Hanley: I had finished, but, out of courtesy, may I pretend that I had not?

Dr. Clark: May I thank the Minister and, with similar courtesy, say that I am grateful for his announcement? I am

sorry that I was 24 hours premature, but the announcement will be welcomed in all parts of the House. It means that the men and women who work in Royal Ordnance factories have a secure future and it is a recognition of their skill, which is second to none in the world.

Mr. Hanley: The hon. Gentleman's comments will be echoed throughout the House.

Mrs. Ann Winterton (Congleton) *rose*——

Mr. Hanley: I shall now pretend for a second time that I have not finished my speech.

Mrs. Winterton: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way so late in the day. May I also welcome the statement that he has made today? It will be very much welcomed in my constituency. The people who work at Radway Green making small arms ammunition for the Army will be delighted by the news. It is good for employment in the future and for investment. As the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) said, Royal Ordnance has a splendid record of achievement since privatisation.

Mr. Hanley: My hon. Friend's comments are justified. Hon. Members like good news from time to time, and it is even nicer when people on both sides of the House support the Government in their policies.

5.17 pm

Dr. John Reid (Motherwell, North): May I thank the Minister for his courtesy, and for his dual pretence as he ended? It surprises me that a Defence Minister can pretend with such ability and that is probably the first time that he has had to do so.

The Minister made a long speech with a considerable number of announcements. I do not want to reply to all of those, but I shall comment on one or two. My hon. Friend the Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) has already expressed his pleasure regarding the Royal Ordnance contract, and we also welcome the announcement of the code of practice regarding fishermen and submarines.

May I also take the opportunity to thank in retrospect —although it is not a party issue—my hon. Friend the Member for Thurrock (Mr. Mackinlay) for his private Members' Bill this afternoon? My hon. Friend spoke for many hon. Members on both sides of the House. I find the argument that, if an injustice occurred a few years ago, we should just bury it and forget about it quite astonishing. Many innocent people would be languishing in British goals if the same attitude were taken as was espoused by the hon. Member for Monmouth (Mr. Evans).

Mr. Graham: My hon. Friends will be aware that Royal Ordnance factory workers from Bishopton, who won a famous victory to keep the factory open, are here today listening to the debate. They must be delighted to hear the news that the Government's long-awaited decision has now been reached. After sweating blood, the work force will once again sweat blood to ensure that Britain is safe in a crisis. That is more than the Tory Government will do.

Dr. Reid: I thank my hon. Friend for that helpful comment. We all congratulate the workers at Bishopton, especially those who are here tonight. Indeed, we congratulate workers at all Royal Ordnance factories. As the Minister said, they have achieved considerable increases in efficiency and productivity. I congratulate them on what my hon. Friend calls a famous victory. I am sure that all hon. Members and the workers at Bishopton unite in congratulating the Member of Parliament who represents Bishopton on the sweat, blood and tears that he put in to ensure that the contract went to the Royal Ordnance factories.

Mr. Phil Gallie (Ayr): The hon. Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mr. Graham) cast a slur on those who operate our helicopters. We have a major station at HMS Gannet in my constituency. The people there do a great job for those in Scotland and beyond in air-sea rescue. Would the hon. Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid) like to make the point that our helicopter service is a good one in safe hands?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Before we progress, I remind hon. Members that no fewer than 32 right hon. and hon. Members want to take part in the debate. There have been many interventions. That is right and proper, but they were probably from people who do not intend to speak in the debate. Some hon. Members who are present and who sat here through yesterday's debate will be denied the opportunity to speak if there are too many interventions.

Dr. Reid: I appreciate that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I sat here all day yesterday waiting to speak. I am not getting far in the first five minutes of my speech. I have no hesitation in agreeing with the hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie) or in congratulating not only the pilots who fly our helicopters but those who build helicopters—just in case any hon. Member present represents a constituency that produces helicopters. If anyone else has a particular constituency interest that he wishes to raise, will he or she write to me? I wil raise it in my next speech in opposition to the Minister.

I should like the Minister who is to reply to answer a question in connection with HMS Active, which is normally in the Caribbean and is being sent to Haiti. Will he confirm that when HMS Active goes from the Caribbean to take part in that embargo it will be under the command and control of the United Nations, not the United States? I should be grateful if we could have that important clarification.

Traditionally on these occasions we express gratitude to our soldiers, seamen, airmen and service women. Although we do so by convention and tradition, our gratitude is no less sincere. Along with others, I thank them, wherever they serve and whatever their role in the armed forces. We also thank their families, who bear the burden of their absence, share in the sacrifice of the risks that they take. In their own way, those families commit themselves to public service. In an age in which public service is denigrated, we forget that those who fulfil the greatest public service because they take the greatest risk are those in our armed forces. They do not ask what their country can do for them or even what they can do for their country—they simply go out and do it. We take that for granted on occasions.

It is only natural when we give those thanks that we should think particularly of those who are under active fire at present. We mention, not unnaturally, those in Ireland and Bosnia. But today of all days, it is also appropriate to remind ourselves of those who carry out a vital, delicate and risky task manning the green line that separates two potentially hostile parties in Cyprus.

[Dr. Reid]

Today, it is appropriate to send our thanks to Brigadier Dick Lamb and all the men and women who serve with him with the United Nations forces in Cyprus. That task should not be taken for granted by anyone, least of all the beneficiaries of the presence of those soldiers serving in Cyprus. We assure our service men and women that no one in the House from any party takes them for granted. We express deep admiration and appreciation of their efforts.

There has been great interest in the debate and, as the Secretary of State will know, a considerable amount of advice has been given. For instance, I notice that in this evening's newspaper—I do not know whether the Secretary of State has read it—advice is offered by no less an authority on defence reviews than Sir John Nott. Receiving advice from Sir John Nott on defence reviews is a little like reading a marching manual by the grand old Duke of York. Nevertheless, it gives some idea of the widespread unease about the position in which we find ourselves.

I shall put four simple propositions to the House. First, the world is not only changing rapidly but changing in a more dangerous direction which requires us to give more attention to problems that are more numerous and complex. Secondly, in that context, the British defence budget has been cut, is being cut and will continue to be cut.

Thirdly, precisely the mismatch between the first two propositions—the expanding nature of the problems that we face and the pressure to commit ourselves more and more as against the reduction in defence spending—has led to the present near-chaos in both thinking and practice at the Ministry of Defence. The fourth simple proposition —I shall elaborate on all of them—is that the chaos and indecision can and ultimately will be solved only by a full defence review and by making hard choices. I shall explore all those propositions.

Let us take the proposition that the world is becoming more unstable and dangerous. All the Front-Bench speakers so far have told us about various visits that they have made. I want to tell the House about three visits that I have made in company with hon. Members from both sides of the House. Those visits confirmed what I suspected before I went—how dangerous and awful many parts of the world are becoming. On three occasions, I visited Bosnia. It is easy to imagine when we see television pictures that one could never have a worse experience. I hope that I never have an experience like it again.

I stood in a mass grave of 85 eighty-year-old women whose heads had been crushed and whose bodies had been ripped open. They had been put in sacks and thrown into a mass grave. The stench of the slaughterhouse was everywhere. It is not an experience which I want to repeat. I have also talked to the orphans in Bosnia. I have mixed with Muslims in the besieged town of Goradze, which is now composed almost entirely of old women and young children.

I moved from Bosnia to Georgia. I was there before the cameras got there. Like Bosnia, it is a beautiful, pleasant and fruitful land full of tremendous potential. Along with the hon. Member for Blackpool, North (Mr. Elletson), I was awakened by the sound of artillery in the beautiful coastal village of Sukhumi. It was unknown nine months ago, but now appears on our television screens as it is bombarded by the Abkhazians. It has become supposedly the last redoubt of Shevardnadze and the Georgians. We have seen that land torn apart by a revolt not only by the Abkhazians but by the South Assettians and various ethnic groups.

From Georgia, I went to the front line in Azerbaijan, where the tragic war between Azerbaijan and Armenia has caused several hundred thousand refugees to flee. The war has wrecked a potentially economically powerful country with amazing resources of oil. It has destabilised the region in its strategic relations between Russia, Turkey and Iran.

As the right hon. Member for Epsom and Ewell (Mr. Hamilton) said, all those places were virtually ignored before CNN and Sky Television turned up. There are 20 to 30 other such places, but the cameras are not there. They all have symptoms of a world from which threats have not disappeared but have merely changed form.

Instability is perhaps greater than ever and the risks are more numerous. There are two reasons for that. First, communism and the centralised control of Leninism suppressed many causes of instability, such as ethnic tension, national rivalries, border disputes and sovereignty claims. Those regimes did not eradicate that instability, but for 70 or 80 years the causes were suppressed. Now that the lid of the pressure pot has been lifted by the removal of Leninism, those causes of instability are seen not to have disappeared.

Secondly, for all its horror, the cold war gave a sort of glacial stability to relations between nations. During the cold war, everyone could freely say, "Of course we believe in the self-determination of nations." That was because we knew that in practice no one would recognise a new nation as that would upset the stability of the two great icebergs facing each other. That stability has been taken away.

Another reason will be recognised by Conservative Members. It is that market economics do not immediately deliver prosperity or democracy. This country had market economics for 200 years before it had any form of democracy. Initially, market economics produces unemployment, poverty, insecurity and degradation. That can be seen in Moscow and, indeed, throughout the former Soviet Union. Poverty, insecurity and degradation are the harbingers not of democracy, but of a demand for totalitarianism, whether from the extreme right of nationalist fascism, from communism or, in other parts of the world, from fundamentalism. All those reasons found my first proposition that the world is more unstable than it was before the end of the cold war.

No doubt Conservatives would dispute my second proposition. It is that in the context of growing risks, our defence budget has been cut every year, is still being cut, and is likely to continue to be cut. Before the taunts, may I say that that will happen whatever party is in power, not just because of a conference resolution, but because of the public's natural expectation that, as the cold war is over, there should be some reduction in defence expenditure. Without being too jaundiced, I should say that it will also happen because of the Government's economic failure and the tragic £50 billion deficit in the public sector borrowing requirement.

It does not take a mathematical genius to work out that there have been cuts. Under current plans, by 1995 the defence budget will have fallen by 20 per cent. in real terms since 1985-86. If the Treasury succeeds in forcing a further £1 billion cut in the annual defence budget, the drop in

defence expenditure between 1985 and 1995 will be about 25 per cent. If, as is likely, expenditure under a Conservative Government continues to fall at that rate until the end of the decade—it is likely to do so and we have not been assured that it will not—the defence budget will have fallen by more than 33 per cent. in real terms between 1985 and the year 2000.

It is sheer hypocrisy for Tories to condemn conference resolutions to cut defence expenditure to the European average when the Government have been cutting it in practice by an even greater amount than the theoretical cuts of those resolutions.

Mr. Churchill: By how much more would a Labour Government cut defence now and in the years ahead?

Dr. Reid: I thought that the hon. Gentleman was not only listening intently but was capable of understanding simple English. At no stage did I say that we would not have cut it. I explicitly said that under any Government it would have been cut. The hon. Gentleman asks by how much more we would have cut it. We would not necessarily have cut it by any more than the Government. If it is cut by £1 billion over the next three years, as the Treasury wants, by the year 2000 there will be a 40 per cent. cut in real terms. If that happens, not only will the Government have surpassed Labour party conference resolutions, but they will be well on the way to meeting the demands of the Liberal party.

We made it plain in our last manifesto that we will provide whatever is required for the defence of the United Kingdom. That is still our position. We also made it plain that we want a full defence review, and I am trying to explain more fully than usual why we want that. My first point was that we have increasing commitments and, secondly, I said that we have a reduced budget. If those two propositions are true—and no hon. Member has yet disputed them—the only way to resolve the mismatch is by a full, open, detailed and rational review of commitments and resources, to bring them into conjunction.

The Government will say that we are wrong, that a defence review is not needed. They told us that when we said two and a half years ago that their figures on the infantry were wrong, but then they admitted that we were right. They told us that we were wrong about the tactical air-to-surface missile. For two and a half years, I have told the Government that they could not afford TASM and that there was no military need for it. They told us that we were wrong, but yesterday they publicly accepted that we were right.

For two and a half years, I said that we could determine the reliability and safety of nuclear weapons without testing, but they said that it could not be done. The President of the United States thinks that it can be done. We have constantly told Ministers with all their civil servants—whether it is 150,000 or 250,000—things that they apparently did not know. I shall take a gamble by predicting that Tomahawk missiles will replace TASM. Those missiles will be put on Trident, as I think the Ministry of Defence already knows but is not telling us.

Perhaps I and *The Herald* of Glasgow, which is one of my sources, are wrong about that, but the defence correspondent of that newspaper was more correct about the infantry and about TASM than the Secretary of State for Defence. We shall see from an announcement about Tomahawk cruise missiles and Trident submarines whether, once again, that correspondent has been more right than the Secretary of State.

Let us examine the muddled thinking involved in the mismatch between resources and commitments in the absence of a course of action to relate them. It is difficult to get Ministers, even Ministers such as the Minister of State for Defence Procurement, who has committed his life to open government, to speak openly. That is because they are constrained by civil servants and by convention, and by the guard dogs that accompany them everywhere. But occasionally the guard slips, and nowhere is it likely to slip more quickly than from a Minister who has just resigned. That gives rise to a free flow of thought and shows the patterns of thought that dictated decisions when he was in Government. I mentioned one such Minister—Mr. Alan Clark—in the previous debate on defence estimates.

Yesterday, we heard a glorious contribution by the recently retired Minister for the Armed Forces, my old friend the right hon. Member for Epsom and Ewell. Some of his speeches are worth re-reading, but for different reasons. I recommend that one reads the right hon. Gentleman on the difficulties of armed intervention in Yugoslavia, a paragraph that I found concise, well informed, historically accurate and, in many ways, a perfect summary of the difficulties that, I accept, face Ministers.

I recommend that one does not read the right hon. Member's solution to the Irish problem, which is to relieve overstretch by ignoring the problems that cause overstretch in the first place. If I remember it correctly, he said that he was talking not about "peremptory action" in the military sphere but about withdrawing one battalion every six or 12 months. He was thus the first recently retired Minister from the Ministry of Defence fully to support the "Troops Out" movement, although not in a peremptory fashion.

Even better, because it bears directly on the question of a defence review, were the following two sentences. First, he said:

"I disagree with the Opposition, who say that we should think about specialisation."

In other words, he rejected specialisation. He then said:

"The broad range that I propose will inevitably narrow under financial pressures."—[*Official Report*, 18 October 1993; Vol. 230, c. 56.]

There is the classic confession—unwittingly—of the truth of what the Labour party has said over the past three years. The Government are not taking decisions after thought, but are allowing policies to result from financial pressures.

We thought that they were the result of the inadequacy of the right hon. Member for Epsom and Ewell when a Minister, but, after last night, we know that they were deliberate, because he thereby applied the free market economic to military choice. He felt that Ministers should not take decisions and that the Opposition should not think about specialisation, which would happen inevitably anyway as a result of economic pressure.

Mr. Archie Hamilton (Epsom and Ewell): I thank the hon. Gentleman for giving way because we are involved in an interesting debate. Does he agree that specialisation was considered in the Nott review in 1981, which decided that we should get rid of our amphibious forces and cut back on the Navy, and that that policy was proved wrong within a short time by the Falklands war?

Dr. Reid: I accept that case. I am not arguing that we should get rid of amphibious forces, or anything like that. I am arguing that, because of economic pressures, we may have to look at specialisation, so we should think about that in advance, through a defence review. What the right hon. Gentleman is arguing—the pattern has been pursued by his successors—is that there is no need to think about it because economic pressures will cause it anyway. When the Treasury demands that the budget is cut by £1 billion, the Department thinks of the last order and delays it by two years.

I am sorry that the right hon. Gentleman interrupted me there, because I have another quote, in which he surpassed himself—incidentally, in the same paragraph.

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): Before the hon. Gentleman passes to another selection from the speeches of the right hon. Member for Epsom and Ewell (Mr. Hamilton), I have a question for him. Does it occur to him that, although the Nott proposals were not implemented, and we were thus able to fight the Falklands war, since then, economic pressures have created such circumstances that few people believe that today we would be able to fight such a war?

Dr. Reid: We spoke earlier about the merchant fleet. That is a perfect example of the problem that the hon. and learned Gentleman has set out. We could not now mobilise the same flotilla that was mobilised for the Falklands war. However, circumstances have changed—there is now Mount Pleasant airport and different ways to protect the area. I should not like anyone outside the House to get the impression that any Member of Parliament wants to modify our defence of the Falklands and our commitment to the people there. That is not the case, but we would not be able to reinforce it in the same way, as the hon. and learned Gentleman suggests.

I am quoting the words of the right hon. Member for Epsom and Ewell because he was, merely a few months ago, dictating policy. He said yesterday:

"It is nonsense to talk about a review because that could not predict any clearly identifiable future threat."—[*Official Report*, 18 October 1993; Vol. 230, c. 56.]

He is thus saying, first, do not think about specialisation and let the market—or, in this case, the Treasury—do it anyway and, secondly, because we cannot with certainty identify a future threat, let us not think about any threat at all.

All Conservative Members who, in their frustration, are wondering why what is going on in the Ministry of Defence is going on should take home that paragraph and frame it. It is symptomatic of the type of thinking that we have had from the Government in the past four years. They have said, "Don't let's think about strategic decisions in the future—leave it to economics. We can't determine everything so let's not determine anything." It is nothing other than a fancy formula for avoiding hard decisions. In Army terminology, it is a combination of a lack of moral fibre and a dereliction of duty.

Mr. Archie Hamilton: I am sorry to intervene again, as I know that many hon. Members wish to speak. The hon. Gentleman is dealing with both the defence review and the intelligence on which we base our assessments of where the threat is coming from. Does he accept that, in the case of the Falklands, our intelligence was wrong and that invasion was not forecast, and that the same was true of the occupation of Kuwait?

Dr. Reid: The right hon. Gentleman should take note of Denis Healey's law of holes, which is, "When in a hole, stop digging." He is now arguing that there should be no military planning. If everything is so uncertain that we should make no decisions, why should we debate matters and why should we have chiefs of staff and all the civil servants, whether they are bean counters or technologists? If we start from the basis that because we cannot predict everything, we should not try to analyse or judge anything, we shall be in an even sorrier mess—or perhaps not. Perhaps that is the basis on which the three remaining Ministers in the Department operate. As I said last time, they are the three ministerial monkeys of "See no cuts, hear no cuts and speak no cuts."

Those of us who have been attempting to follow the seemingly random direction of British defence policy have struggled long and hard to discern the method behind the madness, but without success.

What are we to make of a Government who, because of the mismatch and their refusal to think things through, reduce the size of the Army from 155,000 to 120,000 and then to 116,000 and then increase it to 121,000? What are we to think of a Government who start off with a surface fleet of "around 45" frigates and destroyers, then announce that we need a surface fleet of "around 40", only to change their mind and conclude that "around 35" will be enough, but they cannot give a definite figure and speak of plus or minus five? What are we to think of a Government who cannot tell us whether 31 ships will be enough in the present circumstances?

What are we to make of a Government who allowed Britain's surface-to-air missile system accidentally to lapse into obsolescence? How does one forget about such a system? How does one "accidentally" allow such a system to lapse? They then rushed about desperately trying to procure a new system before deciding eventually that we no longer require such a capability. What are we to make of a Government who promised a replacement for the WE177 free-fall nuclear bomb by the end of 1990 and then dithered until the end of 1993 before saying what we had been saying for three years—that TASM was not needed in the first place and could not be afforded?

The list of issues on which the Government have prevaricated is endless. Churchill used the glorious phrase: "constantly resolute in their equivocation".

Never was it more apt than in the case of Defence Ministers.

Let us take the example of what was said about the royal dockyards yesterday. Having botched the allocation of the Trident contract by giving guarantees that proved to be worthless, causing much hardship at both Devonport and Rosyth, Defence Ministers have been panicked by the Treasury—this is a Treasury-led decision—into opting for a tired and discredited policy of privatisation.

I see the Secretary of State smile, as though it were an outrageous suggestion, to the point of being ludicrous, that any decision that he has taken could have been influenced, in some way, by the Treasury. He reminds me of the wee man in the Mercury phone advertisements—the wee snappy dresser with the moustache and the clipped tones. One never knows whether he is serious. When the Secretary of State tells us that his decisions were not made

as a result of Treasury pressure, that wee man appears before me. The Secretary of State is smiling as if none of the decisions had anything to do with the Treasury.

We regard the royal dockyards as assets which are vital to national security and we will fight privatisation tooth and nail. *(Interruption.)* The Secretary of State says, "Huge cheers", but I did not notice the standing ovation after his speech yesterday or the laurel wreaths being carried down to him from Back Benchers shouting, "Hail Caesar, presiding over our victorious armies." Perhaps he did not notice that they were behind him and those are always the ones to watch, as the Secretary of State will know.

Those hoping to discover some kernel of strategic genius guiding Tory defence policy—I am an open-minded man and I thought that perhaps there was one and that they might have some vision of dizzying clarity which I cannot see—will be profoundly let down by the "Statement on the Defence Estimates."

The Secretary of State clearly hoped to distract attention from the intellectual barrenness of his policies by a deluge of mumbo jumbo. Earlier today, someone—I forget which hon. Member it was—said that giving us a large quantity of accurate information is not enough. I do not want to go through the White Paper, but let me tell him that the information it contains is not even accurate. I advise the Minister of State that, if he is employing bean counters, he should employ people who can count beans properly.

Table 3 on page 22 of the estimates sets out the force allocation of the three roles. There are no fewer than 13 instances in which the number of units required for a given task exceeds the incremental total available. Some of those can be made up by war requisitioning, but if table 3 was an attempt to show that we already have adequate forces, those of us who can count up to 14 found that it illustrates the opposite: in 13 of the instances we do not have the forces deemed absolutely necessary.

Those who ask why the decisions are so erratic and unpredictable and why the Ministry of Defence always seems to change its tune under Treasury pressure are asking the same questions as we did. We asked why the decisions were erratic and unpredictable; we asked why Ministers changed their tune under pressure. We searched and thought and could not find any explanation—that is, until this morning.

This morning, I had a quick look through a book which should be recommended reading for anyone who wants to understand why the Ministry of Defence is erratic, unpredictable and changes its tune under pressure. The book is a philosophical tome called,

"Margaret Thatcher: the Downing Street Years".

As we all know, it deals with ideology and general politics and does not descend to the level of political personalities or backstabbing.

On one of the occasions when the former Prime Minister does comment on the personalities involved, she describes the Secretary of State thus: a man whose judgment is "erractic", whose behaviour is "unpredictable", a man who always

"changed his tune under pressure".

As they say in the Tab advert, suddenly everything becomes clear. That is the explanation of the erratic nature of British defence policy. It is not only because of the mismatch between resources and commitments; it is also a reflection of the erratic and unpredictable nature of the man responsible for formulating it.

Had the former Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Defence been political enemies, I would not have believed it, but I know that they were close political allies because when he was Secretary of State for Scotland the right hon. and learned Gentleman assured me that there was no difference between them; so I take it as an objective comment. Behind the cool and confident exterior of the Scottish legal establishment, apparently, lies a quivering wreck presiding over the Ministry of Defence.

The search for a deeper meaning has been a pointless one because there is no deeper meaning. Tory defence policy really is as chaotic and shambolic as it appears to be.

We shall try not to be too harsh in our criticism because I aim to be consistent and take the advice of the former Prime Minister. She informs us that the Secretary of State is a man who is "sensitive and highly-strung" and we would not wish to be unfair to a man of such a delicate disposition. I shall therefore move on to the general political arguments.

If all that were not enough, the truth is that the sorry mess of "Options for Change" was not exclusively of the right hon. and learned Gentleman's making. The honour belongs mainly to his predecessor, a man who, although he is not noted for his sensitivity, displayed all the erratic and unpredictable qualities expected from a Conservative Secretary of State for Defence. Even so, the 1993 "Statement on the Defence Estimates", although clearly an attempt to respond to the severe criticisms that have been levelled at the Government from both inside and outside Parliament, is an inadequate document in almost every respect.

In particular, there is still no elaboration of the strategic rationale for the decisions that have been reached, no discussion of the foreign policy objectives shaping our military requirements and little explanation of the missions that our armed forces have been restructured to undertake.

We were given assurances that there would be a strategic input into the document. It was heralded by Ministers as a major work, a PhD thesis on strategic thinking. Hon. Members should reread the document. There are five pages on strategy excluding the tables. The Secretary of State has a copy; he can count them. There are four pages in the glossary. There are eight pages in the index. There are as many pages in the glossary and the contents as there are on strategy. There are twice the number of pages in the index as there are on the strategic decisions taken for the future of the British armed forces for the next 30 years. No detailed justification is offered.

I shall not go through any of the shambolic decisions that are included within the document. I merely repeat that, if we do not have a defence review, we shall have a constant incremental cut across all the services which will represent a reduction in most of them to a critical level. That will mean that, instead of doing some things well, we will do all things badly.

Finally, as the Gulf war showed, we remain crucially dependent on our allies for the provision of certain essential capabilities. When we talk of specialisation, which so horrifies ex-Ministers and, presumably, Ministers, their assumption is that we are doing everything now. But we are dependent on our allies for some tasks, as was amply shown during the Gulf war.

At the Tory party conference, the Secretary of State predicted that if there were any more cuts we would have paper tiger armed forces. Two things struck me about that comment. First, it was made with the air of a detached

[Dr. Reid]

observer, a commentator. He made the prediction that we may soon have paper tiger armed forces, as if it had nothing to do with him and was all to do with unforeseen circumstances, the "Book of Revelation" or the fairies at the bottom of the garden.

It was a classic case of trying to opt out of responsibility for the present position, and Opposition Members will not let the Secretary of State opt out of that responsibility. The truth is that under his stewardship and that of his predecessor the Tories have forfeited all their claims to be the party of strong defence. I have some sympathy with the frustration of Conservative Back Benchers, including one or two who are nodding in agreement, who recognise that.

I can tell the Secretary of State today that, although we do not want to intrude in grief, if he continues down that path he will not be forgotten by the Conservative party because those on the Benches behind him do not want to forfeit the right to claim to be the party of sound defence. However, he has already done it and he is going further down that road. That is my first point on paper tigers.

Secondly, whatever the Secretary of State or the Government do, the people in the British armed forces will never be paper tigers. Those looking for paper tigers should not look to the armed forces because, however badly resourced or badly treated they may be, their men and women will always rise well above the description of paper tigers.

Those searching for paper tigers should not look in the barrack rooms of the British Army, the ships of the Royal Navy or the air bases of the Royal Air Force. They should not search in the green fields of South Armagh, the green hills of Bosnia or the green peace line in Cyprus—they should look for paper tigers on the Government's green Benches. That is where the paper tigers sit. Using an animal metaphor, I can say only that there is nothing more sickening than someone who can roar like a lion on the party conference platform, but can only squeak like a mouse in the Treasury vaults or the Cabinet room.

We have seen all this before and the British armed forces deserve better. That is why the Opposition will not acquiesce in the Government's plans. That is why we have tabled an amendment. That is why we hope that those who have the fundamental interests of our armed forces at heart will vote for the Opposition amendment.

6.1 pm

Sir Nicholas Bonsor (Upminster): It is always enjoyable and entertaining to listen to the hon. Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid). I am sorry to disappoint him, but I assure him that Conservative Members stand solidly behind our right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence. We certainly do not agree with the hon. Gentleman's comments.

I find it sickening to listen to Labour Front-Bench spokesmen pontificating, as they always do, about the level of our defence capability and the cuts that they claim the Conservative Government should not be making—while at the same time saying that they, too, would make cuts, but that they would be different cuts. They are not prepared to say what cuts and whether they would be deeper or lesser cuts. They are not prepared to give the slightest indication to the country of what shape they plan for our defence forces. Of course, they are in the happy position of not having to do that because neither now nor in the foreseeable future will they be in any position to make such decisions.

Having said that, I must now say that I am not entirely happy with the rumours going around the country—which I hope will be proved to be wrong—that there will be further defence cuts over and above those that we have already suffered. I am confident that such rumours do not come from the Ministry of Defence. I am equally confident that our Defence Ministers would not wish such cuts upon us. I want to know where the rumours originated and, in a moment, I want to deal in some detail with the reasons why they cause me great concern.

First, I want to say a few words about the defence estimates. I very much welcome their new shape, with the matching of our commitments with the resources available. I agree with the comments of the hon. Member for Motherwell, North about the matching of the commitments in table 3 on page 22 with the resources allocated to them. For example, the target for defence role 1—MCMVs, the mine clearing vessels—is 28. The number proposed is 25 and the glossary at the end of the estimates shows that we will not get even that many because the number will drop to 18 next year as some of the obsolete vessels are removed and new vessels have not yet been ordered or built.

I am unhappy with many of the detailed aspects of current defence planning. I have the honour to chair the Defence Select Committee, whose report expresses the concern that we could not fully meet our commitments. I shall return to that theme later.

The level of defence expenditure proposed arises not from the 1993 defence estimates, but from "Options for Change", which was introduced in 1991 and originally planned in 1989. The hon. Member for Motherwell, North quoted what Lady Thatcher had said about my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. Perhaps he should have reminded the House that the person in overall charge of "Options for Change" was Lady Thatcher. It is not right to blame the present leadership—and certainly not right to blame the present MOD team—for our current level of defence. "Options for Change" was based on the assumption that there would be a peace dividend.

I was never one of those who believed that there would be a peace dividend and I want to explore whether we now have a world that is demonstrably safer than it was in 1989. I believe that it is demonstrably very much more dangerous. There is fighting throughout the outer regions of the former Soviet Union. Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan and Georgia are aflame. As my right hon. and learned Friend pointed out in his opening speech yesterday, Russia came within an ace of dissolving into civil war. There has been no reduction in the number of nuclear warheads in Russia and the Ukraine, but control of them has become much less secure. The danger of nuclear proliferation in states that are incapable of proper and responsible action must have grown substantially since 1989.

In the far east, China is enormously powerful and is growing in military might. It is buying and building military equipment at an enormous rate and is planning to expand its naval fleet and naval bases. It is still a dictatorial regime—it is crushing Tibet, where it is carrying out genocide to the eternal shame of the west, which seems incapable of doing anything to influence China. It has recently exploded another nuclear bomb in an experiment

that directly contravenes the international moratorium on nuclear tests. Looking 10 or 20 years ahead, can we be sure that China will not be a major threat to the western world?

Closer to home and nearer in time, we have only to look at Yugoslavia, Bosnia, Kosovo and Macedonia. The war in the provinces of the former Yugoslavia threatens to spill over into Albania, Greece and Turkey. That would have horrific consequences for the United Kingdom and western Europe. We cannot for one moment assume that none of that will happen.

The United States of America is currently making some extremely unwelcome and aggressive noises about our special relationship, about Europe and about the future of NATO. I am deeply concerned about that. I am sure that we can hold NATO together, but the unity of the United States and Europe is an essential part of our integral future security. If that is threatened we shall be in grave danger.

There never was any room—and there certainly is no room now—for any peace dividend. Even if I were wrong about that and even if there were plenty of room, I believe that we have already taken any peace dividend, and more than in full. It is a staggering fact that, as a nation, we are now spending less on our defences in real terms than the Labour Government spent in 1978. Since 1989, we have lost 20 per cent. of our manpower capability and 15 per cent. of our overall budget. Under the current defence estimates, we will lose 18 per cent. of our current defence expenditure and almost 23 per cent. of our overall manpower by 1995-96.

There is a contrast between what has happened in the Ministry of Defence and what has happened in all the other big spending Departments. The Department of Health is now spending 50 per cent. more in real terms than it did in 1979; the Department for Education is spending 30 per cent. more; and the Department of Transport 25 per cent. more. I am not quibbling about that and I do not say for a moment that those Departments should not have that increased expenditure.

However, if we must look for savings we should look to those Departments to provide them. They have suffered no cuts in the number of civil servants or in their Departments' activities and there has been enormous growth in their administration costs. The Ministry of Defence has already made a significant attack on those areas and it should take great credit for doing so. Is there room for further cuts? I say that there is not. I do not mean to suggest that some millions of pounds cannot be saved —perhaps even tens of millions—by further pruning inefficiencies and looking for additional economies in administrative costs. I am sure that can be done.

What particularly frightens me are persistent rumours of a cut of £1 billion or more being demanded by the Treasury of the Ministry of Defence. I must tell my right hon. Friends on the Front Bench—and those of my right hon. Friends in the Treasury who are looking over their shoulders—that any such attempt further to cut our defence budget would meet with strong opposition. I have no doubt that I speak for many of my right hon. and hon. Friends on these Back Benches as well as for myself when I say that any attempt to put into action cuts of the scale that I have heard mentioned would offer no alternative but to vote against them.

Mr. Eric Martlew (Carlisle): The hon. Gentleman suggests that cuts should be made in other areas. Does he consider that tax should be increased if that is necessary to save the defence budget?

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: I do not want to turn this into a detailed economic debate but it is certainly my view that, when trying to bring down the unacceptably high deficit that I accept exists, the pain ought to be spread among Departments, and there should be a partial increase in tax as well to balance the way in which the gap is narrowed.

The Ministry of Defence can seek exemption from cuts because it is the only Department that has already made enormous savings and should not be asked to contribute further. I am deeply disturbed by rumours and by the false and malicious disinformation released to the press from some source.

One example is the claim that there are more civil servants than fighting men. That is a fatuous misrepresentation of the truth. My hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces dealt with that point at the beginning of the debate. The fact is that we have 240,000 fighting men and 135,000 civilians—including civil servants, but also all those who man the Royal Fleet Auxiliary, those who have taken over jobs previously done by members of the armed services in guarding depots and headquarters, and those who perform many other tasks taken into the civilian sector. To call them all civil servants and to deride them as pen pushers is offensive.

Mr. Cormack: My hon. Friend is making an extremely good speech and some powerful points. I assure him that, if the unthinkable happens, he would not go into the Lobby alone to vote against the cuts.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, but I never actually thought that I would.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): As to savings and bureaucrats, I remind the House—while my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State is present—that my right hon. and learned Friend took the view that a difference of £64 million is sufficient to justify a transfer from Rosyth to Devonport, despite the additional cost of doing so. Under the guidance of my right hon. and learned Friend when he was Secretary of State for Scotland, it was proposed to build a new palace for the Scottish Office in Leith at a cost of £55 million, plus transfer costs of £10 million. That makes a total of £65 million, to accommodate more bureaucrats at the Scottish Office—a sum higher than £64 million.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: My hon. and learned Friend gives me an opportunity to defend the decision taken by my right hon. and learned Friend to go ahead with the new building at Bristol. It will be expensive, but both the Ministry of Defence and the Public Accounts Committee examined the costings and were satisfied that there will be a substantial overall saving to the Ministry. I therefore have no hesitation in saying that I am sure that it is correct to construct that building.

What can be done to solve our present dilemma? Should we believe the rumours and look for further cuts at the Ministry of Defence? Should we continue, for example, to bash admirals—which seems to be the pastime of whoever circulated the rumours of the past week? We were told that

[Sir Nicholas Bonsor]

there are more admirals than ships. Several radio commentators said that it is disgraceful that so much gold braid was about.

The truth is very different. In 1989 there were 47 admirals, and now we have 42. In two years' time, we shall have 36. Of those, four will be doctors. Therefore, our entire fleet—which will still be substantial if not as substantial as most of us would like—will be under the command of 32 admirals. By a happy coincidence, that is the same as the number of Private Secretaries, Deputy Private Secretaries, Permanent Secretaries and Under-Secretaries at the Treasury. I know where I would like to see the axe fall.

The great cry appears to be that there should be a public review of our defence requirements in the context of matching our commitments to our resources. Superficially that is an extremely attractive idea, but I must make mention of two papers published by the Defence Select Committee, on defence estimates and on the Royal Navy. I hope that all right hon. and hon. Members will take the opportunity to read both, as well as the Library paper on defence reviews. If they read that paper, they may view with more reluctance the defence review system. It has not been frantically successful in the past, for the reason that it is a rolling programme.

Mention has already been made of the 1962 review. There was also one in 1981, which was not successful, and "Options for Change" was a review by any other name.

Dr. Reid *indicated dissent.*

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: The hon. Gentleman shakes his head, but he will find that there is no difference between the process adopted by the Government for "Options for Change" and that normally used for the kind of review that he advocates. We should not go for a public review of our defence requirements but must prevent the Treasury from taking over detailed control of our defence commitments and resources.

There must of course be some financial balance and control over the money that we spend on defence, as on everything else—but I am deeply concerned about the moratorium imposed by the Treasury since July on orders that the Ministry of Defence wants to place. I was delighted to hear my hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces announce the order for ammunition, but that should have gone in months ago. It is only because Royal Ordnance created such a fuss that at last the go-ahead has reluctantly been given.

Orders should also have been placed for Challenger 2 tanks, which I know that my hon. Friend the Minister wanted to enter and which the Ministry of Defence was ready to confirm. That order was blocked by the Treasury, as were preliminary orders for the MCMVs and the EH101. All are vital for our national interest and have been budgeted for. Detailed interference of that kind from the Treasury and from Treasury Ministers and officials is anathema to anyone who believes in proper Government and makes it impossible for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State, the Ministry of Defence or the House to keep proper control. We must stop it, and I hope that can be done without recourse to a defence review.

We must also make sure that our commitments and resources are balanced. That again is broadly the case now, give or take some of the shortcomings from which we suffer. We must ask whether we have too many commitments at the moment. That is for the Foreign Office to do, not for the Treasury. What are the proper commitments for our country to be carrying out? What do we wish to do?

Briefly, I have no hesitation in advising my right hon. and hon. Friends what those commitments should be. We must be able to defend our own interests at home and abroad. We must be able to play a proper part in NATO and in the United Nations, as required by our allies and as is properly demanded of us as a member of the Security Council. We must also be able to use our armed forces abroad to bolster British interests wherever we deem that appropriate.

I shall give one example of where we have got it wrong—Belize. We have withdrawn our troops from Belize, and that has had two beneficial effects. First, it has helped our emergency tour plot to become shorter, and I welcome that. Secondly, it has saved the Treasury a vast amount—to the tune of £9 million a year.

What were the benefits of having our troops in Belize? Were they worth £9 million a year? The central part of America is critical for the future security of the west. South America, central America and north America are burgeoning trading areas in which we need a strong British presence. We were asked by the Americans to stay there. We were asked by the Belize authorities to stay there. We were asked—ironically—by the Guatemalan Government against whom we were defending Belize. But we decided, for the sake of £9 million and to ease a short-term problem with the ETP, that we would withdraw our troops from Belize.

I was horrified last night by the answer to a question that I put to my hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces. He told me—he did not tell me, but we were safe enough to divine it—that we were not going to renew the guarantee that we gave to Belize that, in the event of its being invaded by Guatemala, we would go to its aid. I can think of no better way of losing friends and our reputation for being prepared to stand by our friends, which the House is entitled to demand of our Government and our Ministry.

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): May I reassure my hon. Friend? It so happens that earlier today I had a meeting with the Prime Minister of Belize, who is in London. I assure my hon. Friend that there continues to be very close consultation between Belize and the United Kingdom. We recognise that Belize has understandable concerns about the future, notwithstanding the very much improved relationship with Guatemala. My hon. Friend can be assured that we continue to discuss with the Belizean Government the way in which any concerns that might develop in future could properly be responded to by the United Kingdom in the interests of ensuring not only security in central America but the continuing independence and integrity of Belize.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: I wish that my right hon. and learned Friend had been able to reassure me, but I am afraid that he has done precisely what our hon. Friend the Minister did last night, and that is fail to give me the assurance that I sought. We have clearly not given Belize the assurance that we would unequivocally go to its aid in

the event of it being invaded by Guatemala—an undertaking which we have always given in the past and which was the purpose of our troops' presence in Belize until now. With all due respect to my right hon. and learned Friend, it should not be too difficult for Her Majesty's Government to give that undertaking to an ex-colony which heavily depends upon us for its security.

That is one example of where we must look on a wider base rather than purely asking whether that is how we use our defence forces in order to defend immediate British interests. The value of our white ensign and our troops in that area spreads through the whole of that part of the continent and that has an enormous added benefit. Closer to home and in a smaller way, the trooping of the colour ceremonials carried out by the guards has inestimable value for tourism income and for the financial well-being of London. I have seen no sign of that point being taken into account when deciding what will be done about ceremonials.

Last year, we were given an assurance that the cut in the guards regiments would not affect ceremonials, but already this summer there has been what was described as a one-off accidental failure to get the emergency tour plot right. Therefore, the guards had to be taken off other duties. The ceremonial in London was cut in a way that we were assured no one would notice, but one would have had to be blind or ignorant not to notice a substantial difference over two years.

We must carefully consider where the money comes from. I see nothing wrong in the suggestion that the Ministry of Defence be able to charge another Department for the value that our troops give in certain areas. However, I certainly do not believe that we should cut what our troops do in those areas on the spurious ground that we cannot afford it when we are talking about £9 million in the case of Belize and probably a fraction of that amount in terms of extra ceremonial duties which are cut.

Mr. Ian Davidson (Glasgow, Govan): Is the hon. Gentleman aware that, at this moment, Group 4 is practising with horses so that it can bid for the ceremonial aspect of the military when it comes up for tender?

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: I do not think that I will waste my time on that intervention. No doubt it will appear in *Hansard.*

Mr. Menzies Campbell: The hon. Gentleman made an interesting comparison between the number of senior civil servants in the Treasury and the number of admirals. He said that there are 32 of each. As many hon. Members think that the Treasury is trying to run the Ministry of Defence, it might be sensible to send admirals to run the Treasury.

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: I am not sure whether I should have given way on that occasion, either. That intervention gives a lighter note to the finish of what is meant to be a serious speech.

I conclude by reiterating that I do not believe for one moment that this country will remain properly defended and adequately secure, and it will certainly not be able to carry out its duties in the various areas that I described if we suffer any more substantial cuts. I am afraid that I would have to oppose any such action, even though I would do so with great reluctance when my own Government propose it.

6.26 pm

Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton): It was a relief to hear in the speech of the hon. Member for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor) references to the context in which defence policy should be analysed and in which our defence forces should be deployed. I did not necessarily agree with some of his arguments, but at least he tried to address the wider context of defence policy.

During the past day and a half, we have had two hours and 12 minutes of ministerial speeches, but we have heard nothing of what the Government's defence policy is about. We have heard about weapons, procurements, deployments and medals. Today, from the Minister of State for the Armed Forces, we heard about something called gender-free testing.

Yesterday, we even had spatchcocked into the Secretary of State's speech—no doubt it was drafted and inserted by the Foreign Office—a completely gratuitous statement about the situation in Russia today. The House was enlightened by the Secretary of State on how essential to safeguarding Russian democracy it was that the discredited Russian Parliament should be dissolved. I suppose that the same argument might be used about this country at present.

It seems that the Secretary of State for Defence is involved in a great dispute inside the Cabinet about the defence budget. The hon. Member for Upminster, with the weight of his chairmanship of the Select Committee, gave a grave warning to the Government of the consequences among Conservative Back-Bench Members if cuts of £1 billion were made in the defence budget.

It is interesting that the dispute that is going on inside the Cabinet and which is echoed throughout the Conservative press today is not about what the Secretary of State should spend his budget on or whether that expense in necessary, justifiable or cost-effective.

The dispute simply seems to be about what the figures in the budget should be. In defending his budget, the Secretary of State for Defence seems to be echoing Descartes in saying: "I spend, therefore I am." He is simply saying: "I need the budget to show that I am the Secretary of State for Defence, and that the Ministry of Defence has a role to play in the Government." However, that is very different from the Ministry carrying out its role as the protector of the armed services and as the Department designated to work out a defence policy for our country.

The level of defence spending should not be an abstract figure. It should not be as high as the Secretary of State can bargain it up, or as low as the Chancellor can manage to cut it down. I tell the hon. Members for Upminster and for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill)—the latter sought to make the same point yesterday—that having league tables on expenditure between Government Departments is not the point. The point is whether the expenditure of Departments can be justified by what those Departments are doing and what they should be doing.

Whether the defence budget of £24 billion—if that is what it turns out to be—is too high or too low does not depend on picking a figure out of the air or on an argument between the Secretary of State and the Chancellor. It depends on what our armed forces are supposed to be doing, and whether that amount of money will make it possible for our armed forces to do it. The figure of £24 billion is much too low if it does not provide the

[Mr. Gerald Kaufman]

wherewithal to fulfil a sensible defence policy. However, it is too high if it goes beyond the needs of a sensible defence policy.

The problem with the present level of defence spending and, indeed, any future level of defence spending—it is more likely to be lower than higher—or any variant that is now being considered is that no one knows how much needs to be spent. No one, including the Secretary of State for Defence, has the slightest idea of what the defence policy is about and what it should be about.

Yesterday, the right hon. Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones) intervened in the speech of the right hon. Member for Epsom and Ewell (Mr. Hamilton) with what he clearly regarded as an absolutely daring notion—that the Foreign Office should have some say in what defence policy should be, and that defence policy should be a consequence of foreign policy.

Yet that is simply all that a defence policy should be. It does not exist in abstract. Our forces do not exist in order that they should exist. The defence budget does not exist in order that there should be a figure that can be defended by the Secretary of State or cut down by the Chancellor of the Exchequer. It exists to carry out policies in the interests of this country, by defending our country and ensuring that our national interests are defended in the various forums of the world in which we properly have a say.

When Clausewitz said that war was the continuation of diplomacy by other means, he was encapsulating what the right hon. Member for Watford regarded yesterday as so far out a notion that he dared to make it only once he had left the Government—that defence policy should be an arm of foreign policy. But that is precisely what defence policy is and should be: it should be an extension of our foreign policy.

The problem is that, under this Government, the country does not have a foreign policy that can be discerned. It has a number of propositions and elegances that the Foreign Secretary is well equipped to voice. However, we are not getting a world view and a view of Britain's place in that world. We do not have a rational defence policy that can be the military arm of a world view and a view of this country's place in the world.

For 45 years, under both Conservative and Labour Governments, this country's foreign and defence policies were governed, rightly and necessarily, by the cold war. NATO was formed in 1949 to prevent Stalin's armies from overrunning western Europe. The NATO nuclear strategy was necessarily and rightly aimed at preventing the Soviets from backing their huge armies with a nuclear threat.

Mutual assured destruction—with its appropriate acronym of MAD—kept the peace from D day in 1945 to that day in November 1990, to which Lady Thatcher referred in her book, when she heard in Paris that she had failed to be elected on the first Conservative ballot. She was in Paris to represent Britain at the conference which brought about the formal end of the cold war.

The cold war lasted for forty-five and a half years. During that time, we had the same policy and strategy under both Conservative and Labour Governments. It was to deter Communist aggression by alliances, especially NATO, and to have the necessary armed forces on land, sea and air and the necessary nuclear deterrent to make it clear to the Soviets that they faced a nuclear response if they launched a land attack. The policy was tough, but it worked. It was clear, and we all knew where we were.

The problem is that we no longer know where we are, because the certainty of the cold war—the certainty was ugly, but nevertheless it provided a great deal of clarity—has gone. We no longer know why we have the alliance that was rightly formed in 1949.

Yesterday, the Secretary of State for Defence said that it was desirable to expand NATO to include Russia. However, he did not tell the House why we needed NATO, following the end of the cold war. When Mr. James Baker was the United States Secretary of State—he was a fine Secretary of State—he was rightly responsible for killing NATO's flexible nuclear weapons response strategy, against the bitter resistance of Lady Thatcher.

Mr. Baker said that, following the changes and the end of the cold war, a new raison d'etre for NATO needed to be devised. But no one has tried. No one knows why we still have the alliance, which the Secretary of State should be expanding. Nor do we know why we need strategic weaponry.

Yesterday, the Secretary of State for Defence boasted about defence co-operation agreements with Russia, Ukraine, Albania and other easter European Communist countries. When I asked him why we needed a nuclear deterrent against countries with which we were working out defence agreements—he was very enthusiastic about the co-operation—he said that the Government did not know what would happen, and therefore had to guard against uncertainty.

The hon. Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson) is a great advocate of the Royal Air Force. Yesterday, when he rose with some agitation and asked why the tactical air-to-surface missile weapon would not be developed, the Secretary of State said:

"We must take into account the fact that it is right and proper that we should adapt our nuclear policy to the very changed circumstances that exist in the post-cold war world."—[*Official Report*, 18 October 1993; Vol. 230, c. 35.]

The Secretary of State is sure that it is right not to have the tactical air-to-surface missile weapon. During the general election, the Government challenged Labour Members about whether a Labour Government would have the tactical air-to-surface missile. Nevertheless, he says that we are unsure, because the Government still believe that they should keep Trident.

The Government had better not jeer at the Labour party, or even at silly resolutions passed by the Labour party conference, as one was a couple of weeks ago, because, although those silly Labour party resolutions may not become Labour Government policy, they often become Tory Government policy. That being so, let the Government not be too firm in their defence of the need to have four Trident submarines—much as my hon. Friend the Member for Barrow and Furness, (Mr. Hutton) wants them, for practical reasons.

This Government may not decide to commission the four submarines, whatever they say today, and they have absolutely no notion of how many warheads they will have on those submarines. When we say a maximum of 192, the Secretary of State will not say, "Yes, definitely 512," because he knows that he cannot commit himself to that.

I warn the Government that, just as they flourished TASM as their macho symbol at the last general election and taunted the Labour party with it, they had better not

taunt the Labour party about even the sloppiest, most sentimental part of the resolutions that it espouses in emotional moments at party conferences because that part may turn out to be more realistic than this Government when the Chancellor of the Exchequer has a go at the Secretary of State for Defence.

The Government have not begun to think through what the defence policy should be for a medium-sized European power, such as the United Kingdom, with few worldwide responsibilities outside its European alliance and United Nations commitments. Indeed, in this debate, commitments have been shed like autumn leaves.

We have just had a valid row about getting rid of our commitment in Belize. The hon. Member for Upminster joined in, and I disagree with him. We heard yesterday that our troops are to be withdrawn from Hong Kong. The little contingent will go from South Korea. The commitment in Belize has gone, in my view rightly. We have some sailors in the Caribbean.

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces in last night's speech, which was like a long series of postcards home to his mother—his absolutely delightful mother, whom I greatly admire—told us that among our deployments these days were our sailors going on leave in Miami and getting what he assured us was traditional United States hospitality. I hope that our troops are allowed to be armed if they are to receive the traditional hospitality of Florida.

In these circumstances, every penny that the Government spend on defence is wasted, because it is not being spent for a clear reason in pursuit of a clear policy. We have excellently trained armed forces, who commit themselves magnificently whenever they are called upon to go into action. During the Gulf crisis, I met our troops in the Gulf. They acquitted themselves superbly, as they do whenever they are called on to fight. The question is: what are our troops supposed to be doing and preparing for? What should Britain's defence policy be?

Clearly, we must be equipped properly and adequately. We must be prepared to face and defeat any threat to us as a nation. But who on earth is going to threaten us? Not Germany, despite Lady Thatcher's nightmares. Not Russia, as has been made absolutely clear to us by the Secretary of State for Defence himself. The last thing to interest President Yeltsin is some foreign adventure, unless, like the tiny country in the film "The Mouse that Roared", he can persuade the Americans to fight a war with him, defeat him, occupy Russia and solve his problems for him. President Yeltsin is certainly not about to fight us and, indeed, the Secretary of State has just signed agreements with him.

Clearly, we must have basic forces to meet any rare contingency, should foreign policy fail, as it did so abysmally over the Falklands. This afternoon, it was pointed out to us how near we came to not being equipped to fight that war. We must be able to prepare for such a contingency.

I am ready to support any Budget necessary to make sure that we can deploy whatever forces are required rapidly and efficiently. Clearly, we need troops for Northern Ireland, although I say to the hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis) in all friendliness and good will that the sooner we have an end to that sterile and costly commitment by the political solution of a united Ireland, the better for all of us, including Ireland.

Beyond that, we should have well trained, mobile units available for United Nations policing operations on land, in the air and at sea. The end of the cold war has not brought a new world order, as the hon. Member for Upminster made clear so eloquently. Due to a lack of statesmanship by many Governments, including this one, the end of the cold war has brought about a new disorder, which in many ways is less satisfactory and more frightening than the old communist authoritarianism. At least, under communism, the people of those countries, oppressed as they were, lived under a certain rough if ugly order. That order has gone, but the risks have not gone with it.

The people of Yugoslavia presumably thought that nothing could be worse than the communism under which they used to be misgoverned. Now they know that things can be, and indeed are, much worse than that. Is the upheaval in the former Soviet Union preferable to the regime of Mikhail Gorbachev? My hon. Friend the Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid) told us what has been happening in Georgia and Azerbaijan. Many who suffer in those territories would doubt it. Communism was ugly, oppressive and dictatorial; it had its secret police and concentration camps; but it prevented ethnic civil war, which in many ways is worse than what existed before.

Although Russia is no longer the super-power that the Soviet Union once was, it remains a nuclear power. What is more, there are now four nuclear powers where there was one before. One of the problems of there being four irresponsible nuclear powers is the danger of a nuclear capability seeping through to medium-sized and small countries, which will not exercise the control over the weapons that the Soviet Union did. Of course the Soviet Union's ownership of nuclear weapons was odious and ugly, but it was part of a stand-off that the two super-powers understood totally. They both knew where they were, and mutually assured destruction was the name of the game. Brezhnev and Stalin understood that, just as much as Eisenhower.

Already there is proliferation, and now there is a danger of greater proliferation. It can be said that it was far preferable to have a huge super-power, like the Soviet Union, with a nuclear capability than a seepage which enables medium-sized and even small powers to gain a nuclear capability. Too many countries already have that capability, such as India, Pakistan and Israel. A prime aim of our defence policy should be to prevent nuclear proliferation and to reduce the number of countries with a nuclear potential.

That is why this country should take the lead in pressing for a total ban on all nuclear testing. It is frightening that a Chinese resumption of tests should lead President Clinton to consider ending his moratorium on tests. Yet the Government have no idea whether or not they are in favour of nuclear testing. A year or 15 months ago, they said that it was essential; but when I have challenged the Secretary of State for Defence, the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary, in the Chamber, to say whether they regard it as essential for the country's nuclear capability, they have dodged the question. They do not know—because the answer depends on whether President Clinton will allow them to have nuclear testing.

We ought to be saying that it is best for the whole world if no one carries out such tests. We ought to be using the current moratorium, and our own inability to conduct tests —because the Americans will not allow us to do so—both to negotiate a nuclear test ban treaty and to extend

[Mr. Gerald Kaufman]

adherence to the non-proliferation treaty. We should be calling on the United Nations to ban trade in all nuclear-potential materials between countries that refuse to sign the non-proliferation treaty—as too many still do.

That would, of course, mean a change of heart in this country. Day after day, the Scott inquiry reveals that the Government fell over themselves to break their own embargo by selling Saddam Hussein not only conventional weapons, but the wherewithal to manufacture nuclear weapons. The disgraceful record of the Thatcher Government—which, for some reason, is not highlighted in that lady's memoirs—was continued under the present Government, right up to the day on which Iraq seized Kuwait: we were enhancing Iraq's nuclear capability until that day in August when Saddam Hussein seized Kuwait. We ought to use the present position to stop testing and to stop proliferation.

Moreover, rather than squabbling internally about the kind of nuclear weapons with which they should make do —as a macho symbol—the Government ought to realise that the only real and practical use for the residual British nuclear capability is to give us authority to participate in, and if necessary initiate, the next round of strategic arms reduction talks, and to demonstrate to countries that already have a nuclear capability—or wish to acquire it —that the United Kingdom is ready to work with them to make the world a safer place, together with France, China, the former Soviet nuclear powers and the United States.

As I have said, this country is a medium-sized power on the edge of Europe, and it is part of the European Community. Nevertheless—medium-sized though it is, and limited though its capabilities are—it is uniquely placed to play a constructive part in world politics and the establishment of a new world order. Ours is the only country in the world that is a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, the European Community, the Commonwealth and the Group of Seven, and also has a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council —which we should insist on keeping, whatever meddling others wish to try.

We are uniquely placed in those five centres of power, influence and authority. We ought to be playing a constructive role in trying to build the new world order for which we hoped when the cold war ended but which has not come about. It is because the Government are failing to take advantage of a unique opportunity, in unique circumstances, that I will readily join my hon. Friends in the Lobby tonight.

6.53 pm

Sir Dudley Smith (Warwick and Leamington): Let me declare two interests. In June, for my sins, I was chosen as President of the Western European Assembly. My other interest is hardly relevant to the debate, but I suppose that I should mention it: I am connected with a company that has a good many clients, one of which makes weaponry.

The speech of the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) was a tour de force. I agreed with parts of what he said and disagreed with others; time is short and many hon. Members wish to speak, so I hope that he will forgive me if I do not go into the details.

I sat through many of yesterday's speeches and have sat through all today's. There is no doubt about the message from Conservative Members: we are concerned about the defence cuts that are already being implemented and extremely worried by suggestions that more are to come. I hope that the Chancellor of the Exchequer will heed the warnings given by my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor), Chairman of the Select Committee on Defence, and by others who have been present over the past two days.

Because of our commitments—particularly our peace-keeping commitments—any further substantial cuts will have a far-reaching and devastating effect, practically eliminating our role as a major element of NATO. As Lord Younger, the former Secretary of State for Defence, said on the radio yesterday,

"We are a linchpin of NATO".

Indeed we are—and several senior serving officers have told me, "We are already cut to the bone and morale is sagging." Those remarks were not made lightly.

Mr. Wolfson: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Sir Dudley Smith: I would rather not. As my hon. Friend knows, I am not usually chary about giving way, but there have already been a good many interventions. It is very unfair to others who wish to speak.

To date, our peacekeeping role has been very positive and helpful. However, given all the defence requirements of Northern Ireland—I note that the hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis) has sat through the entire debate—and our intensive role in the former Yugoslavia, we are becoming very thin on the ground, especially the Army.

I welcome the step forward taken yesterday by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence in regard to reservists; but why have we not been more realistic about them in the past? Why are we not doing more than he suggested, even at this stage? I believe that reservists are the key to modern defence planning. The United States has found that out for itself; indeed, I have observed something of its large and enthusiastic training operation. Men are prepared to give up their weekends and travel hundreds of miles to fly combat aircraft, sail ships and develop the latest soldiering skills. They become virtually as good and reliable as the professionals. The future must lie with reservists if we are to retain credible forces.

Had the Owen peace initiative succeeded, we would already have been compromised over the number of troops required as our contribution to policing duties in the war-torn areas. The stark reality is that greater European instability leads to potentially increased demands on our defence capability. For those who suggest that we should now collect the peace dividend and opt out of our major role in the world, leaving it to others—this has been mentioned in the Chamber over the past two days—I quote just one figure.

Since 1954, in Europe, the Mediterranean and the middle east—nowhere else in the world—3·5 million people have been killed in local and area wars. That is not my fanciful figure; it comes directly from NATO. That staggering statistic should be given to anyone who makes a fuss about defence spending and thinks that we do not economise enough. As the right hon. Member for Gorton pointed out, the world remains a perilous place, and recent events in the Soviet Union have underlined that we would be sensible to bear that in mind at all times. In imploring the Government to keep defence spending at a realistic

level—despite all the other crucial demands of which we are aware—I stress that greater co-operation is needed between the allies to harmonise reductions and produce cost-effective solutions to common problems.

Since taking over as President of the WEU Assembly, I have become more than ever convinced that the WEU, as the European pillar of NATO, has a special role to play. I am pleased that the statement on the defence estimates makes frequent and positive mention of its contribution. I am glad that there is United Kingdom support for new Western European Union developments such as the establishment of the satellite centre at Torrejon near Madrid, the planning cell in Brussels, which I saw recently, and the Institute for Security Studies. Of those three developments, two had British directors; one a well-regarded gentleman who formerly sat on the Opposition Benches.

Two other WEU initiatives should also be strongly supported by my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster and the Government: first, the recent creation of the Western European Union armament group, which superseded the Independent European Programme Group and which is far more flexible and worth while in its new format; and secondly, the development of observation satellites, which, given the confused state of the world, will be necessary over the next decade, if not just to monitor the migration of large numbers of people from one part of the world to another.

Britain is a prominent member of NATO and the Western European Union. In the WEU assembly, the British delegation, drawn from all parties, plays a full and effective role in its proceedings. It cannot be stressed too often that the Western European Union is not trying to duplicate NATO or even trying to succeed it. However, it is sometimes possible for the WEU to act effectively in certain areas, such as the running of three Danube emergency control points in co-operation with Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania and as a catalyst for NATO action, for example, by inspiring the highly successful blockade in the Adriatic, which I was able to see in the past week.

That joint NATO-WEU operation has a complement of 12,000 sailors who have virtually shut down 50 miles of Montenegrin coast line and almost ended the traffic into the two main ports there, exerting a considerable effect on the Serbian economy. Further defence cuts would probably see the end of such help. We would not be able to contribute in future to such operations and would set a poor example to our allies.

We all know that NATO has more than proved its worth since 1949, when, as the right hon. Member for Gorton pointed out, it was formed during the time of a Labour Government—although it was a general wish. However, it must evolve into a new area, which is why next January's summit on the future of NATO is so important. It has become even more important following the American President's comments at the weekend, which I consider unwise and unnecessary.

I am chary about the enlargement of the WEU because of many complications. It would be resented by Russia and would extend a large number of commitments. However, many countries would love to have a closer relationship with the free countries of the old western world and it would be better if our chiefs decided to make the WEU the vehicle by which those countries could join rather than NATO.

Defence economists must play a part in the forthcoming summit. That is why I believe that there is so much scope for co-operation and joint enterprise. It is vital that the summit further develops the relationship between the countries of central Europe, and perhaps it could arrange for them to play a part in the Western European Union.

Co-operation between Europeans on security and defence is vital, but we must never abandon national responsibilities. That was clearly underlined by my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster and others, that the No. 1 task for any Government or Secretary of State for Defence is to look after our country and defend our own. We must be vigilant over any attempt to develop a European defence policy beyond the bounds agreed at Maastricht and one in opposition to our interests. We can achieve that by strongly pursuing the kind of policies which have been criticised by the Opposition but which have been generally good over recent years. We must have credible defence spending options available if we are to succeed.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. May I remind hon. Members that speeches from now until 9 pm must be restricted to 10 minutes.

7.6 pm

Mr. Ken Maginnis (Fermanagh and South Tyrone): One must be deeply concerned, at a time when there are so many conflicts throughout the world, that the United Kingdom cannot maintain its forces at a level that creates reasonable confidence within our armed services, if not in the country. Confidence is being eroded and the signs are becoming evident.

In the not too distant past, there were separate Ministers for the Army, Navy and Air Force. Without explaining the reason for that arrangement ceasing, the change provided an opportunity, which worked well, for chiefs of staff to take a more panoramic view of our defence interests to minimise the competition among the three arms of our defence forces.

"Options for Change", allied to proposed crippling financial constraints, has now created such a strain that we are already beginning to see old inter-service rivalries re-emerging as each arm understandably seeks to ensure that it is adequate in its role.

No one would suggest that new efficiencies are not possible in the light of reduced threats from the former Warsaw pact, but I am deeply unhappy when it appears that the extent of other threats are under-estimated and under-provided for. It is always a poor recipe for success when one seeks to impose swingeing financial cuts at the same time as seeking to implement radical structural changes.

Most hon. Members depend to a considerable extent on valuable and objective reports from the Defence Select Committee. It is imperative, therefore, that that Committee should have access to as much information as is available. When I was a member of the Committee, it was apparent that one could gain access to much more sensitive information through the United States Pentagon than through our own Ministry of Defence. Is it not time that members of the Select Committee on Defence were positively vetted to ensure that there was no continuing excuse for the Ministry of Defence to act in that coy

[Mr. Ken Maginnis]

manner? If not, we shall continue to be unable to make a judgment based on Select Committee indications on, for example, whether our present costly commitment to Cyprus is still justified or whether there may be less expensive alternatives.

Yesterday, I listened with a growing feeling of unease as the former Minister, the right hon. Member for Epsom and Ewell (Mr. Hamilton), struggled, almost in desperation, to present a disturbing method of partially alleviating the problem that we face, by withdrawing a number of battalions from Northern Ireland. I must address that issue, since I was somewhat disappointed that the Minister failed to respond to those dangerous ideas. I hope not to distort what the right hon. Gentleman espoused, or misrepresent his stated reasons for doing so, but it seemed that he was suggesting that there was little or no correlation between the number of troops on the ground and the incidence of terrorism.

On that dangerous premise, he suggested that we should begin to consider reducing the military commitment that operates in support of the civil power in Northern Ireland at the rate of one battalion every six to 12 months. The right hon. Member for Epsom and Ewell justified it on the basis that, if the number of troops had any correlaton to the level of terrorism, we would have resolved the problem by initially committing 100,000 troops. That wrongly presumes that the problem was and still is predictable, uniform and constant. But terrorism does not operate like that. It pitches its activities at a level consistent with the vulnerability of the community.

If the right hon. Member for Epsom and Ewell is correct in his correlation theory, it would be equally logical to conclude that the terrorists would not even notice if troop levels were gradually reduced to zero. Yet we know that that would be nonsense and that decisions on manpower levels take account of current intelligence and the assessment of commanders on the ground. But some of us who listened to the right hon. Gentleman will ponder whether he knows something that we on this Bench do not.

I would not want to believe that a former loyal member of Her Majesty's Government would be party to the abandonment of a part of the United Kingdom or to leaving 1·6 million citizens to be dominated by terrorists. Surely the right hon. Gentleman cannot have failed to recognise that it is those commanders on the ground, including the General Officer Commanding and the Chief Constable, who have access to the most recent intelligence and who, on that basis, have to be depended upon to present their case honestly to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and the Secretary of State for Defence. The right hon. Gentleman cannot really believe that it would be better to react to terrorist outrages than to respond to a perceived threat.

The reality is that the level of terrorist violence is, at any time, but a fraction of the terrorist intent. We who live in Northern Ireland know that there is a definite correlation between the level of security on the ground and the extent to which the terrorist is denied access to the battle—in practical terms, to his full schedule of targets. It is on that basis that judgments must be made.

It is important that the House is never again lured into the same sort of trap as in 1985, when it embarked upon the fruitless exercise of trying to placate those who cannot be placated through the good offices of those who cannot be trusted. The right hon. Member for Epsom and Ewell is intelligent enough to know that if what is understood to be the Hume-Adams agenda were followed and Her Majesty's Government withdrew their presence, even by degrees, the net result would be a move towards a dangerous and unstable independent Ulster, not towards a united Ireland. Ulster Unionists do not want that. Does anyone?

Rather than sowing seeds of doubt about the commitment of the House to the democratic process in Northern Ireland, it may be reasonable to expedite the movement towards greater stability by seeking—through the courts, or if necessary by executive detention—to dismantle the command and control structures of the paramilitary groups. However, the need to withstand subversion in any part of this Kingdom is paramount and cannot be minimised or tinkered with.

Of course one has sympathy for the stresses and strains imposed by 17-month operational cycles in Northern Ireland, but that will abate to some degree when amalgamations are complete. What a pity that the Secretary of State has not seen fit to ameliorate the problem still further by reprieving the Queen's Own Highlanders and the Gordon Highlanders. My party would implore him to do so.

Before leaving the problem of an overstretched Army, I want to ask the Secretary of State about the level at which our troops are equipped. One has to be frightened by the continuing rumours that the SA80 is inadequate for its purpose. Can the Secretary of State for Defence reassure the Housed that a multitude of faults have now been rectified? I wonder how many soldiers have been unfairly penalised for losing parts that have simply dropped off?

The Minister of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. Jonathan Aitken): I can immediately give the hon. Gentleman the assurance that he seeks so that there will be no confusion—the faults on the SA80 have been rectified.

Mr. Maginnis: Having bad weapons and inadequate fire power are the quickest ways to demoralise any army. The whole system of procurement is called into question when a weapon like the SA80 is commissioned in the knowledge that it has 32 innate faults. What has been done to ensure that that state of affairs cannot happen again?

Similarly, one must ask how it makes any sense to have our helicopters operating close to the frontier with the Irish Republic while totally under-equipped to deal with the threats that they face. On 23 September last, a number of helicopter crews in the Crosmaglen area of South Armagh, acting above and beyond what might reasonably be expected of them, closed on a heavily armed group of IRA terrorists and succeeded in forcing them to flee and to abandon some of their arms.

The terrorists were equipped with two mobile firing platforms, each fitted with one 12·7mm Duska heavy machine gun, two general purpose machine guns, and one AKM. The Duska is capable of bringing down a helicopter and has an effective range, under those conditions, of 1·5 km. The helicopters are fitted with weaponry which requires them to engage the enemy at about half that distance. Those are the issues which we should be debating as they involve our responsibilities to our security services.

Will the Secretary of State enlighten the House on whether he has considered the future of our special forces and how they will fare, in terms of recruitment and resources? What will be the——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman's time is up.

Mr. Maginnis: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I fully respect the 7 o'clock ruling which the Chair imposed earlier, but I must put on record the fact that we, the third largest Opposition party in the House, field one speaker in major debates, and invariably fall within that time trap. An extra minute or even half a minute would have allowed me to finish. I know that you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, can do nothing about that, but will you take into consideration the fact that the ruling invariably militates against us when we are trying to put our case to the House?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman has placed his submission on record and I shall draw Madam Speaker's attention to it. In fact, I gave the hon. Gentleman an extra 15 seconds to compensate for the Minister's intervention during his speech.

7.16 pm

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith (Wealden): I understand the feelings expressed by the hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis) and I hope that he will understand if I do not follow on from the interesting comments that he made. There is a great deal of sympathy and understanding of the problems that he and his colleagues face in Ulster.

From what one has read in the press, both before today's debate and after yesterday's debate, one might gather that we were having a row about whether the Government were spending enough. However, our debate is on the 1993 estimates and the document "Defending our Future" published with the estimates in July.

It is worth putting it on the record that I and my hon. Friends were, on the whole, pleased with much of the report, although that was not graciously acknowledged by Opposition Members. Some new improvements were made to our armed forces, particularly to our anti-armour capability. Such improvements were well received by the House, and we were particularly grateful for the fact that, for the first time, we were able to gauge for ourselves the match between commitments and the resources allowed to meet those commitments.

It would be stupid of me in the few minutes available to go on and on about the estimates, as the debate is still overshadowed by reports that our armed forces are likely to be subjected to drastic cuts. I do not know how much truth there is in the reports. I assume that they contain some truth, but I do not know how much hype there has been or how many of the reports are due to leaks from a Government Department, possibly the Treasury. My friends in the press tell me that there has been many a nod and a wink.

Whatever the scale of the cuts, the fact remains that the sum of £1 billion is undoubtedly disturbing. The concerns expressed by so many of my hon. Friends today cannot be lightly dismissed as the atavistic and knee-jerk reaction to be expected from those who could be regarded as defence buffs. That suggestion has been made, though not, I am glad to say, today. I think that I can say that, with one notable exception, all those I know who take a close interest in the subject—such as members of the Select Committee on Defence and members of the Back-Bench defence committee, of which I am proud to be Chairman —are too young to be described as armchair generals, retired defence strategists or cranky colonels.

Over the years, the Select Committee has done a good job in drawing attention to some of the problems and shortcomings of our defence policy. I should like to think that, in our meetings, we on the Back-Bench committee have tried to be constructive. In our discussions with Ministers, our strictures have always been received in the constructive spirit in which they have been made.

I do not blame the Chancellor of the Exchequer for making it clear, albeit in a television interview and in other ways, that he expects all branches of the Government to help reduce the deficit. It is quite right that he should want to do that. He is a robust man and can look after himself. It would be foolish of me, and I believe of all of us, to suggest that the budget of the Ministry of Defence is inviolable, even though we have already successfully cut out waste in many areas, and have experienced cuts, sometimes against our will. Nevertheless that has been done.

Many of us admire my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the way in which he has conducted our affairs as Secretary of State over the past few years. He gave a sturdy response yesterday to the questions that were put to him. He made sturdy comments about his desire to strengthen our armed forces and ensure that they are well equipped and can carry out their duties, but, at the same time, he expressed a willingness to comply, to some extent, with the requests and demands that were made of him.

I am sure that we all agree that the Secretary of State has been flexible—I believe up to a reasonable point. He will know that there is a big difference between being asked to change the levels of expenditure in defence and other areas of public expenditure. One can switch off some social service expenditure—changes in taxes can be switched on and off. At the stroke of a pen, one can be confident that the recipients of a benefit will feel the effects of the decision almost immediately, or at least within six months if one is a pensioner.

However, the lead times for defence are entirely different. Those who have looked at some of the figures for the 1930s will know what happened then. Year after year, defence was run down, but we managed to beef it up just before the war. Because it did not take too much time to design, build and produce a Hurricane, we had them just in time. One cannot do that today. Most of us know that it takes 10, if not 15 years to develop some of the modern equipment that is needed should one face a serious enemy and threat from abroad.

We should consider also the effect of a run down in the defence forces at a time of instability and the impact that that could have on the morale and quality of leadership that we so much admire. Of course equipment is valuable, but there is not one of us, after seeing our armed forces at work, who has not come away with the striking impression—regardless of the equipment—of the quality of the men and women of every rank. We should talk about the often terrible and hard work done in Northern Ireland; work which demands courage, leadership and understanding. One will not find a better leader anywhere in the world than a corporal in the British Army.

[Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith]

Those things cannot be changed overnight. If one destroys what has been created, it takes years to build it up again; I was in a regiment that was disbanded and I know the agony that we went through.

The international situation is fluid, and there are threats from abroad. If it deteriorates, we all know that it is important not to accept cuts that go to the bone. That is the message which the debate sends out.

However, despite all the alarmist talk, which seems to have come from the sources to which I referred earlier, I find it difficult to believe that the Chancellor would seriously propose, or that the Government would accept, further deep cuts. Such cuts would jeopardise our role in NATO and destroy the foundations of our foreign policy. I do not believe that the Government are as crazy as that —I do not believe that the Government are crazy.

I have just returned from the North Atlantic Assembly. We were discussing matters concerning the future of NATO. One of the reasons why I am able to discuss some of our views reasonably sensibly is that I am briefed by the Foreign Office. I do not find anything in the Foreign Office brief that says, "Go easy on NATO. Do not worry about trying to develop it or bring about a better, understanding relationship with France." We have an important role to play in developing European security.

We have important roles to play and the Foreign Office knows that one of them is the strength and leadership of the armed forces in Europe that we have stationed under NATO, and our role in the Rapid Reaction Corps.

We know also that discussions have to take place with the Americans, which we do through the NATO assembly, with Congressmen and others, who expect from us an assertion that we are four-square with them in preserving the alliance, which has kept the peace, and that we are willing to discuss its future, because it is undergoing change. That is why our policy must be adaptable.

The changes that the Government have been forced to make over the years have been partly to do with the economic strength of the nation, but were almost entirely in these past few years due to the changing nature of the threat. We are undoubtedly being criticised, but I think that "Options for Change" provided the framework that enables us to move forward so that we can ensure that our defence policy is in tune with our commitments.

I shall conclude with the point that defence, as we have heard today, is about discharging, first and foremost, the primary duty of our country. Having discharged that duty, we can then decide what is our political interest, whether to be involved in other alliances, to extend our political and economic influence and help create a more secure world.

Our position in the Security Council alone, let alone in Europe, dictates that we have a wider interest than the defence of our shores. I should hate to see soured the statement that we had in July, which was greeted so well. Rather than make a decision that involves not only the Ministry of Defence, but other Departments, I hope that the Government as a whole will help to set the political parameters. If not, we shall see the death of our armed forces by a thousand cuts.

7.26 pm

Mr. Llew Smith (Blaenau Gwent): I speak in support of the amendment in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn). I remember that, way back in 1988, Marjorie Thompson warned the Labour movement that we were in danger of having a radical vision without radical policies. Some five years later, according to comments made about the divisions passed at the recent Labour party conference, we have neither a radical vision nor radical policies. If history is to repeat itself, once again this evening we shall be faced with a three-line Whip to abstain on what is the most important issue facing us in this parliamentary Session.

Those same hon. Members who refuse to oppose the defence estimates will be the same people who will vote and campaign against cuts in health, education, housing and so many areas that are important to the communities that we represent. They seem to refuse to accept that there is a link between the level of defence spending and the provision of public services, or they regard investment in weapons of war as far more important than investment in health and life.

The standard of our public services is dependent on defence spending, especially at a time when all parties seem to be unwilling to increase taxes substantially, even on the richest people within our communities, to begin to pay for those services. Some may argue that that is not necessary because we shall find the taxes to pay for the services through increased economic growth in the months and years ahead. I suspect that that will not happen. We shall not have sufficient economic growth to pay for the services that are so important to our communities.

I believe that the situation is even more difficult when one realises that, with the Maastricht treaty, no country will be allowed to have a budget deficit that exceeds 3 per cent. of its gross domestic product. That means that there will be cuts in public expenditure in the region of £25,000 million, which is almost exactly the same as the budget in the defence estimates for 1993. In such circumstances, defence cuts will be even more important to pay for some of the services, and the cuts in the services that almost certainly will happen through the Maastricht treaty.

I must admit that I find it increasingly difficult to relate to the new Labour party, which asks us to vote for the Maastricht treaty and public expenditure cuts and abstain on defence estimates of £24,500 million. It is our task to defend those services and, for that very reason, I shall vote against the Government's defence estimates this evening.

What savings could be made if we had a decent defence policy? If we linked our defence expenditure to that of a country such as France, we would have savings in the region of £8,000 million. If we linked it to that of Germany, we would have savings in the region of £13,000 million. At the recent Labour party conference, we demanded that our defence expenditure be linked to the average defence expenditure of other countries in western Europe and the scrapping of Trident. That would save us billions upon billions of pounds. Sooner or later, we shall have to confront the issue, or all the talk of defending our public services will be just talk.

Some hon. Members seem to believe that the slashing of the defence budget will come naturally through the ending of the cold war and the peace dividend. But the question that we should be posing is, "What peace dividend?" When the Berlin wall came down in 1989, we were

spending about £20,000 million on our defences. Some five years later, in 1993, our defence spending is about £24,500 million, so where is the peace dividend?

It is also disturbing to note that the United States 1994 defence budget is planned to be $275 billion. The United States defence industry employs approximately 2·75 million people, so the cost of each job is approximately $365,000. In 1994, the United States so-called peace dividend will result in savings of only $11·8 billion.

It is somewhat ironic, even obscene, that countries such as Britain and the United States, which are supposedly most responsible for global security, are the very same nations most responsible for arming the conflicts that they are trying to police. Just name a country or a dictatorship from Iraq to Iran, from Indonesia to Somalia, and it will be found that the west has supplied it with arms to engage in conflict.

Some months ago, I asked the Ministry of Defence to list the arms sales to Yugoslavia since 1979. It refused, saying that it would cost too much to compile such information. However, it gave me the information from 1989 and it was a long and sad list. The Government should realise that people from Somalia to the United Kingdom cannot eat weapons or be educated with aircraft carriers. If we continue to spend as much money on weapons of war, if our defence budget continues to increase, if there is no real peace dividend, the losers will be the very same people whom we were elected to defend.

One reason why our defence budget is so high is Trident. In past months, there have been squabbles about whether the Trident refit contract should go to Devonport or Rosyth. I can understand Members of Parliament taking sides, but that is not the answer. The answer is to use the skills, talents and creativity of those people employed in the nuclear industry for peaceful purposes. For example, they could be employed in cleaning up the terrible legacy of radioactive waste that has already been created by the Polaris programme, or in dismantling the stocks of weaponry that are no longer required. The Royal Ordnance factory at Glascoed has the skills to do that work. Why not ensure that it has the work to use those skills?

Vickers, the builders of Trident submarines, could be given the go-ahead to offer thousands of jobs to workers to manufacture the undersea water column which Vickers designed and which could provide energy from a clean, non-polluting source.

If we were to ask anyone in our community to draw up a list of the jobs necessary to make the community nicer and environmentally friendly, it would be almost endless. If a future Labour Government were to implement present party policy, as set out in the latest manifesto, to strengthen the non-proliferation treaty and to negotiate with the other four recognised nuclear powers for a reduction in the stock of nuclear weapons, Trident would not have to be refitted and would either be cancelled or renegotiated out of existence. A unilateral example has been set with yesterday's announcement of TASM's cancellation.

We should also focus on the defence implications of the Maastricht treaty and, in particular, article 4, which requests the Western European Union to implement decisions and actions of the union which have defence implications. By ordering the integration of the Western European Union into the European union, the EC has taken on a military wing—an alliance which is armed with nuclear weapons and which has no restriction on its operation; a Western European Union which openly admits that its most important pillar is the nuclear pillar.

Whether we are addressing the export of arms, the so-called peace dividend, the non-proliferation treaty, the defence estimates or the Maastricht treaty, we are spending too much effort, imagination, creativity and finance in developing more and more sophisticated ways of destroying life when we should be trying to find ways of preserving it—a life of dignity and hope in which our children and grandchildren have the opportunity to use their truly wonderful talents. That is surely what the Labour movement is about. That is what has attracted generations of people to our cause. If we take that road, we shall have a glorious future. If we fail, we shall be little more than a Social Democratic party mark II.

7.35 pm

Mr. David Atkinson (Bournemouth, East): The one issue that I wish to raise, which has not been adequately addressed in the defence White Paper, is the shared development of a global missile defence system. In May this year, the United States Defence Secretary announced the reduction in research which would now be directed towards ground-based defences instead of space-based weaponry; in other words, an end of the strategic defence initiative.

That decision is dangerously complacent and premature. I fully accept that the original Reagan concept of SDI in 1983 achieved considerable success in ending the arms race without even one brilliant pebble being placed in orbit. To his credit, President Gorbachev perceived that he could not match the technology or resources that the United States was prepared to deploy. Today, it is fashionable to dismiss Reagan's original concept of a laser umbrella as fantasy. Perhaps we shall never know.

In abandoning global defence, the United States is ignoring certain realities. It ignores the reality that the proliferation of missiles and weapons of mass destruction shows no signs of abating. By the end of this decade, 15 or more countries will have the capability to produce ballistic missiles, six countries will have missiles with ranges of 2,000 km or more, and several may possess missiles with intercontinental ranges.

At least eight countries will have nuclear weapons or advanced programmes, 30 will probably possess a chemical weapons capability, and seven or more will possess biological weapons. Of course we must hope that international efforts to introduce controls and conventions will succeed, but we have yet to reach that situation.

By the early years of the 21st century, numerous countries with ballistic missiles will have the ability to release not one but dozens of small bomblets—cluster munitions—that would overwhelm any land-based defence system.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will accept that the implications of that for western security and international stability, or instability, are tremendous. The deployment of space-based missile defences, preferably in co-operation with the Russians, is an essential minimum response to such proliferation. The absence of such deployment will serve only to encourage such proliferation. It will also challenge our will and our capability to respond to regional aggression such as that of Iraq against Kuwait, which led to Desert Storm.

[Mr. David Atkinson]

In view of the United Kingdom's memorandum of understanding with the United States Government sanctioning co-operation in the research of SDI, I should like to know what consultation was undertaken by Mr. Aspen, the United States Defence Secretary, before his announcement effectively ending SDI.

In view of President Yeltsin's offer to Congress in April that Russia wanted to develop global defence with the United States, sharing costs and technology, it would be interesting to know whether he too was consulted on the ending of SDI.

In short, I believe that the Clinton Government's decision to abandon global defence without regard to the anticipated need for global defence is utterly irresponsible. It is a missed opportunity not only for international co-operation but in the development of dual-use technology.

For example, it now threatens to put back the development of the space telescopic mirror, which would transmit light and energy for peaceful purposes, as well as the so-called death ray laser beams. Those are all areas in which British, European and Russian technological capability could be deployed, but American leadership is required. I look forward to hearing from the Minister what representations have been made.

We in Europe cannot afford to abandon the goal of an effective space-based missile defence. One of the lessons of the Gulf war was that an attacking rocket requires to be intercepted in its early boost phase—which means within 70 seconds of launch for a Scud missile. It requires tremendous speed, and can only be guided by sensors from space. That must remain our goal, and I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will confirm that tonight.

7.40 pm

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): In common with the hon. Member for Bournemouth, East (Mr. Atkinson), I wish to refer to one aspect of this wide-ranging debate, although it is not the same one. I make no apologies for making a constituency speech, because of the appalling circumstances that currently confront Swan Hunter shipbuilders on Tyneside. The shipbuilding community on Tyneside has served Britain well in peace and war, and it deserves a hearing in the House—a hearing in the most desperate circumstances.

Two key procurement decisions have put Swan Hunter —the last remaining shipyard in Tyne and Wear—into receivership: the procurement of the auxiliary oiler replenishment vessel—HMS De Lorean as it is known in the industry—and the recent decision as to the procurement of the landing platform helicopter carrier—the LPH. Both were political decisions, both claimed to provide the best value for money at the time of procurement, and both winning bids were heavily subsidised, although by different routes. The eventual outcome of the procurement of the AOR1 has become one of the greatest defence procurement scandals of the post-war era.

The Ministry of Defence has a responsibility to Swan Hunter, both as a supplier and as the main employment base of a community that has provided more than 80 per cent. of all the Royal Navy's fleet auxiliaries in the past 20 years. That community has provided, and continues to provide, warships built to time and delivered fault-free to the Ministry of Defence. It has a record unequalled by any other supplier.

The decision to allow Swan Hunter to go into receivership was not taken lightly by the Government. The Prime Minister, the Department of Trade and Industry and the Department of Employment, as well as the Treasury and the Ministry of Defence, were all involved in the discussions as to the consequences and in the decision. The outcome—Swan Hunter going into receivership—reflects the collective view of the Government, not just that of the defence chiefs.

What has amazed all those who have followed this issue is the way that the Government have failed to respond to the situation at Swan Hunter since the company went into receivership. No commentator on Tyneside—including Conservative-supporting newspapers like the *Evening Chronicle,* and broadcasting media like Tyne Tees television and Metro radio—has been able to explain or to understand the Government's indifference to the company's plight. It is all the more perplexing because prospective private-sector purchasers of the business cannot make final commercial judgments because the Government's attitude is ambiguous.

Perhaps there is no ambiguity at all about the Government's attitude towards Tyneside. Perhaps the Government want the business to close; perhaps they want it to cease trading as a shipyard, whether military or merchant. Perhaps they are trying to pretend to the outside world that closure is not their objective, whereas in reality it is. If that is the sort of unambiguous response that we will get from the Government, I hope that the Minister of State for Defence Procurement will tell the truth about the Government's approach to Swan Hunter.

It is a matter of record that, since the receiver arrived, every initiative to help Swan Hunter has been met with double dealing from the Department of Trade and Industry and cold hostility from the Ministry of Defence.

Closure of Swan Hunter has meant some 6,000 direct and indirect redundancies in Tyne and Wear, redundancies inflicted on a shipbuilding community where male unemployment is already 38 per cent. even before the redundancy rounds are completed. There are still 1,600 men working at Swan Hunter, building the type 23 frigates.

The Government have not announced any significant economic development package for the area, whether directly related to shipbuilding or not. The whole issue of intervention funding has been grotesquely mismanaged, particularly in the Government's dealing with the European Commission.

The only possible assumption that can be made is that this was deliberate. Intervention funding would have enabled Swan Hunter to survive as a shipyard, and would have facilitated the transition from over-reliance on warship building to a broader base of civilian activity. Significantly, such a broader base and state aid were made available to Harland and Wolff at the time of the AOR1 competition, and to Kvaerner-Govan at the time of the LPH procurement.

When the Germans needed intervention funding consent from the European Community to deal, perfectly understandably, with the difficult problems in East German yards, the German delegation to the European Commission was led by the German Chancellor, after some very strong lobbying, conducted by all parties and at all levels of

German public life. The Germans made it perfectly clear that they were serious about preserving their shipbuilding industry and competing directly with the Pacific rim.

We sent the Minister for Industry, the right hon. Member for Hove (Mr. Sainsbury) to Europe. He managed to put the wrong case to the right commissioner at the end of a meeting convened to discuss something else. Later, he managed to put the right case to the wrong meeting, a meeting that had no power to agree to intervention funding.

By dressing up the Swan Hunter case as part of a package for all four yards, the Minister is disingenuously able to claim, for domestic consumption, that he has made a special case for Tyneside, certain in the knowledge that he has also made a case that the European Commission cannot possibly accept.

It is impossible to escape the conclusion that the Government's intention is to blame Europe for Swan Hunter not getting intervention funding, or better still to blame European socialists. That contemptible strategy would not convince even a Conservative party audience, if such a thing could still be found in Tyneside.

The behaviour of the Ministry of Defence has been even worse. Now that the company is in receivership, the Ministry of Defence is denying it a chance to tender for any MOD work—even minor refit work that would be completed well before the type 23 frigates leave Tyneside. Some 90 per cent. of the refit work for the entire British fleet has now been earmarked for Rosyth dockyard to help underpin the employment base there. I make no complaint about that, but the people who took that decision will not give Swan Hunter a single ship.

There is no core programme for Swan Hunter. The Ministry of Defence could bring forward the landing ships logistic, LSLs, for Swan Hunter—the ships are currently in the programme—but the Government will not do that, because the Prime Minister has personally forbidden it. Even more absurdly, the Ministry of Defence is refusing to send the AOR1 to Swan Hunter, where the several thousand defects that have so far been discovered on that vessel could be remedied by the same work force who delivered its sister ship, the AOR2, to the Navy, defect-free.

Not content with denying the yard domestic work, the Government must take the blame for preventing Swan Hunter from gaining a key overseas contract. The Government of Oman wished to place a contract for patrol vessels with Swan Hunter—two or three to start with, but potentially more. The British Government allowed the Omani order to go to a French shipbuilder, CNN, rather than allow the work to be carried out on Tyneside. The international shipbuilding community could not conceal its collective amazement when the Omani decision was announced.

The British Government's attitude has become clear. No other European Government would behave in such a way. It is impossible to avoid the conclusion that the Conservative party is deliberately starving the yard of work, with a view to seeing it close.

I hope that, when the Minister of State responds to this debate, he can give the lie to all that, and that he will say that the Ministry will allow Swan Hunter to tender for work, will allow it to win work from his Ministry, will put work into the yard—either while it is in receivership or when it is in new ownership—and that it is the Ministry of Defence's wish that it makes the transition to new ownership by a shipbuilder that can tender for Ministry of Defence work.

Mr Aitken: That is exactly the position.

Mr. Brown: I hope, therefore, that the Minister will list the work that Swan Hunter can tender for, and will give an assurance to the House that that work can go into the yard, even though the yard is in receivership.

Mr. Aitken: As long as the yard is in receivership, it will be difficult for it to have the financial strength and credibility to win new orders from the Ministry of Defence, although we have done our best to give it some extended new work on one or two matters that the hon. Gentleman knows about.

As for the future, we hope that Swan Hunter will survive and flourish and win new orders competitively, and we will do everything to make that possible.

Mr. Brown: On Tyneside, that will be interpreted as "No".

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. Mr. Neville Trotter.

7.50 pm

Mr. Neville Trotter (Tynemouth): I will resist the temptation to follow the perverted and obtuse line taken by the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown). I remember the way in which he advised the House, at the start of the sad story of Swan Hunter, that it was all the result of a deliberate plot by a small cabal in the middle of the Ministry of Defence. That spurious and ridiculous idea was seen off by the National Audit Office. I shall confine myself at this stage to the comments that I had intended to make on the general defence scene.

Defence has been a success story. NATO kept the peace for 40 years and won the cold war. Excellent work has been carried out year by year in humanitarian aid and peacekeeping by our forces. In the major war in the Gulf, a significant and distinguished part was played by our men and women. The forces always respond admirably to the challenge. Great tribute must be paid to the individual men and women and to their leaders. We must ensure that our defence policy remains a success.

Our very success in the cold war has caused difficulties. The collapse of the Soviet Union and a reduction in the Russian military capability has led to an inevitable reduction in strength for all the western allies. In our case, we have received a peace dividend in the form of about a 25 per cent. reduction in manpower and a similar envisaged reduction in funding. We have already enjoyed the peace dividend. There is no more to come, in my judgment.

When we confronted the Warsaw pact countries, it was never easy to find the funds to provide all the defence that we desired when the need was obvious. Indeed, force numbers were spelt out for us by NATO, which was helpful.

In the changed circumstances of today, much more difficult decisions must be taken. The Treasury, as always, busily pursues the saving of public money and naturally seeks to maximise the peace dividend. The Treasury argues for the minimum leveel of defence, but the current plans provide the minimum acceptable level of defence. They provide a balanced and capable force.

[Mr. Neville Trotter]

A side effect of the cold war was that forces designed to support NATO were available to fight and win elsewhere, such as in the Falklands and the Gulf. The challenge now is to ensure that, without the immediate and obvious threat from Russia, we maintain that capability to use when necessary.

Self-evidently, the world is far from stable—it is much less stable than it was at the time of the cold war. We read daily of the conflicts raging. In the background of the former Soviet Union there are terrible problems and tremendous pressures. Who can say what form of government will ultimately emerge?

We must be prepared to meet the unexpected, to respond quickly and unexpectedly to unforeseen crises, and furthermore to be able to sustain operations for lengthy periods. It is not sufficient to provide only a gendarmerie for low-intensity peacekeeping. Who can predict when we shall again be called upon to take part in a high-tech campaign such as that in the Gulf?

We must not forget the long-term possibilities, either. Defences are easily disbanded, but it takes many years to rebuild them. Russia retains formidable military capabilities. We wish it well in tackling its immense problems, but we cannot forecast the outcome of the struggle in that country.

The Government have sought to confront the uncertain future with powerful, highly competent forces. I welcome the White Paper. The way in which it sets out the details of our forces is a great improvement. It is inevitable that the more is spelt out, the more questions are asked.

I commend the Government on the way in which they produced the White Paper this year. The Ministry's long-term costings have been carefully constructed so as to maintain our capability. There has been no improvement in the world scene since the long-term costings were arrived at, and no reduction for defence reasons could possibly be justified to reduce the long-term costings now.

I welcome today's announcement of the ammunition order. It will be well received at the Birtley Royal Ordnance factory on Tyneside. My right hon. Friend will understand if I refer particularly to the need to order more Challenger 2 tanks to enable the armoured regiments of the Army to be entirely converted.

Exhaustive studies have taken place in the Ministry and it has been unanimously agreed that the best solution for the Army and the best value for money is to proceed with an order for Challenger 2. I urge my right hon. Friend to proceed in the near future with that order. I emphasise the importance of that order for Vickers, not least for the plant on Tyneside. Such a United Kingdom order would be helpful in securing further export orders for that excellent tank.

I shall mention the question of Navy orders. The House is aware of the disastrous effect on Swan Hunter of losing the LPH order to VSEL. The immediate appointment of a receiver highlighted the dearth of orders in the naval field. Every endeavour is being made locally to secure a new owner for the yard. That is obviously needed. Some months before the collapse, the then owners of Swan Hunter advised me that they could not continue on their own, and that a new owner was needed.

The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East suggested that inadequate attempts have been made to obtain permission from the European Commission for intervention funding. I can categorically deny that, from the content of discussions in which I have taken place. I welcome the Minister's assurance that Swan Hunter can again, with a new owner, compete for new orders for the Royal Navy.

Let me mention potential orders. I welcome the statement at the start of the debate that there are to be more orders for type 23 frigates. I urge my right hon. Friends to proceed as fast as possible with those important ships for the Navy. I also mention the pressing need to replace the landing platform docks Fearless and Intrepid, which are not only 30 years old but expensive to run—far more expensive than modern successors would be.

The Select Committee on Defence, on which I have the honour to serve, pointed out in a report the age of many of our RFAs. Swan Hunter is especially well placed to provide the necessary replacements for those ships.

I welcome the announcement that competition is to take place in ship repair for the Royal Navy's fleet. For too long those ships have been allocated to Devonport or Rosyth. If we read carefully the pronouncements on the future, we shall see that half the surface warships will go out to competition. I welcome that. Tyneside has a proud record. The Southampton was very satisfactorily repaired after collision damage and a Leander was satisfactorily modernised and refitted a few years ago on the Tyne.

In considering the defence scene overall, we must maintain our defence industrial base. We must maintain our technical capability; we must ensure that every help is given to the industry to secure exports; and we must retain the capability to acquire the necessary equipment to expand our forces if needed in some future crisis.

7.57 pm

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): I will refer to the industrial strategic requirement later in my speech. I will follow the comments then of the hon. Member for Tynemouth (Mr. Trotter).

We have heard many references in the debate to the horrors and slaughter in this unstable world. That instability, and the dangers internationally, lead us to view the role of the Secretary of State with some sympathy as he seeks to extract resources from the Treasury. We cannot wish him well, but we have sympathy, not least because many Opposition Members understand that, if he fails, it will not be Conservative Members who suffer but the personnel in the armed services, to whom so many tributes have been paid in the debate.

The wicket on which the Secretary of State is batting is a bad one, for it comes at a time when Britain's economic weakness is utterly demonstrable—and it is severe. We have experienced a massive decline in our international economic position. Over the past 12 years, we have slipped from sixth to 15th place, and it has become increasingly difficult to match our international obligations with our economic capacity.

I am not suggesting that we should run away from those obligations. My right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) pointed out the importance of our position on the Security Council, but we will eventually reach the point where the policies and values adopted by this Administration for the past decade

must be changed—or Britain will not be able to fulfil the commitments that Conservative Members so avidly want us to pursue.

Tribute after tribute has been paid to our service men, but tributes do not relieve the pressures of their duties, the strain of their separation from their families or their profound anxieties about their careers. Yesterday, my hon. Friend the Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) made a plea for a gap of 24 months between overseas tours. He was referring to the Army; but the Minister will confirm that it would be impossible for the air force to offer a 24-month gap between tours. A great many RAF personnel have done three tours of duty in a 24-month period—some even more. The strain on those young men and their families is serious indeed.

The young men who perform these frequent tours of duty are never in one place for long, and they are extremely anxious about their careers. The highly skilled technicians whom the Air Force needs to retain are worried about whether their promotion prospects have been slowed down. They are worried that they may not reach the next rank which will allow them to stay in the service.

If they do not, they will be forced out into a world in which there are no jobs, and their great technological abilities will probably be wasted. Young officers, some of whom I know, who are on their fourth tour in a 24-month period, do not know yet whether they will receive permanent commissions, yet they too need to maintain the energy and enthusiasm which the service certainly needs.

The services will not be well served by the contractorisation which, as I said in another debate, leaves Britain with the capacity to defend the realm between 9 am and 5 pm, because civilian firms cannot provide the resources outside that time that the services seem to need.

Defence is not only about people: it is about equipment too. On the last occasion that we debated this subject, I pointed out that the Hercules has been in squadron service for 25 years. Now it is a year older, and it needs replacing, because it is being used more intensively now than ever before. If the Hercules needs replacement because of its antiquity, so too does the Wessex, which entered squadron service some years before the Hercules and which carries our troops in conditions of considerable hazard.

The hon. Member for Tynemouth mentioned the strategic factor. We have also heard about shipbuilding. The Minister tried to tell us that our merchant fleet is large enough to sustain us in a crisis. If it is, it will not be for much longer if its decline continues.

As for engineering, in South Yorkshire we have what is probably the finest engineering steel production capacity in Europe. We have made enormous sacrifices and put in a great deal of investment to achieve that in recent years, but the Templeborough steel works, which produces steel of strategic importance, is to close—not because the quality of its production is poor, or because there have been delivery delays, or because the work force is inadequate. It is to close because three plants in Europe, two in Germany and one in Spain, are competing with it. None of those plants can compete with the United Kingdom firm, United Engineering Steel, on equal terms, but they remain in competition with it because the German and Spanish Governments give massive state aid to their industries. Our superior plant therefore has to close.

The Minister responsible at the Department of Trade and Industry tells us that we must understand the difficulties facing the German and Spanish Governments in their areas. So we have to bear the costs, despite the fact that unemployment in our area is much worse than in those European areas for which the Minister appears to have some sympathy. The Minister has also assured me that the DTI will serve Britain's national interest. What national interest is served by the slaughter of our merchant marine, our shipbuilding industry and our engineering steel industry?

The Government may be able to manage the armed forces, although increasingly the latter tend to doubt it, but they have shown that they are utterly unfit to manage the strategic requirements of this country.

If Britain is to play the proper part in the world that many of us feel it should, we must return to an economic approach that will make our commitments and obligations achievable. If they are being achieved at present, that is only because, caught between political incompetence and economic inadequacy, our forces are carrying burdens that are becoming intolerable. I honestly believe that, before very long, the Conservative party will have to tell the Government that enough is enough, and that a far wiser approach is essential.

8.5 pm

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): When it was proposed to merge the Ulster Defence Regiment and the Royal Irish Rangers, the Democratic Unionist party warned of the consequences, especially for part-timers in the UDR. It has been clear for some time that the UDR and its part-time members are in the sights of the Republican Government and of certain elements in Northern Ireland. Indeed, the day the Anglo-Irish Agreement was signed, Garrett Fitzgerald and Dick Spring announced that the agreement would put the UDR out of action.

The vicious attacks launched against the security forces of Northern Ireland, part-timers in particular, are testimony to their effectiveness and their dedication to duty. Twenty years ago, a young member of the UDR was murdered. This week, his mother died, killed by an IRA bomb.

At the time of the merger, the threat to the part-time element was raised in this House. I remind the House that no proper debate on the merging of the regiments was permitted. Indeed, the only Member given the chance to speak in the debate—myself—was guillotined, and no other Ulster Member was allowed to speak.

We were, however, given certain assurances. But the Minister of State for the Armed Forces has supplied my hon. Friend the Member for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson) with figures showing that, since 1990, the part-time element in the UDR and the RIR has decreased from 3,075 to 2,794; and the number of recruits taken on each year has also declined, from 843 to 407. So, during this crucial period, the number of part-timers has fallen by 10 per cent. —in line with the Dublin-led demands for the phasing out of the part-time element.

There has been a steady reduction in the part-time element ever since the late 1970s, in fact, and the trend has accelerated even as Dublin applies the pressure.

I am also perturbed by the fall in the number of recruits to the regiment. There has been a 50 per cent. drop in the number of soldiers joining it since 1990. The 1992-93 total of 407 compares poorly with totals of between 1,300 and 1,600 in the late 1970s.

The people of Northern Ireland are at present faced with an upsurge of killing and terrorism on all sides. They need

[Rev. Ian Paisley]

to know that the security forces, and the part-time elements in particular, will be maintained and strengthened, and that the IRA will not be given the massive boost of seeing the part-time element eliminated.

I have listened with interest to what Ministers have said about the part-time elements of the security forces. I was surprised that the former Minister for the Armed Forces, the right hon. Member for Epsom and Ewell (Mr. Hamilton), talked as he did in the House yesterday. He talked about getting outside operators in, for example, to guard the Maze prison. There are already people who are trained to do that. Is the right hon. Gentleman suggesting that they be sacked to make way for new people who need to be trained? The problem could be solved by using the people who are willing to give their services.

I was also surprised that the right hon. Gentleman seemed to have joined the "Troops Out" movement. He said yesterday that, although he did not want a radical measure, he thought that the Government could achieve their goal by withdrawing a battalion from Northern Ireland every six or 12 months. It would not be long until there were no troops there at all if that were done. The right hon. Gentleman also said that, the longer the British Government continue to talk to Dublin, the more they give the IRA the impression that they could leave the United Kingdom altogether with one more push. That is unnerving people.

I suggest that the British Government should deal with the claim that the Dublin Government have over a territory of the United Kingdom. Having dealt with that claim, the oxygen would be taken from the IRA, and it would realise that there was no hope for its campaigns.

However, I cannot accept the assurance that was given to my hon. Friend the Member for Belfast, East that there is no hidden agenda. That is because of the stark facts before us, and the well-signposted intentions of the Dublin Government, the Social Democratic and Labour party and others who have been prominent in the pan-nationalist attacks on the Ulster Defence Regiment through the years.

The Minister has admitted that the trend of steadily reducing the number of part-timers will continue, at a time when terrorism is on the upsurge. The people of Northern Ireland are convinced that the rundown of the part-time element will continue until it is no longer of any significance, when it will be done away with altogether. Such a betrayal of the part-timers would be an insult of the highest magnitude to the many who have paid the ultimate sacrifice while serving their Queen and country. The UDR has lost more of its members than any other section of the armed forces. That would be another victory for the IRA and for their fellow travellers.

The part-timers must be retained, because they are needed. At the height of the recent troubles, it was only because part-timers were available that serious sectarian riots were stopped and the districts affected were policed in a proper manner. I would appeal to the Government tonight to face up realistically to what is happening in Northern Ireland.

People are concerned. We hear that the IRA Sinn Fein leader has come to an agreement with the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume), the leader of the SDLP. They have said that they now have a plan and, if the plan can be further negotiated, all will be well. The next time the Sinn Fein leader opens his mouth, he is defending the violence and the bombing. He also tells us that there can be no peace until everyone has got around the table. They will decide how peace can be achieved. The IRA could turn off the violence simply by ceasing to bomb, kill and maim.

I trust that the Government will recognise their responsibilities within the United Kingdom. I welcome the fact that the Minister for the Armed Forces has left in the Library copies of correspondence that give the figures for recruitment to the UDR and Royal Irish Rangers through the years. Hon. Members should read it for themselves to see what is happening in Northern Ireland.

8.16 pm

Mr. Thomas Graham (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): I was delighted to hear the announcement from the Government that, after a considerable delay, they were going to give a £200 million order to Royal Ordnance.

It was not long ago when Royal Ordnance was bought with British Aerospace. One of the major announcements was that the Bishopton Royal Ordnance factory was to close. I remember that, at the time, everyone said that it would close. The work force fought vigorously and showed the country that they were a caring and dedicated bunch of workers. They were committed to the defence of the country as much as the soldier on the front line. They wanted to work and to contribute to the country. That battle was won, and they have won the right to continue to work in Bishopton. I am glad to say that the factory is still open, and that there are 430 workers still there.

What worries me is that over 600 workers have now left. I can assure the House that those people will probably still be unemployed, languishing on the dole, scramblingm about looking for work and still trying to live on the pitiful dole money that the Government provide for the so-called unfortunate unemployed.

What happened to the grand statements made by the Government about diversification? They have done nothing for the former workers at the Royal Ordnance factories. I can assure the Minister that the workers were delighted to hear today's announcement. However, why was there a huge delay? The announcement could have been made months ago, and we would not have lost all of the jobs that have gone.

I heard the hon. Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier) talking about jobs that were created in his constituency, including "75 bean counters". I can assure the hon. Gentleman that I would be quite happy to get some of those 75 bean counters jobs in my constituency. Do hon. Members remember what the Minister said? He replied to his hon. Friend that, in a previous life, he had been a bean counter. I can tell the House that he is certainly not working for a bunch of smarties now.

I have never seen such a dummy Government. They cannot manage the economy and they cannot look after the nation's defence in a sensible way. Thousands of dedicated people who have worked sincerely in our arms industry are looking now at the Government who have mismanaged the economy, run the country into a £50 billion deficit and are now looking to cut their jobs to make a saving for the Government's mismanagement.

During the Falklands crisis, the Bishopton factory workers worked 24 hours a day and sweated blood. That was not just to ensure that they kept their jobs, but to

ensure that the soldiers, sailors and airmen had the best equipment and the most accurate weapons, provided by British workers. We must recognise that, when our people produce arms for our people, they work to produce the best. Britain should buy the best. It should not go for the lowest bidder.

It is a joke to say that we should go to foreign people in a war and ask them to provide our weapons. I would not chance it. The people of this country would not like it. The hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Robathan) can smile all he likes, but I am sure that if he wanted a bullet to put in his gun to fire at the enemy he would prefer a Royal Ordnance factory worker's bullet to anyone else's bullet. He would want one which would work; one which would explode and make sure that his head was not blown off.

Today I met a group of shop stewards. They were men who have worked almost all their life at the Royal Ordnance factory. They have skills. They recognise the changing world more than the Government do. But they also recognise that they have a right to receive a wage to pay their rent, electricity and food bills and to pay for a house, a holiday and all the things that go with a salary. The workers say, "Tommy, if the Government continue in their mad, blundering way, are we going to have a job? Are we going to face the dole?" They do not see the Government doing anything to diversify from products for war into meaningful civil products. Perhaps the Minister can tell us what the Government intend to do.

I intervened lightheartedly in the Minister's speech about the ladies who are training as helicopter pilots. Funnily enough, I mentioned the military helicopter that the Tory party in my area used to raise funds. I received deep, sincere apologies and was told that it would not happen again. The hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie) intervened later to say that I had cast a slur on our helicopter service.

Mr. Martlew: It appears that that is not the first occasion on which the Conservatives have used military aircraft for private means. Two years ago, in the south of Cumbria, the Red Arrows put on a display because it was the birthday of a former Cabinet Minister.

Mr. Graham: I am most grateful for my hon. Friend's illumination. The Government have abused their power in every way. They use our military forces for their own needs and even to fill their coffers—probably because Asil Nadir did not give them enough. They use a helicopter to make a few bob.

There is no way that I would cast a slur on any of our service men. My late father fought for this country for nine bloody years. He died when I was 19. I am proud of my father and of his record as a sailor in the Royal Navy. I would never cast a slur on the men and women who fight in the front line for this country. The hon. Member for High Peak (Mr. Hendry) can smile all he likes. People like my father made it possible for him to sit where he is.

Clearly, the world is changing. There is a major split in the special relationship between the United States and the United Kingdom. I watched the previous Prime Minister talking about the special relationship on television the other day. What a load of nonsense. Mr. Clinton is saying to the United Kingdom, "You are on your own," because he does not get what he wants. Europe does not get what it wants. The special relationship is nonsense when it comes to countries looking after their own. I should like to see a special relationship not just with America but with all parts of the world.

I would like to see the defence bill reduced, but not if we put the country at risk. We are seeing revolutions all over the place in Russia. The most terrible civil war is raging in Yugoslavia. I hope that Britain will ensure that our defence is such that nothing like that will ever happen here.

8.24 pm

Mr. Andrew Robathan (Blaby): I congratulate the hon. Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mr. Graham) on his speech. We were not laughing at his serious points. We laughed only at his jokes—those that we could understand.

We expect our armed forces to rise to the occasion, whatever it may be, in emergencies. We turned to them in 1990 before the Gulf war, in 1982, and today in Bosnia and Northern Ireland. We must play fair by them. The men and women of our armed forces want to know what is their future. The recurrent complaint in the mess and barrack rooms around the British Isles is not about boots or food, as it normally is. In the language of the trooper, they are saying, "What the — is our future going to be? What is going on?"

"Options for Change" promised a different future. It promised a versatile future after the cold war. The Secretary of State at the time told the House that "Options for Change" would be followed by stability. I fear that the opposite is the case. We have seen considerable cuts since 1991, but no real change in policy. Policy and resources are no longer compatible. Our forces are double or even triple-hatted in their roles. The position seems likely to get worse rather than better.

The armed forces are still a respected institution, made up of high-calibre professionals of all ranks. They remain well equipped and well trained, backed by an excellent defence industry. They are respected at home and abroad. They are successful, reliable and without parallel in the world. They are able to defend the United Kingdom and our national interests whenever they are called upon. Are they not the sort of armed forces that we want? Before we make any change, we must decide what change is desirable.

It is already planned to reduce all armed forces. For example, it is planned to reduce the Army to 119,000 people. That will be the smallest since 1840, when the population of this kingdom was half what it is now. So proportionately we are reducing the Army to smaller than it has been for more than 200 years, before the Napoleonic wars. Yet we cannot get sufficient good recruits into Sandhurst. There is concern about manning and strength in all units.

The question we must ask is, "What sort of armed forces do we want?" Do we want an all-arms capability? Do we want to fight tank wars in the desert and engage in counter-terrorism in Northern Ireland? I suggest that we do. If we give up capabilities, we cannot resuscitate them overnight. We will lose ability, training, experience and equipment. It takes a long time to restore those things. If we withdraw from Belize—as we are doing—we shall endanger the jungle warfare skills that took years to learn in world war two. We may not need them tomorrow, but who can say when we may need them again?

[Mr. Andrew Robathan]

If we want a wide range of options, we need the equipment, training and troops for them; we need decisions on equipment. I was delighted to hear the decision on ammunition announced today. But we cannot have a Treasury freeze on future contracts for ever. Decisions on batch 2 Trafalgar class, replacement of the C130, Challenger 2 and minehunters need to be made swiftly because we are asking the armed forces to carry out the tasks listed in the excellent estimates. We must give them the tools for the job in future.

Long-term planning and stability is also essential. That involves equipment contracts, training and organisation. They all take time to get right and put into place. To attract high-calibre armed forces we must offer them a future for however long a person wishes to serve—be it three years or longer. Paradoxically, stability will be achieved by conducting a review of our capabilities, commitments and resources. It is a paradox that at present we have no stability and no review. We need to ask what armed forces we want and what we want those armed forces to be able to do.

Whatever happens, there must be stability, so that our armed forces will know what the future holds for them. Their morale is low and they will vote with their feet, as many are already doing. We have a duty to them to quote yesterday's speech by the Secretary of State.

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Robathan: I am afraid that I will not.

Defence estimates consider various roles and tasks. At the moment we cannot identify potential enemies, and all certainties have changed. Two weeks after the worst fighting in Moscow since the Bolshevik revolution, it is almost beyond belief that we should be considering further defence reductions.

With nuclear proliferation in north Africa and the middle east, events in the former Yugoslavia, Georgia, the Ukraine and Azerbaijan, let alone in Africa where the USA is contributing so well to peace in Somalia while in Angola and Sudan awful civil wars continue, the world is not a safer place. Russian submarine activity is almost at its pre-1989 level. I hear that Russia has launched 12 new nuclear submarines in the past year. Perhaps the Minister will confirm that.

Confusion and instability abound in international affairs, and they are matched only by confusion and change in our armed forces and in the Ministry of Defence. Commanding officers are being asked to plan for 3 per cent. savings next year. As they cannot cut pay, they have to cut training, operations or manpower as a whole. Will they be asked for further paring of resources? Is the Ministry of Defence budget being planned for 119,000 soldiers or is a shortfall being built in to make matters worse? There is an incoherence in policy which might be rectified by review.

If we cut defence spending as a soft option, in 25 years many of today's political arguments will be largely forgotten and irrelevant. In the middle of the next century nobody will recall the level of social security benefits in 1993, but people will recall whether we had been unable to maintain national security or our interests in a crisis or conflict. That will be remembered, and those responsible will rightly be blamed.

Baldwin and Chamberlain, both good men I am sure, have not been kindly treated by history. I was always taught to speak softly and carry a big stick. I urge the Government to ensure that we continue to speak softly, to wield our influence in international affairs and to have a stick to hand if it is needed; otherwise, in future I am unlikely to be able to support the Government's defence policy.

8.32 pm

Mr. Alan Simpson (Nottingham, South): I support the amendment in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn), which would be seconded, if they were allowed to, by the vast majority of those who voted for these policies at the recent Labour party conference. I support the amendment because of its fairly basic propositions: first, that our current defence thinking is woefully out of touch with the realities of the modern world; secondly, that we need a wholesale review of our international and defence thinking; and, thirdly, that a profound redirection of our defence spending and priorities is long overdue.

I contrast the realities of the outside world with the issues that frequently seem to obsess the House. I attended a recent conference of the International Peace Bureau in London. It was attended by delegates from all over the world who spoke about the greatest threats to peace and stability in their respective regions. It included delegations from the Caribbean, the middle east, Africa and southern Asia, and I was astonished by the commonality of the issues that they raised.

They spoke about poverty and starvation and the primary threat of environmental disaster. They also spoke about the threats of regional and civil conflict and many of them echoed the comments by Boutros Boutros Ghali in the UN document "The Agenda for Peace 1992":

> "Poverty, disease, famine, oppression and despair abound, joining to produce 17 million refugees, 20 million displaced persons and massive migrations of peoples within and beyond national borders.
>
> These are both sources and consequences of conflict that require the ceaseless attention and the highest priority in the efforts of the United Nations. A porous ozone shield could pose a greater threat to an exposed population than a hostile army. Drought and disease can decimate no less mercilessly than the weapons of war.
>
> So at this moment of renewed opportunity, the efforts of the (UN) Organisation to build peace, stability and security must encompass matters beyond military threats to break the fetters of strife and warfare that have characterised the past."

I contrast those comments with ones that I heard when I visited NATO headquarters and spoke to people there about the threats to peace. Far too often they were bedevilled by a language which was obsessed by the cold war and by images of a world constrained by notions of aggression and deterrence.

I listened with interest to the Khmer Rouge band of the Tory right—those who are most obsessed by market forces and whose lexicon appears to extend little beyond the notion of the words "cut" and "privatise". However, they make special pleas for not cutting defence while advocating a defence posture that is driven by the belief that we can somehow threaten or bully our way through the

threats to our existence in the rest of this century and in the century ahead. That is not the way to peace, stability or security.

As an example, I should like to focus on the issue of Trident. The otherwise gung-ho privatisers, in their enthusiasm for continuing expenditure on Trident, should ask themselves how it addresses any of the threats or conflicts in the past decade. Almost the only conceivable use for Trident would be to fill the warheads with a combination of spam and veggie-burgers. We could give advance notice of targeting and send the missiles as food convoys, delivered to their doorsteps as drive-in diners for the dispossessed.

Trident is no deterrent to the many people who are in the process or on the verge of mass migration resulting from fear for their survival. Trident offers no deterrence to hunger, homelessness or starvation. Most of us would take the opportunity to flee if we were faced with the same threats in this century and in the century to come.

There must be an enormous rethink of our priorities, and I shall address some of the possibilities. We must ask two questions about our conventional defence policy. They are, first, what conventional forces are needed to defend this country from attack and, secondly, what forces do we need to honour our international peacekeeping obligations? Beyond that we must move to a different notion—from peace keeping to peace-building. That is the area in which we must move profoundly from our past thinking.

We must acknowledge that the challenge of the next century may well be to take on board the notion of a massive resource shift from NATO to the United Nations. We must face the nuclear paradox because we cannot convincingly say to the rest of the world that it must move away from nuclear proliferation while we reserve the right to retain and increase nuclear weapons. We cannot credibly hide behind the argument of a test ban treaty while we reserve the right to continue testing ourselves.

The House should examine the resolution moved in the House of Representatives by Mike Kopetski, in which the United States proposes to levy charges for the entire cost of restoring areas, such as the Nevada desert, used as test sites. Those costs would be levied against the country that wishes to test in the area. That is a real and significant cost that our Government could face in the future.

We need to say clearly to the public that there is no credible place for nuclear arms in the defence and security system that we must develop. We need to face up to the fact —as I have been trying to do with workers in the Royal Ordnance factory in my constituency—that the future lies not in squandering skills but in using them, in engineering and design, to move from building for war to building for peace. It is the "swords into ploughshares" argument made real.

Those on my Front Bench must be aware that it is no good saying that we want a commitment to a defence diversification industry if we do not start to develop such a policy before we go into government. We need to enter into plans with workers from those industries now so that they know the jobs that they will be doing from day one of the next Labour Government.

We must also face up to redirecting our spending priorities. We have to reduce them to the level of the European average, which in this case would mean the redirection of up to £8 billion. At the same time, we must think the unthinkable—that it may not be relevant or desirable for Britain to retain its place on the Security Council. That would be the biggest challenge that we could face. Our priority should be to set up a conflict resolution council or a preventive diplomacy council under the United Nations. The House and the country should rise to that challenge.

We must address the fact that the future stability of Britain and Europe will be found not through threats of war but through guaranteeing that we can live our lives, in the words of John Dos Pasos,

"not afraid, not hungry, not cold: not without love."

That will not be achieved if we follow the siren voices of the men from the Maginot line who want to keep up the strategy forged in cold war who believe that, with a few more bricks, the world will be a safer place. It will not be, and unless we face the reality of those challenges, we shall betray the future safety of our children and our children's children.

8.41 pm

Mr. Julian Brazier (Canterbury): I shall not follow the hon. Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Simpson). I have three simple points of my own to make. First, it is not just the world which is a more dangerous place, but we face greater dangers than are suggested in the White Paper. Secondly, even within our existing long-term costings, there is a gap between the funds available and even the much smaller level of forces that we plan. Thirdly, we need a strategic review, not a measuring of commitments to resources but a serious look at wartime capabilities and a matching of those with resources.

I am an admirer of Boris Yeltsin, but if an historian today were to compare the Weimar Republic of the 1920s with the present regime in Moscow, and did not know the end of either story, he would notice that the Weimar Republic could draw on a limited pre-1914 democratic experience and on a tremendously successful pre-1914 capitalist past. In contrast, Russia today has neither, and the Russians, unlike the Germans, are a notoriously ungovernable people. Boris Yeltsin today is in power only because the general staff chose to allow him to stay there. The coming elections will take place only because of their agreement.

The situation in Moscow, which has been mentioned by several of my hon. Friends, would be of great worry and concern to statesmen of previous generations. Yet today, the situation is different, because we are dealing with a country that has over 20,000 nuclear weapons and enormous stocks of conventional weapons. It is true that many of them are now unserviceable, but as my hon. Friend the Member for Blaby (Mr. Robathan) said, Russia is continuing to build weapons at a great rate.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Brazier: If my hon. and learned Friend will forgive me, I will not, because others are waiting to speak.

That brings me to the other serious danger we face—nuclear proliferation. The break-up of the Soviet Union has meant that 3,000 nuclear scientists and tens of thousands of nuclear technologists have uncertain futures. *Jane's Intelligence* has calculated that as many as seven new countries, most of them in the middle east and north Africa, will acquire nuclear weapons during the next five years. The Uranium Institute in London has calculated that Saddam Hussein was only 18 months from the bomb when he invaded Kuwait. If he had waited another couple of

[Mr. Brazier]

years, we might have been faced not with deterring but actually with fighting a nuclear armed aggressor. The Government should be publishing their assumptions about those sectors. The White Paper is strong on activities but short on analysis of the threat.

What is our response to the threat? We shall be cutting the resources available for defence from 5 per cent. of GDP in the mid-1980s to 3·2 per cent. in the year after next, even before any further cuts. The percentage of our budget spent on equipment is at its lowest since we took office and will decline over the next three years to a lower level than at any time under the previous Labour Government, so that quality as well as quantity is bound to decline. Stocks of ammunition and spares are both in desperate shortage and training is being cancelled. Inevitably, morale has plummeted.

Worst of all, we are slipping into a peacetime model in which the configuration is being driven by considerations of peacekeeping in Bosnia, of maintaining the blue line in Cyprus, and of providing an extra battalion or two in Ulster. We are losing sight of the necessity to provide high-tech, high-capability forces to defend the country from a real threat. That is why we need a strategic review, oriented towards deciding the priorities and what wartime and military capabilities we want to keep. Only then can we decide what we can afford in the way of peacetime commitments.

If we wish to keep the NATO alliance together, the vital requirement, as a number of hon. Friends have said, is to keep America committed to Europe. I have just been lecturing in the United States and I ended with some meetings on Capitol Hill. The Government are right to resist President Clinton's calls for us to intervene in Bosnia, but we are simply fooling ourselves if we believe that Uncle Sam will continue to bear a disproportionate part of the west's burden if we and our European allies continue to cut, cut and cut again so as to maintain our social programmes.

I expect that three points would come out of a strategic review. First, the emphasis must be on the high-tech and the highly capable. We need a tactical air-launched nuclear weapon—not an expensive Rolls-Royce such as TASM, but a cheaper option, independent of Trident. Secondly, we must keep the armed forces as an attractive career. We cannot expect service families to continue to tolerate the unacceptable levels of separation. Much of the housing is squalid and service men's wives face terrible disadvantages in trying to find employment.

Thirdly, there must be an imaginative use of reserves. Lack of time prevents me from dwelling on that subject. I heard what my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State said to me yesterday, but the process that he is conducting now is based on a paper that contains nothing that has not been proposed many times before. The process is identical to all the previous unsatisfactory reviews. We need an independent review of the reserve forces led by a civilian with reservist experience. I have suggested a number of names to my right hon. and learned Friend.

I end where I began. We face considerable dangers in the world today. As my hon. Friend the Member for Blaby said, in 30 or 40 years' time, nobody will remember our level of spending on health or social security. Do the Government wish to go down in history as the Government who disarmed at a time when, to our east and potentially to our south, the world was sliding increasingly into a nuclear armed chaos? I shall be voting with the Government tonight. I hope that it will not be the last occasion on which I vote with the Government, whom I have loyally supported in the past five or six years, on defence issues.

8.49 pm

Mr. Jamie Cann (Ipswich): I come from East Anglia. I am a new boy here, there are many bases in East Anglia and I represent a marginal constituency. All those factors ensure that I talk to many people in an area where people know something about the services. I do not pretend to be an expert on the subject, but I should like to pass on to the House the views that are expressed to me and the views that I share.

I followed carefully the speech of the hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Robathan), who I believe is an ex-Army officer, and I consider much of what he said to be correct.

For a number of years, Britain has had three overlapping defence objectives: first, to ensure the protection and security of the United Kingdom and any dependent territories; secondly, to insure against a major external threat to United Kingdom and our allies through membership of NATO; thirdly, to work with our partners in NATO, the Western European Union and the United Nations to maintain Britain's wider security interests by concerted action to safeguard international peace and security. Those objectives have been with us for some time now and I am sure that they represent and are fully representative of the wishes of the House and the people of the country.

However, it seems to me and to those in the services to whom I talk that, although our aims are unchanging and are accepted, our capacity to deliver them is increasingly threatened.

I make no criticism of the men and women who run and staff our armed services. They are admired worldwide for their professionalism, compassion, courage and efficiency. What concerns me and many of them is the seemingly annual reduction in the teeth of the services with no reduction—indeed, often unforeseen increases—in their burden.

The utility players of our armed services—the infantry battalion, the RAF squadron, the destroyer and the frigate—grow fewer year by inexorable year. For example, in 1990 we had 50 destroyers and frigates and 50 infantry battalions. Soon, we will be down to 40 battalions and "about 35" frigates. In addition, 65 Phantoms have been taken out of service since April 1990, with no replacement being provided.

The salami slice annual reduction in the cutting edge of our armed forces is not only deeply debilitating to their reactive capacity, but is also, as has been pointed out, devastating to the morale of both ranks and officers. Service men do not understand the logic of selling a ship such as HMS Challenger for £2 million when it was only recently built at a cost of £240 million. They do not understand why 65 Phantoms were broken up for scrap instead of being preserved for any future use, or why four new submarines built at a cost of £900 million had to be sold to the third-world equivalent of Arthur Daley for the price of a cup final ticket.

The objectives of our policy are intact and accepted by all. They are even growing. Why, then, are the forces necessary to achieve them being reduced? When I speak to service men of whatever rank, the word used most often in the conversation is "overstretch". The Government are willing the end without being prepared, it seems to many of us, to provide the means.

I should also like briefly to draw to the House's attention the reserve formations, where morale is being severely affected. Many of us have acquiesced in the reductions in the numbers of regular units because of the promised increase in the numbers and roles of reserve units.

We should therefore examine the Government's track record. Let me give an example from near my patch. As late as July 1992, the Ministry was able to state that the Royal Auxiliary Air Force field squadrons were to be retained for the area defence of airfields in times of war. As of this year, such units are under threat of being disbanded.

The case in point is squadron 2623 based at RAF Barham near RAF Honington. It is unquestionably the strongest, best trained and most effective of the six Royal Auxiliary Air Force field squadrons, yet apparently only four are to be retained, with 2623 squadron being one of the two victims—and why?

The uncharitable, among whom I must include myself, say that it is because 2623 is the squadron that is most up to strength, and therefore has the largest pay bill. The fact that it is the most efficient seems to count for nothing. Indeed, it would appear to count against it, as does the fact that a 120-strong reserve unit capable of defending a base in wartime costs only £500,000 a year to maintain in a state of readiness.

The Government could make the equivalent saving by getting rid of 15 people in the Ministry of Defence and their on-costs. Why do we not do that instead? Why is it that, whenever savings are required in the Ministry of Defence they come from the people who work out in the services and not from the people who sit up the road in that palace?

The reductions in the reserve forces tell the same sorry tale as the treatment of the regulars. It is the exact opposite of Theodore Roosevelt's dictum,

"Speak softly but carry a big stick".

The Government talk tough in wonderful Scottish brogue, but they progressively weaken the armed forces year in, year out.

The Secretary of State would have us believe that he is fighting a savage rearguard action against the Chancellor's pressure to reduce the armed forces budget. In reality, there is no difference of principle between them. As Cabinet members, they are responsible for the year-by-year debilitation of our armed forces. Their only difference is how much further to go down that road in any particular year.

In my view, and certainly in the view of the service men I have spoken to, it is time for the Government to come clean. If the Government cannot afford to keep up all the roles of the armed forces, they should reduce the number or the treatment of those roles. If the Government insist on maintaining the same roles as at present, they should fund them properly. Above all, they should tell service men what is expected of them, give them the necessary manpower and equipment and please restrict themselves to a defence review every 10 years or so and leave them to get on with the job.

8.58 pm

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): I shall be brief so that others of my hon. Friends may have the opportunity to speak. I congratulate the hon. Member for Ipswich (Mr. Cann) on what he said. He spoke with real feeling and authority, based on his many conversations with his constituents. There was little in his speech with which I could disagree.

I want to devote the few minutes at my disposal to appealing to my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement—and he is a friend in every sense—and our right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State to stand firm. If one theme has run through every speech from both sides of the House, it is that the world is a much less safe and a much more dangerous place now than it was during the cold war. At this time of danger and volatility, the Government's paramount duty—and it is always a paramount duty—is to ensure the defence of the realm and of our national interests. That cannot be done if we arbitrarily cut defence spending.

It is with real reluctance that I shall vote with the Government tonight. I could not support "Options for Change". We won our battle over the Staffordshire Regiment, but it was a small victory. We have cut too deep already and to cut any more would be, from a Conservative Government, a dereliction of duty and a betrayal of our past. It would totally jeopardise our future. In all conscience, that is not something which I could ever support.

During the past two days, we have spoken several times of what has replaced the Soviet Union. None of us knows whether democracy will survive in Russia. I hope that it will and I back President Yeltsin, but things could go wrong even if he wins the election.

The other point that we must bear in mind is that the United States of America is now led by a much less certain and sure-footed leadership than for some time past. I wish President Clinton well and I want a strong and close relationship between our two countries and between the European Community and the USA. However, the fact is that President Clinton, by his prevarication and his uncertain touch, has almost invalidated the very doctrine of the deterrent that has been the basis of successful policy for the past 50 years.

With such a new, inexperienced and untried leader—and in so far as he has been tried, he has been found wanting—leading the greatest nation in the world, there is a greater responsibility than ever on the other nations of the west, and especially on Britain and France as the two permanent members of the Security Council. Because France is still outside NATO in the fullest sense, that means that that responsibility primarily rests on this country.

Many times in the past we have stood alone; many times we have contributed enormously to the defence of freedom and the survival of decent values. We now have a greater responsibility resting on our shoulders certainly than at any time since the last war and, perhaps, during the whole of this century. This is not a time merely to try to balance the books and to say that £1 billion must go. I must tell my hon. Friend the Minister that if that happens, with the greatest possible reluctance I shall go into the Opposition Lobby and I shall try to persuade as many of my hon. Friends as possible to go with me.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): There will not need to be too much persuading.

Mr. Cormack: I am glad about that. If the Government pursue that course, it will be a black day for this country.

We have been talking about press speculation. I do not believe that the Prime Minister, the Foreign Secretary, the Defence Secretary or any other member of the Cabinet would for a moment seriously contemplate that sort of arbitrary cut in our defence spending——

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: Or any cut.

Mr. Cormack: Indeed, the Government could not seriously contemplate any cut in our defence expenditure, save for any proper economies that can always be made and which were referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster (Sir N. Bonsor), the Chairman of the Select Committee on Defence.

That is my plea to my hon. Friend the Minister. I do not want to part company with him now or at any time, but we must recognise the priorities. Our national priority is the defence of the realm and the safeguarding of this country and all that it stands for. We cannot, at this moment, turn our backs on our greatest responsibility. I appeal to my hon. Friend to give an answer that will reassure us. I hope that long before 30 November we shall have ceased to discuss such a ghastly course. I hope that the Cabinet will knock it on the head very early and very firmly.

9.4 pm

Mr. Ian Davidson (Glasgow, Govan): Earlier today, I returned from Belize, where I was with 45 Commando, as part of the armed forces placement scheme, and I want to refer to two issues that arose from that visit. I seek clarification of the exact nature of the Government's commitment to Belize. I read with interest the *Hansard* report of yesterday's debate, in which the Minister of State for the Armed Forces stated:

> "We will enter into discussions with those interested in the region to ensure that Belize continues to prosper as an independent sovereign state."—[*Official Report*, 18 October 1993; Vol. 230, c. 116.]

That leaves much to be desired. It implies that discussions have not yet taken place. With whom are those discussions to be held—the United States alone or the United States and Mexico? Will Cuba or Guatemala be involved? Who is to give Belize a guarantee of continuing independence?

If we are contemplating British involvement in Belize solely in terms of guaranteeing the complete state's territorial integrity, that misses many of the achievements of British troops until now. It does not cover the risk of constant border incursions—perhaps by the Guatemalan army in hot pursuit of Guatemalan guerrillas—or take account of the roles played by British forces in supporting the civil power and helping to restrain illegal immigration, or take any account of the deterrent effect of the presence of British troops on drugs trafficking and the corresponding corruption of civil society that usually follows from that.

Belize has a far lower level of drug money involvement than many other countries in that part of the world, not least because of the presence of British troops. If those troops are withdrawn, a country that is a beacon of democracy in that part of the world—I speak as someone who visited it shortly after a free general election—may slide into the kind of system that is seen elsewhere in the region. We should not view our forces simply as a means of intervening after the event. They should be there to bolster a democratic regime.

My second point relates to the SA80, which has been the subject of previous discussion and of reports claiming that it is satisfactory. That was not my experience when I was in Belize, and is not supported by reports that I received from officers and marines with whom I discussed the matter.

I watched an exercise in the jungle in which two marines walked 150 yards along a trail, firing at targets popped up by instructors. Those marines suffered six blockages in their SA80s. I was told that the same happened on seven of the previous eight runs up that alley. I spoke subsequently to other marines to establish whether that was the general pattern and was told that the same thing had occurred before, and that they were anxious about the safety and security of the weapon.

John Wilkinson and I had the opportunity to fire the weapon, and both of us encountered a series of blockages and faulty ammunition. The weapon did not work and the ammunition seemed faulty. John spent all his time shooting at red targets——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. I remind the hon. Gentleman of the need to refer to the right hon. and hon. Members by their constituencies.

Mr. Davidson: I apologise, Madam Deputy Speaker. I was referring to the hon. Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson), who spent all his time shooting at red targets, whereas I at least switched my aim. In any event, both our weapons constantly jammed. I hope that the Minister will establish whether the situation is now satisfactory, obtain appropriate reports and ensure that we are sending marines and other troops abroad with equipment that actually works.

Mr. Hardy: My hon. Friend may recall that the Minister assured the House that defects in the SA80 had been resolved and that the problem would not recur. My hon. Friend's experience suggests that the Minister needs to reconsider the matter urgently.

Mr. Davidson: I am glad to hear that point. I should be happy if the Minister would consider the matter. He is a fair and reasonable man. I am reassured by the fact that he helped VSEL Kvaerner jointly to receive the order for the helicopter carrier, for which my constituents and I are eternally grateful.

9.9 pm

Mr. Eric Martlew (Carlisle): I am concerned to hear what my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Davidson) said about the SA80, which I had understood was a fine weapon. My only experience with it was during a trip to Cyprus, when I took part in a shooting competition and came last, but that was nothing to do with the weapon. My hon. Friend has made a serious complaint. Perhaps the conditions in which that weapon was used in Belize were different from those in Bosnia or Cyprus. I hope that the Minister will take up that matter.

The debate has been a non-event. According to the papers, it was going to be a key debate. It is a key debate, judging by the number of hon. Members present. I fear the worst with regard to the so-called Tory revolt. If I were a Tory Whip, I would go to my Chief Whip and say, "There

are a few there; the ones we expected. You might not get away with knocking £1 billion off the budget, but you could get away with £600 million, £700 million or perhaps, if you push it, £800 million. Some of them will never vote for us anyhow, but the rest can be whipped in. There is no problem." The duty Government Whip, the hon. Member for Shrewsbury, Atcham (Mr. Conway), is smiling.

The debate is similar to manoeuvres. The Government have pulled a fast one. They decided to hold the debate early so that we would not be in receipt of a copy of the defence budget and would not know what cuts were made. The Government took nearly a year to bring the previous statement before the House. It has taken five parliamentary weeks to prepare this statement, and it is all about tactics. The Conservative rebels, if that is what they would like to be called, are being out-manoeuvred, and they know it.

Yesterday's debate was strange. It was admitted that there was a fight going on between the Treasury and the Ministry of Defence on defence cuts. It was a coded message, but it was made. The Secretary of State also admitted that the Labour party was right to call for a full defence review.

The Secretary of State does not have the ammunition to argue with the Treasury about the right defence expenditure, because he has never considered the minimum required for the defence of the realm. The right hon. and learned Gentleman is now threatening—I understand that he did so during a television interview yesterday—that, if there is a cut of £1 billion, he will have a defence review. That sounds like an offer that his Cabinet colleagues cannot refuse. It is ludicrous of him to make such a statement. I suspect that we are in for troubled times.

At the Dispatch Box yesterday, the Secretary of State had the look about him of people—I have seen them often over the past two years—who work for the Ministry of Defence. He appeared to be unappreciated, unsure of his future role, suffering from low morale and thinking about a career change.

In the first 15 minutes of his speech, he told us about the trouble spots he had visited during the recess and the international statesmen he had met. It became apparent that he was looking for a career change—a career in the Foreign Office. I am not sure whether the Foreign Secretary will accommodate him, but I have a feeling that the Secretary of State is looking for a new job, and at a time like this.

What else did the Secretary of State say yesterday? He announced a new classless system of awards for military bravery. That is in line with the Prime Minister's view of a classless society. I would have welcomed the Secretary of State's action if he had not announced one medal to be given solely to officers. That is not acceptable to the Labour party.

It is a pity that, even when we are doing something that should not be contentious, the Government cannot get away from their class background. The changes will not cost a great deal of money, but I suspect that they will create a great deal of trouble. I read in the newspapers today about people who have received such medals in the past, complaining that they have been degraded in some way by other ranks and officers. I suspect that our constituency postbags will receive letters from people complaining about the changes.

Yesterday, the Secretary of State paid tribute to the United Nations forces serving in Bosnia. I agree that without the United Nations forces, and especially the British forces, many more people in Bosnia would have died. Many civilians would have died if the humanitarian aid had not got through.

I visited Bosnia in September. Like other hon. Members who have never seen a conflict before, I was shocked that there was conflict in a country to which many of us had gone for holidays in the past. We thought that the country was civilised. However, there were three different groups of people who were nice to speak to but who hated each other.

I came away with the feeling that it was a civil war and that we should not get involved in resolving the problem of who should win and who should lose. We should be there to help to restore peace. Our troops are doing a good job. If called upon, we should send more troops to police the peace, but we should not try to resolve the problem.

The Prime Minister was probably right to tell President Clinton that, if we took an active part in the fighting in the former Yugoslavia, it would bring down his Government. I do not think that the British people would accept the number of casualties that British troops and other service men would have sustained in that position. I do not think that any Government would have been able to persuade the British people that the fight was worth losing hundreds or thousands of our citizens.

I am critical of the press and the media, because they have not given a balanced view of what is happening in Bosnia.

Mr. Geoffrey Clifton-Brown (Cirencester and Tewkesbury): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Martlew: I shall give way in a moment.

When I was in the former Yugoslavia, I visited the Muslim safe area of Gorazde. The day after the peace agreement failed, the BBC World Service said that the Serbs were shelling Gorazde. We insisted to the Bosnian Serb general we were with that we should travel to Gorazde. He did not want to take us, but eventually he did.

We were met by the United Nations and taken into the Muslim safe area. The United Nations told us that there had been no shelling in the town for more than a week. At the same time, the BBC World Service was saying that the town was being shelled. Disinformation has come to this country, just as it has to other countries. There is general agreement on both sides of the House about our policy in Bosnia.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the moment we dropped the first bomb on Bosnia, we would have been seen to be partial by all three sides and our humanitarian aid, which has been the biggest in the world, would have come to an end?

Mr. Martlew: The threat was enough to make the Bosnian Serbs think again, and the ploy worked. It could have turned out differently, but it worked. So there is agreement about Bosnia.

The Government agree with Labour Members about the tactical air-to-surface missile. Not only did we say that there was no need for it—we predicted that the Government would scrap it. On 9 February I told the Secretary of State that, in order to save at least £2 billion, the Government should scrap TASM, and I went on to predict that they would scrap it. The Secretary of State replied that that spoke volumes.

"on the inadequacy of Labour thought on those crucial issues."
—[*Official Report*, 9 February 1993; Vol. 218, c. 816.]

[Mr. Martlew]

Now he has had second thoughts, and that, too, speaks volumes.

The Tories believe in TASM. We were glad to see it scrapped yesterday, but they believe that it should go ahead. The economy is in a shambles, and the Treasury has put pressure on the Secretary of State for Defence to scrap TASM. The Tories are running the economy in such a way that they cannot afford to provide a nuclear weapon that they think is essential.

I am not convinced that there will be a replacement for TASM—we shall have to wait and see. Perhaps, when the Minister replies, he can tell the House how many millions of pounds have been wasted on developing TASM and their nuclear warhead for it, and what the cancellation costs will be. The House has a right to know.

The Minister said that there would be consultation on the reserves, and that he would be asking for comments. If he takes as much notice of those comments as he took of the consultations on the Royal Naval Reserve and the Royal Auxiliary Air Force, we might as well not bother. On that occasion, he was interested only in saving £10 million, and I suspect that it will not be any different this time. We hope that the Minister will come to the Dispatch Box, so that he can be questioned on that announcement.

A great deal has been said about the Royal Ordnance order. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mr. Graham), who made a strong speech. He is the sort of man who shouts and carries a big stick. His philosophy is like mine: if British troops are to shoot bullets, they should be British bullets. We saw what happened in the Gulf war. The Belgians were going to refuse to give us artillery shells.

Why, then, have we placed this order with the French? Can hon. Members imagine the French asking us to tender to supply them with ammunition? What nonsense. Where possible, we should build equipment for British forces in this country. It must be of fine quality and at a competitive price. If we do that, jobs will be maintained here. In addition, we should be careful when we export weapons. British troops should not be fired on by British bullets, as happened in Iraq. The Government have a bad record on that.

The hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) and the hon. Member for Weston-super-Mare (Sir J. Wiggin) asked about the EH101. The order was promised six years ago by Lord Younger. At 3.30 am on 27 July 1993, we thought that we were about to hear an announcement. The knights of the shires, including the hon. Gentleman, were present. I was all excited, because I thought that this was how we would win the Christchurch by-election.

In fact, we heard nothing, but we got something. The Minister said that he understood that there was a possibility of a Dutch order. He had had a word with his Dutch counterpart and—nod, nod, wink, wink—it looked as though everything would be all right. That obviously did the trick, because the order went to the French.

I understand that the Secretary of State for Defence went to Yeovil, as I did. No doubt he saw the commitment of the work force and of management. I understand also that the Chancellor of the Exchequer took away the Secretary of State's cheque book. The Chairman of the Select Committee on Defence told us tonight that the Secretary of State would not be allowed to place that order until after the Budget. What a situation! It is six years since the Government promised to place the order: the allies won the second world war in less time than that.

Yesterday, in a scurrilous intervention, the hon. Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) suggested that the social security budget should be cut to save defence. I suspect that that was a rehash of his grandfather's famous wartime phrase "guns before butter"—but, in this instance, it was "guns before social security". I do not think that that would have united the country in 1940.

If extra money must be raised for defence, it should be raised through taxation; it should not be taken from the social security budget, and my party will not stand for that.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: It was Hitler who said that. Who taught you history?

Mr. Martlew: I wonder who taught manners to the hon. Lady.

Mr. Michael Fabricant (Mid-Staffordshire): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Martlew: I am sorry; I have a very tight schedule.

In the past, I have referred to the Secretary of State as the grand old Duke of York, and as one of the "donkeys" described by Alan Clark. Tonight, however, I think that he will be Pontius Pilate: ultimately, he will say, "I wash my hands of this."

I hope that enough Conservative Members will decide to warn the Government with a pre-emptive strike, and join us in the Lobby to tell the Government that they do not believe that defence moneys should be cut further until a review has been completed. I hope that they will vote for the Labour amendment.

9.26 pm

The Minister of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. Jonathan Aitken): In some ways, this two-day defence debate has been unusually sombre, but it has been valuable none the less. It has gone very wide of the White Paper at times, and—naturally—a good deal of attention has been paid to the public expenditure round and rumours of possible defence cuts. I have, of course, taken careful and profound note of the significant number of Conservative Members who have expressed grave reservations on that subject.

The debate has thrown up two main themes, which could be described as "we want a clearer defence strategy" and "we do not want significant defence cuts". I shall address both themes and, indeed, those who developed them. First, however, let me deal with some of the specific points raised by hon. Members. As more than 40 have spoken—over 20 of them this afternoon—I hope that I will be forgiven if I do not mention every speaker, but I will do my best. It will depend on the time that is available.

The hon. Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid) asked about HMS Active and the operation that is currently under way near Haiti, under United Nations auspices. I can tell the hon. Gentleman that HMS Active will be under British command and British rules of engagement at all times. Tactical control may be passed to the United States for specific operations, but at all times United Kingdom rules of engagement will apply.

Two hon. Members representing Northern Ireland constituencies—the hon. Members for Fermanagh and

South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis) and for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley)—raised important points. I assure them both that the Government have no current plans to withdraw security forces from Northern Ireland: it is our policy there to match force levels with threat levels and we see the present threat level as high.

Indeed, I will go further. We believe that, if the level of support for the Royal Ulster Constabulary were reduced, the number of terrorist attacks would be more than likely to increase. It follows from that that we do not feel able to accept the novel correlation theory—as it is called—of my right hon. Friend the Member for Epsom and Ewell (Mr. Hamilton). He is, of course, entitled to his own views, given his new-found freedom; but those views do not yet find favour with Her Majesty's Government.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, East (Mr. Atkinson) raised some detailed questions about global missile defence. We have been kept in close touch with the thinking of the United States as the strategic defence initiative has evolved. We are aware of the emerging ballistic missiles threat. We have been working to prevent it through various export controls such as the missile technology control regime. We have preliminary studies in hand to consider future medium range surface-to-air missile and we will take ballistic missile threats seriously and carefully into account.

I shall now turn to one of the major themes of the debate: the question of defence strategy. The point has been made by several Members of all parties that our defence policy lacks a coherent strategy. I believe that to be unjustified, but the debate has been enhanced by some good speeches on that subject such as from the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman), the former foreign affairs Opposition Front Bench spokesman, and my hon. Friends the Members for Blaby (Mr. Robathan) and for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier) among others.

From the Opposition Benches, the concomitant cry immediately goes up that what we need is a defence review. When I hear that from the Opposition, I do not take it with anything other than a large pinch of salt. We all know that the Opposition's request in this context for a defence review is nothing less than a opportunistic mechanism to cover up the fact that they have no defence policy of their own.

One of the rather amusing features of all our defence debates is the little Punch and Judy show that takes place on the Opposition Benches. No sooner has the Labour Front-Bench spokesman, the hon. Member for Carlisle (Mr. Martlew), bounced up in his usual way to say that the Labour party want a review, than up gets the Liberal party defence spokesman, the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) who rebukes him in tones of Gladstonian rectitude for what he now felicitously calls the hon. Gentleman's irresistible urge to call for a review. The hon. and learned Gentleman then points out that a review will not provide the answers to difficult questions. With that, we are certainly at one with the Liberal party.

I give greater weight to the more thoughtful arguments put forward by some of my hon. Friends who have asked for a wider concept: a security foreign policy and strategic review of all our commitments. That was emphasised yesterday by my right hon. Friend the Member for Chertsey and Walton (Sir G. Pattie) and my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury and others.

In the context of those speeches, I shall turn to the interesting pamphlet "Facing the Future" that was written by 12 of my hon. Friends, several of whom have spoken in the debate: the hon. Members for Wimbledon (Mr. Goodson-Wickes) for Birmingham, Hall Green (Mr. Hargreaves) for Blaby, for Canterbury and others. When a pamphlet is signed by a cabal of my hon. Friends, whose number exceeds the Government majority, it, as Dr. Johnson once said in a different context, concentrates the mind wonderfully. I read it carefully and with some measure of sympathy during the recent recess.

First, I must make friendly criticism of both the views expressed in the pamphlet and of the speeches. Some of the views are set out more in the interrogative than the substantive. In its six pages, the pamphlet asks well over 50 questions, many treble and quadruple-hatted. Some of those questions, I am bound to say, are answerable only by a Minister of clairvoyance. For example, the pamphlet asks:

> "Can we rely on the same commitment of interest holding together the Atlantic alliance over the next 40 years as has sustained it over the previous 40? What are the foreign policy implications of any alternative assumptions we might adopt, or vice versa? . . . Once we have answers to these questions of strategy and doctrine, others will need to be addressed. What changes, if any, do we need to make in numbers, training and, equipment? Do we need more or fewer men, tanks, helicopters, fighter interceptors, stand-off missiles, frigates or carriers? What is the scope for greater specialisation of roles?"

And so it continues into a further flurry of broad-brush interrogatives.

The sheer scope and breadth of such questions highlights the difficulty that we all face. The plain fact of the matter is that we have had a bonfire of the certainties that prevailed in defence and foreign policy for the 45-odd years of the cold war. Those old certainties have not been replaced with new certainties. We all agree that the world remains a dangerous place, but there is not much agreement about which of the current dangers and uncertainties pose a real and immediate threat to our security or that of our friends and allies.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): Has not President Clinton told the United Nations that his top priority is non-proliferation? Why cannot the Government make that their top priority as well?

Mr. Aitken: Of course the Government support the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, and drive to achieve it. They have said so unequivocally, so there is not—as the hon. Gentleman seems to be suggesting—any great difference between us and the United States. I deplore the attempts of some journalists, too many commentators and some hon. Members to drive a wedge between ourselves and the United States. The differences between us are minuscule compared with the great interests that keep us together and will do so for many years.

The old certainties have not been replaced with new ones. There is not too much agreement as to which of the current dangers and uncertainties pose an immediate threat to our security or that of our friends and allies. In those circumstances, perhaps the White Paper that we are debating carries more strategic weight and credibility than some of my hon. Friends seem to have thought on first reading it.

Mr. Brazier: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who has been generous in the amount of time that he has devoted to our little paper. The central message that it was designed to convey was that, since the big changes, we have received from the Ministry of Defence an enormous and

[Mr. Brazier]

unprecedented volume of detail on existing activities, but less information than ever on underlying assumptions, even on issues on which MOD must hold a view.

Those issues include questions such as, how many years, in a broad sense, may we expect before some of the middle eastern powers start to acquire nuclear weapons? Such matters need to be debated in public, and we can then settle questions of priorities—obviously, we cannot afford everything. The problem is that, without such a debate, we end up being pushed along by what is urgently needed in terms of our peacetime commitments instead of what is important in defending vital British and western interests.

Mr. Aitken: My hon. Friend is perfectly right to draw attention to the potential menace of nuclear powers in the middle east. It is worth reminding ourselves that, despite all the intelligence skills available on both sides of the Atlantic, no western power was aware of how close Iraq was to becoming a fully fledged nuclear power until the invasion of Kuwait and the aftermath of that conflict revealed the depth of Iraq's nuclear capabilities. My hon. Friend's warning is well taken, but I am not sure that we will achieve any greater accuracy of information than before the Gulf war. We are striving to achieve that, but I am not sure whether my hon. Friend's example is a particularly good one.

A review, of whatever sort, creates uncertainties, and an ongoing review effects the morale of the armed forces. The Government do not believe that the time is right for such a review. I agree with the words in the leader of today's edition of *The Times*.:

"What is needed is not a cumbersome defence review, whose findings will be out of date as soon as they are published, but a rolling response to the changing world."

We must consider the acid test of a rolling response. When I read my hon. Friends' pamphlet, I found that some of the passages, particularly the section entitled "War and Proliferation Closer to Home", echoed John F. Kennedy's seminal work, "Why England Slept". I read those warnings, hear the warnings given in today's debate and return to the White Paper to ask: can we defend ourselves or at least get ready to defend ourselves against such potential threats within the strategy and capability of the White Paper? The answer now is a firm, "Yes, we can."

Although I say that we can defend ourselves well now and have strong defences now, if we are to believe the rumours in the press, there seems to be a sword of Damocles hanging over our debate. There seem to be profound anxieties about the effect on defence of the current expenditure round. The debate has been notable for the stern warnings from the Back Benches. By John F. Kennedy's definition, England is clearly not sleeeping at this hour, because my hon. Friends the Members for Upminster, for Staffordshire, South, for Canterbury and for Blaby all said ominous words about their fears and gave warnings of what they might be compelled to do in political and parliamentary terms.

Once or twice in the debate over the past two days, as we talked about cuts, I heard echoes of the ancestral voices of the great Tory parliamentarians of the 1930s and 1940s, such as Leo Amery, Duff Cooper and Brendan Bracken.

Let me come to the big issue of cuts, because, in a major debate about defence spending, I can well understand that some of my hon. Friends wish to warn the House about the dangers, as they see it, of a cut, or cuts, too far. The air is indeed full of rumours. My hon. Friend the Member for Upminster, who leads our Select Committee, these days speaks with the authority, expertise and political clout equivalent to Sam Nunn in the United States Senate. My hon. Friend has done us all a service in giving the warnings that he gave today.

I am not against warnings, or even warning shots, but there is a real danger that, without sight of the figures, the proposals or counter-proposals, which are all part of the ebb and flow of public expenditure round of discussions, some of my hon. Friends may fall too easily into believing in a stereotype of stagey confrontation, which may turn out to be far removed from the collegiate discussions that can result in settlements that uphold, as we all hope, a strong and realistic defence posture for Britain.

Before we get to the tabloid or war comic versions of "Treasury Guns for Defence" or our more colourful military response for that over-dramatised scenario: "Bombs Away over the Chief Secretary's Office", let me try to offer the House some conciliatory thoughts on an issue about which Treasury and Ministry of Defence interests do and should meet: value for money in defence spending.

You, Madam Speaker, may or may not be aware of that vivid Pentagon phrase, "Getting more bangs for the buck". In our more restrained way, we in the Ministry of Defence talk of concentrating resources at the sharp end, and, above all, of ensuring that we spend as much as is humanly possible on the front line. I cannot emphasise too strongly the primacy of the front line and the need to give spending priority to it. It is fundamental to the philosophy of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State and his entire ministerial team.

It is our priority also to give stability to the funding for the front line, to its manpower and equipment. Even if we have to make difficult and painful decisions elsewhere in the defence budget, we believe that to be the right priority for our defence system, and we are making good progress on that. Many new brooms are sweeping hard to achieve our objectives.

We have a good tale to tell on efficiency savings, because since 1988, as my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster was good enough to acknowledge and praise in his speech, we have secured 2·5 per cent. efficiency improvements, and plan to do so through to 1996-97. By then we shall have reduced the cost of the defence programme by some £3 billion sterling.

If we ask ourselves whether we have done enough in that direction, the honest answer must always be, "Well, not yet." In a budget of more than £23 billion, there are bound to be areas where the quest for value for money has not prevailed as well as it should. We are getting to grips with that problem and are determined to come to closer grips with it. We have had a glimpse of far more radical efficiency savings possibilities as a result of the important lessons that we have learnt from our £1·2 billion market-testing programme, particularly the Army's share of it.

It is the Army that has set the pace in recognising that there are massive areas of support expenditure which can just as efficiently and more cost effectively be delivered to the front line not by service men or women in uniform but by defence industries or by leaner in-house teams of civilians after bidding competitively against each other.

For example, right now in the Army Base Repair Organisation, some quite remarkable savings and changes are being made as a result of the spur of competition in the support area. The overhaul of a main battle tank, which used to take 34 weeks, now takes a smaller team of skilled workers just 19 weeks to accomplish with no loss of quality.

A complete review of work practices and procedures is taking place at those Army base workshops. Where we no longer need service men, we no longer need some facilities. Even some officers' messes are going in the reorganisation programme. None of this is easy, but the certain end result, whoever wins the market testing competition, is, first, that the taxpayer will be saved tens of millions of pounds, secondly, that many service men will be redirected from the support area to the front line and, thirdly, that the Army will have at least as efficient and good quality support as it receives at present.

I mention the Army's efficiency savings and market testing programme to make the point that not every defence cut means a reduction in defence capability. What is being accomplished at those Army base workshops will, in part, be notched up to the Treasury as a cut. But Army commanders will see them as a gain because service personnel are being released for the front line.

The hard questions that we have been asking of the Army with such impressive responses and results we are now putting to the other services and to the civil service. The civil service cannot be exempt from value-for-money changes in our determined drive to direct maximum resources to the front line.

Again, I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Upminster for what he said about the excellence and quality of our civil servants, so many of whom are in no sense administrators or pen pushers but are there almost as part of the front line, going out to the Gulf and other fields of quite dangerous service.

I also accept the point made by the hon. Member for Ipswich (Mr. Cann), a new contributor to defence debates, that perhaps too often civil servants did not bear the brunt of the pressures while the people whom he described so eloquently from his constituency did. We are very much aware of that worry.

I do not want today to go into a catalogue of targets for the radical value-for-money reforms and efficiency savings which my right hon. Friend intends to achieve within our Department, but it is worth saying that, in today's newspapers alone, there are articles which ask the same hard questions that Ministers have been asking internally.

For example, there was a particularly knowledgeable column this morning by John Keegan, the defence editor of *The Daily Telegraph.* He suggested that the Department should

"undertake an open-eyed rationalisation of its own house".

He mentioned the cost of support agencies, the medical services and the white collar administrators, and I agree with his comments there.

In another article, the defence correspondent of the *Daily Express,* Mr. John Ingham, drew attention to the differences in the size of the support tail per combat aircraft between the Royal Air Force and other air forces.

I draw the attention of the House to such journalistic signposts only because we ourselves are now travelling fast down the same roads in our internal crusade for efficiency and value-for-money savings. I emphasise again that such savings can be substantial in financial terms but, above all, I emphasise that such savings should not reduce the operation effectiveness of the front line of our services. If those are to be our cuts, they are not the sort of cuts on which tears or votes need be shed.

As yet, I do not know the outcome of the public expenditure round, but I hope that I have gone some way towards making it clear where, according to our internal calculations, the priorities should lie.

I said that I would come back to one or two points, particularly constituency points, made by hon. Members. The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) and my hon. Friend the Member for Tynemouth (Mr. Trotter) referred to Swan Hunter. We have done our best to sustain Swan Hunter in the difficult time that it is now going through. As a mark of our confidence in Swan Hunter's capability, we have recently given it some extra work, but that is a short-term measure. We shall do everything that we can to help the company find a buyer and secure overseas work. More than that I cannot say, except that we very much hope that Swan Hunter will flourish in the future and win competitive bids.

I also thank my hon. Friend the Member for Tynemouth for his warm welcome for the ammunition order that I announced earlier. As to the Challenger 2 decision, we hope to go ahead with this as soon as practicable. This and other major procurement decisions are, quite fairly, coming under careful scrutiny—which, in the present public expenditure climate, is understandable—but our defence capabilities are not in any way being affected. I understand the natural impatience of some hon. Members who have important factories in their constituencies.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: I warned my hon. Friend that I would intervene. Another very important contract that is awaiting decision is for the Hercules replacement. The Hercules is the front-line work horse for all three services and the oldest aircraft are now more than 30 years old and desperately need refurbishing or replacement. I urge my hon. Friend to issue the invitations to tender for the new Hercules replacements as soon as possible after the public expenditure round.

Mr. Aitken: I sympathise with my hon. Friend. We need to replace our Hercules fleet—or at least half of it—in the reasonably near future. We have recently placed a contract with Marshalls of Cambridge to look at the options of either refurbishing the existing fleet or buying a new type of Hercules aircraft. That is under consideration at the moment. I certainly appreciate my hon. Friend's point about urgency and I hope to be able to resolve it as soon as possible.

A number of my hon. Friends have commented on the EH101, particularly my hon. Friends the Members for Weston-super-Mare (Sir J. Wiggin) and for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin). It is an excellent aircraft. We had a good debate about it in the small hours of the morning in July. We hope to be able to move forward but—again because of the extra scrutiny—we are biding our time. We are not losing any defence capability in doing so; it merely emphasises the importance of price and achieving value for money in that contract.

The hon. Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mr. Graham) seems to be a member of the Labour party. He takes tremendous pride in the work force of the rearmament and stronger armament wing of the Royal Ordnance—quite rightly so—and it was moving to hear

[Mr. Aitken]

him say how he took tremendous pride in his father's military service. If his attitude represented the heart and soul of the modern Labour party—I wish it did—there would be nothing wrong with that. I thank him for his robust contribution to the debate.

As I have talked about at least one Opposition Member who has robust views on defence, I think that it is right that we should have a little fun with the Labour party's general defence policy. The Labour party likes to pretend that it had a very good conference. Well, on defence, it did not. There was a great deal of military posturing around, led by the right hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett), the deputy leader of the Labour party for the time being. She played the role of the Grand Old Duke of York; she marched her troops to the top of the hill and then had to march them down again.

The hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark), the Opposition Front-Bench spokesman on defence, seemed to be applying for the extraordinary new role of milliner general to the armed forces. A phrase in his speech could have come from the lips of Hardy Amies or the late Norman Hartnell when he said that he was proud of our boys in Bosnia who were "wearing their blue bonnets". I do not know wether he was playing the role of the mad hatter or whether he buys his wife an Easter beret, but I hope that he polishes up on his military terminology before he next visits the Royal Marines or the Paras.

Then there was the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott). He was playing Rupert of the Rhine—charging off wildly in all directions, exhorting the troops in an incomprehensible language and then telling everyone that he had won the first battle of the civil war single-handed.

Meanwhile, however, the ironsides of the trade unions were regrouping. They were regrouping so effectively that the following day in the conference they cast their block votes to make the Labour party push through some of the most irresponsible and destructive anti-defence policy motions in the history of left-wing socialism.

Let me remind the House of composite motion No. 48, which instructs the next Labour Government to carry out the immediate scrapping of Trident. By a majority of 52 to 40, the brothers and the comrades passed that reckless reversion to unilateral nuclear disarmament. Evidently, in the new modern Labour party, OMOV washes redder.

The brothers did not stop at throwing away our nuclear defences. They wiped out most of our conventional defences too, for they also passed, by a 79 per cent. majority—let us remember that a two-thirds majority is binding on the Labour party in policy terms—composite motion No. 49, whose effect would be to reduce Britain's defence spending by one third or £7·5 billion. That is the equivalent of removing the whole of any one of the three services or of stopping the whole of Britain's defence equipment orders to Britain's defence industries—industries that employ nearly 500,000 British workers.

The Labour party likes to proclaim in its official motion its support in Parliament for its latest new-fangled quango, a defence industry diversification agency, but by its votes at the conference it has created in effect a defence industry destruction agency and a defence industry jobs destruction agency, and we will not let its members forget that.

It is also illuminating that, of the plethora of motions on the Order Paper, the amendment of the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn)—not the Front-Bench amendment—represents official Labour party policy. With a two-thirds majority, it means just that.

So much for those composite resolutions. Let their epitaph be, dust to dust, ashes to ashes, composites for the compost heap of history. Let us leave the past to Labour and its squabbles, because it is giving the future to us.

The guiding beacon of our Government's policy must be that sound defences and sound money go hand in hand. On the subject of sound money, let there be no doubt that we all share the view that any sense of a return to high inflation, high interest rates or uncompetitive exchange rates would emasculate Britain's defence capabilities far sooner and far more devastatingly than any foreseeable hostile military attacker is likely to do.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer was absolutely right, therefore, when he said in his recent speech at Blackpool:

"The Conservative Government is the Government of sound money or it is nothing."

I know, however, that neither my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor nor anyone else will take it amiss when a Defence Minister adds this important rider; a Conservative Government are also the Government of sound defence or they are nothing.

Her Majesty's Government have to confront the challenge, therefore, of how best we should spare the circle between the two imperative requirements of sound money and sound defence. No one pretends that it is an easy task, but after all, government is all about making difficult choices. When we choose, we shall have to temper financial realism with military responsibility.

No one in Government is suggesting that our defence posture should be purely resource-led, but equally our defence posture cannot be unconstrained by resource considerations, because defence expenditure has to take its place within our overall priorities for public expenditure. That is not just a financial calculation. We cannot, to use the familiar cliché, pretend that there should be a level playing field between the finances of social security and the finances of national security.

Defence goes to the very heart of nationhood. It goes to the heart of the beliefs of the British people about themselves; it goes to the heart of our national self-confidence and of our image, responsibilities and role in the world. It goes to the heart of those deepest of national values which are so well exemplified by our armed forces —honour, discipline, duty, loyalty and patriotism. It is with these higher considerations in mind that I know the Government will face the difficult decisions that lie ahead, to reach a realistic and responsible position that maintains Britain's role in the world as a premier military nation with armed forces of formidable skill, scope and excellence. I commend the motion to the House.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 267, Noes 322.

Division No. 363] **[10.00 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane	Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Adams, Mrs Irene	Armstrong, Hilary
Ainger, Nick	Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*	Ashton, Joe
Allen, Graham	Austin-Walker, John
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*	Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*

Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyce, Jimmy
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Byers, Stephen
Cabom, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dafis, Cynog
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Richardson, Jo
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Tipping, Paddy
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Williams, Alan W *(Carmarthen)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Jon Owen Jones and
Mr. Dennis Turner.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James

Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliff)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
McCrea, Rev William
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maginnis, Ken
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Paisley, Rev Ian
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Lightbown and Mr. Sydney Chapman.

Question accordingly negatived.

Main Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 332, Noes 34.

Division No. 364] **[10.20 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas

Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ruclif)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Forth, Eric
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Harvey, Nick
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Lynne, Ms Liz
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Madel, David
Maginnis, Ken
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Rendel, David
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Tyler, Paul
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Timothy Wood.

NOES

Adams, Mrs Irene
Austin-Walker, John
Barnes, Harry
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Chisholm, Malcolm
Cohen, Harry
Dafis, Cynog
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret

Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gordon, Mildred
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Gunnell, John
Hood, Jimmy
Jones, Lynne *(B'ham S O)*
Lewis, Terry
Livingstone, Ken
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Maxton, John
Purchase, Ken
Salmond, Alex
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Welsh, Andrew
Wigley, Dafydd
Wise, Audrey

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Bob Cryer, and
Mr. Jeremy Corbyn.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House approves the Statement on the Defence Estimates 1993 contained in Cm. 2270.

European Economic Area Bill *[Lords]*

Motion made, and Question put,

That, in respect of the European Economic Area Bill *[Lords]*, notices of Amendments, new Clauses and new Schedules to be moved in Committee may be accepted by the Clerks at the Table before the Bill has been read a second time.—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

Motion made, and Question put,

That, if the European Economic Area Bill *[Lords]* be committed to a Committee of the whole House, further proceedings on the Bill shall stand postponed and that, as soon as the proceedings on any Resolutions come to by the House on the European Economic Area Bill *[Lords] [Money]* and [Ways and Means] have been concluded, this House will immediately resolve itself into a Committee on the Bill.—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

Sir Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. My hon. Friends and I had hoped to table amendments tonight for consideration during the Committee stage of the European Economic Area Bill on Thursday. Because of the rejection of the Government's motion, amendments cannot now be tabled until tomorrow and they will then be starred. Would it be possible to persuade my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House to agree not to hold the Committee stage immediately after Second Reading on Thursday? Otherwise, there will be no real Committee stage and no proper discussion.

I know that you, Madam Speaker, are concerned with proper debate in the House. It would be appalling if there were to be a Second Reading, a Committee stage, a Report stage and a Third Reading without hon. Members having the opportunity to table amendments. I hope that there will be discussions through the usual channels, perhaps in consultation with you, to ensure either that amendments can be tabled or that there is not a Committee stage on Thursday.

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman's point has been noted. It will certainly be noted by those on the Treasury Bench and, I am sure, the Leader of the House.

Wing Bypass

Motion made and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

10.32 pm

Mr. George Walden (Buckingham): I am pleased to see my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education with us this evening. He will add a scholarly tone to our discussions. I imagine that he will sit and listen in enforced, although I hope not unsympathetic, silence to what I have to say. I am also glad to see in the Chamber my hon. Friend the Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry)—the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment—my hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Lidington) and the hon. Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith).

My hon. Friend the Minister may be getting used to debates such as this. If he is not, he soon will be. I begin by cautioning him against any belief that this is merely a routine protest about roads, where the Government want to build a route that they think is patently necessary and to which people object in the way that people always do. After the village meetings that I have attended and the expressions of exasperation and anger from normally placid and perfectly rational folk, and after answering almost 1,000 letters on the subject—more than I have received on any other—I would not make that mistake and I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister will not do so either.

I need scarcely remind my hon. Friend the Minister that all the polls show that concern throughout the country about transport policy in all its forms is mounting. For me, the A418 is obviously a major constituency issue, but it is also a symbol of far wider concern about what is happening with our countryside and increasingly profound anxieties about the direction in which Government transport policies are driving us.

My hon. Friend the Minister knows the history of the present proposals, and that I first drew the Department's attention to my concerns about the A418 in an Adjournment debate on the proposals for Wing nearly two years ago. My hon. Friend may appreciate less well the evolution of the proposals as seen through the eyes of those most concerned—my constituents.

Imagine the millenarian expectations of villages that have suffered for years from the effects of traffic growth, as they wait and hope for the long-promised bypass, and the frustration and fury that they feel when they discover that they are to get not a bypass but a major east-west trunk route—initially of four lanes but with provision for six lanes, which will in some cases run within a few hundred yards of their villages.

As to the question of six lanes, I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister remembers that he wrote to me on 17 August to state:

> "The only additional feature we are considering because of the wider implications of the East-West route is the provision at the outset of bridges that would allow widening to dual 3-lane standard in the future."

The next thing that my villagers learned was that their little local bypass features on the trans-European road network that is to be considered and approved by the European Parliament while Department officials are still explaining that proposal to the outraged villagers concerned. Even those who are well disposed towards the EC, such as myself, find that strange.

I shall be grateful if my hon. Friend the Minister, to whom I have written on that matter, will say exactly what I am supposed to tell my constituents when they express fears that matters are being decided over their heads. When they see all that happening, what conclusions are they to draw about Government transport policy? That it evolves organically, driven by the insatiable demands of the motor car; that it is made up as we go along; and that there is no transport policy in any rational sense.

I ask my hon. Friend the Member to forget his brief for a moment and to resort to his imagination. How does he think it feels to have a major European trunk route sprung on one instead of a bypass at the very moment that the Government are floating off the entire railway system, to be run by persons as yet unknown? In those circumstances, are the Government surprised that there is nil enthusiasm in my constituency—or in the country, as far as I can see—for rail privatisation, when all my constituents can see at the end of it are higher fares, fewer lines and more roads?

My own experience of the A418 has intensified my misgivings about rail privatisation and has strengthened my conviction that a fully integrated transport policy is needed. I am not saying that a railway could replace this particular road, but, were there a semblance of a national policy, Members of Parliament might be more inclined to explain to their constituents that, however, regrettable it may be, sacrifices have to be made for the greater good. I had to do that over the extension of the M40—as I am sure a number of right hon. and hon. Members did—part of which passes through my constituency.

I acknowledge the economic case for a link between the M40 and east coast ports, although it may be healthy to re-examine that too, because I have heard the contrary case made. How am I to explain to my constituents, at a time when they have so little confidence in the Government's overall road policy, that the best way to reach those ports is to string together a series of bypasses next to their villages?

My constituents' reactions naturally vary from village to village, as Department representatives who met them will have noted. I pay tribute to the way in which those representatives conducted themselves in the course of some warmish exchanges. Feeling against the road is strongest in places such as Haddenham, Long Crendon, Chearsely, Dinton, Cuddington and Nether Winchendon—which, because they were not asking for bypasses in the first place, will suffer much for absolutely no return.

Other villages, such as Stone, Bierton and Wing, have more nuanced opinions, but that is only because they have effectively been placed in a trap. They are being told that they either settle for a bypass in the form of a major trunk route of potentially six lanes, with all that that could mean for the local environment and the attraction of yet more traffic to the area, or they get no bypass at all. "Blackmail" is a strong word, but I have heard people use it.

For those reasons and many others that I have discussed with my hon. Friend the Minister and written to him about, I must call on him to withdraw the proposals as soon as possible and go back to the drawing board. Opposition to them is justified, widespread and determined. As my hon. Friend knows, Oxfordshire county council has strong views on the matter.

Mr. Andrew Smith (Oxford, East): I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way and for initiating this debate. I agree that it is clear that what is going on is the use of a series of supposedly local bypass schemes to smuggle in a major strategic route without proper consultation on that strategic route. Should not the Minister give an assurance that the strategic road, its justification and route, will be the subject of full public consultation before the Aylesbury bypass scheme and the related Oxford bypass schemes, which are so damaging to my constituents, especially at Barton and Old Marston, are given any further consideration?

Mr. Walden: I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister will answer that intervention as adequately as he answers my speech.

If the proposals go ahead, the A418, along with an increasing number of national schemes, will become a cause celebre. The only outcome will be the enhancement of the Government's regrettable reputation for vandalism by road building.

The Minister might think that I have spoken strongly, but I cannot exaggerate the sense of bitterness that my constituents feel. People will look back in future years at the despoiled environment around their villages, the acres of concrete, the desolating no-man's land between parallel roads, and ask, "Who in heaven's name did this?"

10.42 pm

Mr. David Lidington (Aylesbury): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden) and to my hon. Friend the Minister for allowing me a few minutes to intervene. As my hon. Friend will recall from an Adjournment debate that I initiated this year, there has been strong demand within Aylesbury, from county and district councillors and the local business community for the building of a bypass around the town at the earliest opportunity. The scheme, as published by the Department in its initial proposals, does not meet the demands or the needs of my constituents.

Criticism has fallen into two categories. A significant number of my constituents, like those of my hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham, would say that no road needs to be built. Another group take the line to which I certainly subscribe—that there is a need for a bypass around Aylesbury which would remain even if the Government scrapped the east-west link tomorrow night.

I do not want to see Aylesbury fall into the position of towns in north Kent or some towns on the Sussex coast which have become pockets of high structural unemployment because of poor communications although they are located in a region which is generally prosperous with good employment prospects. That is the fear which drives local councillors and the local business community to say that a road of some sort along some route is needed not as an alternative to public transport but complementary to it. I certainly regard the Government's continuing commitment to the crossrail project as evidence of their good faith and the fact that they intend to pursue a balanced transport policy now and in years to come.

The criticisms that local people have made of the scheme concern both the route and proposed design. It has concerned me that, although my hon. Friend the Minister has now rightly released details of his Department's consultants' reports into the possibility of a northern bypass route around Aylesbury, it has become apparent that such a route has not yet been subjected to a thorough analysis in the way that the southern route has been treated.

[Mr. David Lidington]

The so-called SO3 strategy seems to offer Aylesbury the economic benefits of a bypass but without the costs associated with the proposed southern route. There may be disadvantages. The people in Bedgrove, Walton Court and Wendover Park in my constituency would benefit from a northern route. They would not have the intrusion and the noise. People in the north of Aylesbury might feel differently. We need to know more about the relative costs and benefits of alternative routes before a final decision is taken.

I ask my hon. Friend to look at the design of the proposed road. Nothing has aroused more anger and resentment in Aylesbury than the proposal by the Department of Transport to stick this road on a 30ft high embankment going around the entire southern and western perimeter of the town. The Department's criteria are inconsistent. In the south of Aylesbury, it has rejected the so-called black route because it passes too near to homes, yet in the west of the town it is advocating a route that is as near to people's homes as the rejected black route is along the Bedgrove side of Aylesbury.

I shall write to my hon. Friend shortly with a much more detailed account of the specific objections raised by my constituents to the proposals published by his Department. Tonight, I ask him to recognise that a public consultation exercise a decade ago, showing a majority in favour of a southern bypass for Aylesbury, was undertaken with the expectation of a route that would be a normal single carriageway—a two-way traffic road—running a fair distance from people's houses and along the level, rather than a major trunk road running along a 30ft high embankment and lighted for its entire length.

I ask my hon. Friend to live up to the pledge that he has given to me, and which his officials have given at public meetings: that they will listen carefully to the criticisms and the comments made during the public consultations. In the light of those comments, I hope that they are prepared to reconsider the route and the design of the road that they propose to build.

10.46 pm

The Minister for Roads and Traffic (Mr. Robert Key): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden) on his determination to focus attention on the concern that has been expressed about this road. I am glad to have this opportunity to put the record straight. I am pleased to see my right hon. Friend the Member for Oxford, West and Abingdon (Mr. Patten) and my hon. Friends the Members for Banbury (Mr. Baldry) and for Wantage (Mr. Jackson) here. I acknowledge the representations that I have received from my right hon. Friends the Members for Witney (Mr. Hurd) and for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) on this issue.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham so eloquently demonstrated, the concern centres on the role of the Aylesbury scheme as part of the east coast to M40 route and the potential impact that it could have in the longer term when included in the trans-European road network. My hon. Friend mentioned the whole question of a balanced and integrated transport policy. I entirely agree that it is important for us to recognise in real and practical terms that that is what we are achieving.

I hope that the fact that we spend 56 per cent. of our budget on roads and the other 44 per cent. on public transport subsidy will go some way to reassure my hon. Friend on that point. Ninety per cent. of all journeys and freight movements are undertaken by road with only 10 per cent. by rail. Yet the balance of spending does not recognise that: it recognises the need to subsidise public transport and invest heavily in railways.

There is nothing new about the Aylesbury bypass. The current scheme has its origins in local authority proposals which, in the 1980s, formed part of a plan for a new route between Thame and Stevenage. This, in itself, is a concept from the early 1970s. The scheme was absorbed into the trunk road programme four years ago when the 1989 White Paper "Roads for Prosperity" announced plans for a new strategic east-west route between the M40 and the east coast ports which would build on work already carried out by local authorities. Because of its background knowledge of the scheme as a local authority one, and to maintain momentum, Buckinghamshire county council was appointed as design agent to continue the development of the proposals to meet the demands of the new trunk road.

The route taken to consultation was to the south of Aylesbury—a preference which had been chosen in 1983 following a joint county and district council planning study and public consultation on routes to the north, centre and south of the town. It would not only bring direct relief to Aylesbury from traffic using the A418 and A41 corridors, but also relieve villages on the A418, such as Rowsham and Stone.

Initial surprise was expressed that the scheme appeared to have grown beyond a local bypass into a strategic east-west route. This strategic role was made clear in "Roads for Prosperity" in 1989 and again during consultation in both the brochure and the public exhibition material about the Aylesbury bypass. We are not proposing a motorway—nor a six-lane highway. The dual two-lane road now proposed is, in our view, the standard required even if we were only providing a local bypass. There are certainly no plans for the scheme to be expanded further as part of some fictional outer orbital route of London, nor any other national or international concept.

My hon. Friend referred to bridges. We design bridges to last about 120 years. Recently we have had to knock down many 30-year-old bridges because they are too narrow. It is simply prudent to design bridges that do not pre-empt decisions that may be taken in 50 or 100 years' time. Understandably, that has caused concern.

There has been concern, too, about the intrusion of the scheme on people's homes, particularly on the southern and western outskirts of Aylesbury. In addition, villages such as Haddenham are anxious about the impact of the new road on their peaceful surroundings. We have specifically asked in our consultation for views on points, such as the profile of the route, environmental measures and the position of the junctions.

I can tell my hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury that we would be prepared to consider putting the road in a cutting. We will take all these views fully into account before deciding which scheme to develop further. If and when we decide on a preferred route, we will publish draft orders, probably in 1995. The merits of alternative routes would be considered at a public inquiry.

This leaves the fundamental question of why northern routes have not been put forward for consultation. The immediate answer is that northern routes were considered

beforehand, but rejected. Some were inferior in traffic and economic terms while others suffered environmental disadvantages. A southern route is more acceptable in planning and environmental terms, while offering greater relief from local traffic for Aylesbury. At Buckinghamshire county council's request, we have produced a report of previously unpublished information about two rejected northern route options.

I am grateful to both my hon. Friends for coming to discuss these issues with me at the Department of Transport. Of course, public response to the consultation has been intense. The next step will be to analyse all the results. The decision will not be easy and there will be many points to weigh before we reach a conclusion about the best route. We hope to announce our conclusions in early 1994.

An important offshoot to the Aylesbury consultation has been the concern about the future development of the western section of the east-west route, west of the town. There is strong feeling that the choice of a southern route for Aylesbury has a bearing on this. This is not so. The Oxford-to-Aylesbury study, from which the corridor choice was made, had two principal objectives. The first was to advise us on the right corridor for the east-west trunk route west of Aylesbury to the M40; and the second to identify whether future improvements in that corridor were needed.

In the case of Oxford to Aylesbury, because of the significant interest and the perceived relationship with the Aylesbury bypass proposals, we departed from normal policy and announced the result at an earlier stage than usual. The announcement made it clear that we had not decided, and have still not decided, to add any improvement schemes to the roads programme for the M40 to Aylesbury section of the east-west route. At the request of my hon. Friends, I have made available the full text of the Oxford-to-Aylesbury study report.

Perhaps most disturbing has been the way in which some protagonists, in particular Oxfordshire county council, have speculated about the trans-European road network, TERN, concept in relation to the east-west route, and in particular the Aylesbury bypass. Facts about TERN have been distorted, and some eminent people have been misled as a result. There is no secret about TERN.

Part of the Maastricht treaty looked forward to the establishment of Community networks of infrastructure in transport, energy and telecommunications. Following the agreement in Maastricht in 1991, the Commission set up a working group to investigate proposals for a trans-European road network. That group produced an initial report and the Commission used this to prepare its published policy document "Towards a Master Plan for the Road Network".

At the Edinburgh Council last year, agreement was reached in principle for funding mechanisms to be set up for trans-European Networks, and at the Luxembourg Council in June a political decision was taken to proceed with TERN. The European Parliament is at present considering the latter decision, and will debate it on 25 and 26 October. Select Committees of both Houses of Parliament considered these proposals in October 1992. A further memorandum was laid before this House in May the year.

Much of the TERN network already exists or is in preparation by member states. The agreed network in the United Kingdom includes a link between Oxford and Felixstowe, of which the east-west route forms a part. That route is not planned as a motorway as part of TERN; there is no requirement for links in TERN to be motorways. Nor are there any plans for the east-west route to be a part of an outer orbital route of London, as I have said.

It is worth noting that, in every other case, local councils have been clamouring to be included in the network. I have received at least one delegation in my office to that effect. As far as I know, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire are the only counties in the United Kingdom that are opposed to this concept, whose aim is to improve trade in the European Community.

We have been open in our preparation, frequently consulting the local authorities. For example, Department of Transport officials discussed TERN and the east-west route with Oxfordshire county council some six weeks before the council made its extraordinary statements. On the Oxford-to-Aylesbury study, my Department worked closely with Oxford in the formulation of the study; in fact, the county council brought important and practical influence to bear. Since July 1989, there have been six formal meetings between my officials and officials of Oxford county council about extending the east-west route between Oxford and Aylesbury. In July 1991, a presentation was given to Oxford county council officers and members.

My predecessor received a delegation from the council, together with the hon. Member for Oxford, East (Mr. Smith), in December 1991. The council has also been kept up to date in correspondence from my Department in July and August this year.

I believe that the House will agree that to accuse us of secrecy now is just a little strange. We are not complacent about the effect of roads on the environment and do not claim that new and improved roads have no effect on people's enjoyment of their surroundings. That is why we follow such a careful step-by-step process of study, consultation and debate. I am sure that fruitful debate of the facts will, in this instance, lead to an acceptable solution.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising the subject and hope that he and his constituents will be assured that their opinions count.

I cannot refrain from commenting on the fact that, only today, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport announced that we had decided to abandon a motorway scheme in the north of England, because—following consultation—we had concluded that it was no longer necessary or desirable. We do indeed listen very carefully and do indeed update and take seriously our economic assessments of the needs for roads. That was a motorway; this is not, and we have no plans for it to be one.

I am very glad to have had the opportunity to dispel some of the myths and misconceptions which, if not checked, can cause unnecessary worry to our constituents.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at two minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 20 October 1993

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

ENVIRONMENT

Local Government Commission

1. **Mr. David Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on progress of the work of the Local Government Commission.

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. John Selwyn Gummer): We announced on 30 September that the commission's programme was to be speeded up so that all the remaining shire reviews could be completed by the end of 1994. We also issued some proposed amendments to the commission's guidance on policy and procedures. We are consulting the commission and the local authority associations on the implications of the new timetable and guidance.

Mr. Atkinson: I welcome my right hon. Friend's decision to speed up the work of the commission. Can he say whether he expects the elections to the new unitary authorities to take place in 1995? Does he agree that one of the sad lessons of the last local government reorganisation was that the smaller unitary authorities, such as the former county borough councils, including Bournemouth, proved to be much more beautiful and efficient?

Mr. Gummer: As the legislation has to complete its passage through the House, I would not like to be too definite about the number that would be possible. I agree with my hon. Friend that people in many parts of the country are looking for local government that is closer to the people but large enough to have the necessary powers.

Mr. Clelland: Is the Secretary of State aware that the democratic deficit of the country has now reached such an extent that we are the least represented democracy in the modern world, and that the work of the commission, by reducing the numbers of councils and councillors, will further aggravate that situation? Does he agree that the Government should arrange for the election of democratically elected regional government, instead of further extending the unelected state by the appointment of seven regional commissars who are responsible only to the doctrines and dictates of Whitehall?

Mr. Gummer: I find it difficult to understand that a spokesman from a party whose democratic deficit has never been properly addressed can make such a comment at all. The Labour party's policy and representatives are largely dictated by people who have never liked elections of any kind. Many of them are elected for life in a way that, until the rules were changed, was reminiscent of Haiti. I am certainly not learning anything from the hon. Gentleman about that. Our purpose is to make us more democratic and have a democratic system much closer to the people.

Mr. Barry Field: My right hon. Friend will be aware of the concern in the Isle of Wight at the announcement made during the recess. This morning, the Select Committee on the Environment took evidence from Sir John Banham and we were surprised to learn that the next tranche has been frozen, so far as the commission is concerned. That includes Hampshire and has implications for the administration of the Isle of Wight.

When my right hon. Friend was Minister for local government, he was a great gladiator for every community making its own decisions. Can he reassure my constituents this afternoon, and other Conservative Members who believe in unitary government—small being beautiful—that the whole thing is not becoming murkier and opaque by the minute?

Mr. Gummer: I am sure that the most important thing is for local government to be as close as possible to those who elect it, so that the people know why the decisions are made and know to whom those decisions are to be accounted for. My hon. Friend has particular difficulties, as I am aware, with the Isle of Wight, and we are trying to address some of them. I hope that he will be able to put those points more clearly in the Adjournment debate which I understand that he will have. I assure him that we want this to be as transparent as possible.

Mrs. Helen Jackson: In view of the astonishment expressed this morning by the chairman of the Local Government Commission at being directed yesterday to cease all work on the second tranche of reorganisation of local authorities, does the Secretary of State not now agree that the whole process and programme of reorganisation on which they have embarked is in an utter shambles? It does not have the backing of public support.

Mr. Gummer: I find that an odd question, if I may say so. The fact is that the commission is concerned to listen closely to what the public wants. The hon. Lady must see that clearly, not only from the commission's actions but from its guidance. The reason why the direction was issued was simply that it is much more clear if future decisions are made under the new guidance, which cannot be officially promoted until the proper time after the consultation has taken place. If the hon. Lady does not understand that, I wish that she would go back and read the documents.

Mr. Thomason: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that he sees the best possible outcome normally to be the creation of unitary authorities, arising from the Local Government Commission review? Will he also encourage the Local Government Commission to listen to that view? Some of us who listened, with concern, to the evidence given this morning to the Select Committee gained the impression that there might be some lack of enthusiasm among certain senior members of the commission for the introduction of unitary local government.

Mr. Gummer: There is no doubt from the guidance that we would expect the norm of local government to be unitary authorities, but we are first concerned that it should

be local government that the population see as the best form for their area. Therefore, we are perfectly well aware that there may be a variety of ways to conduct local government. Many of us regret the loss of variety. We hope that unitary local government will seek to delegate its powers, wherever suitable, to parish and town councils, for example. At the same time, we point to the importance of unitary local government because it ensures that people know whom to hold to account when decisions are made. In two-tier local government, there is often a grave difficulty with that.

Mr. Straw: Will the Secretary of State make a clear statement about how the costs of the reorganisation are to be borne? Does he understand that the whole exercise is necessary only because the Conservatives made such a botch of reorganisation in 1972? In those circumstances, it would be outrageous if the local people of the areas concerned were forced to pay all the costs of reorganisation by an alleged £100 surcharge on every council tax bill. If there is to be a surcharge, should it not be paid by the Ministers and Conservative Members of Parliament, such as the Secretary of State, who drove the 1972 reorganisation through the House of Commons despite the Labour party's consistent warnings that it would be an expensive and wasteful failure?

Mr. Gummer: I rather suspect that the Labour party at the time wanted an entirely different system, one that would have been extremely bad, as is usually the case. The reorganisation is intended to end with a simpler system of local government, which will cost less. I hope that the savings will be given to the council tax payers for whom they are made. I see no need to expect this to cost very much, simply because there will be considerable savings and we are not necessarily extending or increasing bureaucracy. The hon. Gentleman's worries are entirely unfounded.

Council for the Protection of Rural England

2. **Mr. Rathbone:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when last he met representatives of the CPRE to discuss new housing development in the south-east; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister for Housing, Inner Cities and Construction (Sir George Young): My right hon. Friend met a delegation from the CPRE led by Lord Marlesford on 8 July. My hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government and Planning met another one on 1 September. The CPRE's views on the proposed level of housing for the south-east are well known to my Department and will be taken into account, together with those of other bodies, in the final version of the regional planning guidance for the south-east to be published later this year.

Mr. Rathbone: I welcome my right hon. Friend's contact with the CPRE. Does that lead him to conclude that the aim to have 35,000 more houses in East Sussex is over the top and that there are opportunities for building on derlict urban land of which advantage has not yet been fully taken? Any development of housing, whether in urban or rural areas, must be environmentally sensitive.

Sir George Young: I agree with my hon. Friend. No final decision has been taken on the figure of 35,000, and we are consulting on that. I agree that all use should be made of derelict and underused land, the so-called brown land, before we make further encroachments into green fields. On my hon. Friend's last point, what we want to do is what he wants to do—provide decent homes for those living in his constituency without making unacceptable environmental sacrifices.

County Hall, London

3. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he now expects the redevelopment of county hall, SE1 to be completed.

The Minister for Local Government and Planning (Mr. David Curry): The Shirayama Corporation plans to finish its redevelopment of the riverside building by March 1996.

Mr. Banks: Does the Minister accept that the decision by "Baroness Bonkers" to abolish the Greater London council is deeply resented by Londoners, and does he accept that London is now in a chaotic state? Why will the Secretary of State not allow the people of London to discuss the possibility of having a strategic authority? He could get his own back on "Baroness Bonkers", who has said some rather nasty things about him.

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman's vocabulary is quite unacceptable.

Mr. Banks: Does the Minister accept that the decision to allow a bunch of Japanese property sharks to take over county hall and turn it into an hotel is an insult to London? If the development cannot go ahead, will the Minister allow the roof to come off county hall and become derelict, just like Battersea power station?

Mr. Curry: I welcome the hon. Gentleman to the Dispatch Box, but it is easy to see why the GLC acquired the representation it did while he was prominently involved.

Not a dog has barked for the GLC. I have never known a corpse to die and decompose so rapidly and there to be so little regret at its departure. As for the Japanese corporation, the London residuary body has instructions to get the best price for county hall. A development is needed as that is one of the prime sites in London. The development that has been approved is exciting, and we expect completion to take place on 29 October. The sooner life returns to that side of the river the better, and a life that is forward looking rather than backward looking to the GLC.

Mr. Congdon: Does my hon. Friend recall the waste and extravagance of the late and unlamented GLC and does not he agree that many London Members welcome the opportunity to sell county hall to ensure that the proceeds flow back to the London boroughs?

Mr. Curry: The proceeds will flow back to the London boroughs during the period of the window for capital receipts, and they will be particularly beneficial to the boroughs. Nothing that the Khazbulatov of county hall says will make a difference.

Ms Hoey: Is the Minister aware that originally there was great opposition to the Shirayama development? Does he recognise that the Government could learn a lesson from the way in which Shirayama is working closely with local

people and with the local authority in trying to make the development as near as possible to what local people want and to bring jobs to the community?

Mr. Curry: One of the things that have changed during recent years since the demise of the GLC is that councils of all complexions have worked more sensibly with the private sector. That must be welcomed, and it brings a lot of sense and imagination to local government. I am delighted that that should be the case.

Mr. John Marshall: Does my hon. Friend accept that the redevelopment of county hall will provide worthwhile jobs for Londoners? Does he also accept that the abolition of the GLC has saved London ratepayers many tens of millions of pounds and that the GLC is regretted only by those who purloined its GLC silver?

Mr. Curry: I agree.

Thermal Oxide Reprocessing Plant

4. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the progress of the consultation relating to his responsibilities for licensing THORP.

The Minister for the Environment and Countryside (Mr. Tim Yeo): Consultation ended on 4 October. When all the consultation responses have been carefully considered, my right hon. Friends the Secretary of State for the Environment and the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food will decide whether to afford a hearing or inquiry, and, if they decide not to do so, will take final decisions on the authorisations.

Mr. Williams: Today's issue of *The Guardian* states that German utilities may cancel their contracts with the thermal oxide reprocessing plant because the cost of reprocessing is more than twice the cost of dry storage. The original justification for THORP was that it would use the recovered uranium and plutonium, but there is not a market for those materials as there is a glut on the world market. Does the Minister agree that the original arguments for THORP have changed fundamentally since the 1970s and that they should now be subjected to a detailed independent public inquiry?

Mr. Yeo: I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman's remarks reflect a hostility to the nuclear industry that is widely shared by Opposition Members and that owes more to the continuing malign and powerful influence exercised over Labour party policy by Mr. Arthur Scargill and Labour's other paymasters in the National Union of Mineworkers than to any concern with the environment or safety.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Will my hon. Friend not accept that if a decision is not taken pretty soon, all the orders will have gone up the spout, and work in Cumbria will be seriously imperilled?

Mr. Yeo: I assure my hon. Friend that, as soon as we have carefully considered all the responses, we will make a decision. We are aware of the desirability of making that decision as soon as we reasonably and responsibly can.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Is not the truth about the consultation as stated in the evidence given by a departmental official at a conference in Germany—that the consultation process that has just ended was the only way that the Department could think of trying to protect itself against the argument that, in law, it had to hold a public inquiry? In the light of all the changing circumstances, such as economic risks from Germany, increasing international opposition and increasing health concern, should not we accept—whatever our views on the issue—that the only way in which we will reach a decision that will stand up as valid and impartial is by allowing for some sort of scrutiny independent of the Government before the final decision is made?

Mr. Yeo: The Government have proceeded with extreme care at each step of the way. The purpose of that is to allow my right hon. Friends the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Secretary of State for the Environment to make up their minds on the basis of the facts available.

Council Tax

5. **Mr. Clappison:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what help is available to people living alone under the council tax.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Tony Baldry): People living alone are entitled to a 25 per cent. discount on their council tax bill. Those on low incomes may also qualify for benefit to offset all or part of their council tax liability. They may also receive transitional relief, which eases the change from the community charge to the council tax.

Mr. Clappison: Does my hon. Friend agree that—unlike that proposed under recent Labour party policy—the help that he has just described is available for all single people? Does he further agree that the single people who are in the best position of all are those who live in Conservative-controlled areas? Is my hon. Friend aware of the very substantial difference between the council taxes levied in Conservative and in Labour areas?

Mr. Baldry: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Single people living in Conservative-held areas will know that, in addition to the discount, band for band, they are paying £100 less than they would if they were living in a Labour-controlled area. My hon. Friend is also right in believing—and it is worth remembering—that if the Labour party had had its way, there would have been no discounts at all for single people under the council tax system.

Mr. Pike: Does not the Minister recall the Government's concern about the plight of single pensioners and widows living alone under the rating system? Does not he recognise that many hundreds of thousands of widows and pensioners living alone are paying far more in council tax than they were in rates or poll tax and that that is especially true of those living in low-value properties? Should not we introduce a band lower than band A, as that would bring considerable benefit to that category of people?

Mr. Baldry: It comes ill from the mouth of a representative of the Labour party, which was opposed to any discount whatever for single people, to pretend that that party is the friend of those living on their own.

Rents to Mortgages

6. **Mr. Deva:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many people he expects to benefit from the proposed rents-to-mortgages scheme.

Mr. Gummer: There are more than 1·4 million council tenants who pay full rent and who will be eligible. We hope that as many as possible will take up this new opportunity.

Mr. Deva: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the scheme, which extends choice and opportunity for council tenants who would not otherwise have the opportunity to buy their own homes, is an extension of our great policy of giving people their own homes and the right to buy?

Mr. Gummer: It is important that people who can build something for the future should be given the opportunity to do so. One of the strengths of Conservative party policy is that it spreads to the many the privileges that were once enjoyed only by a few.

Mr. Soley: Given the crisis in, and the lack of, affordable rented accommodation, how does the Secretary of State propose to replace the rented properties that are sold? Could he not put as much effort into a mortgages-to-rents scheme to prevent the nightmare of home owners being put into bed-and-breakfast accommodation because they do not have any rented accommodation to which to go?

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Gentleman misses the point. The homes are occupied; they are not empty. Under our proposed system, someone who would otherwise be paying rent for the rest of his or her life can begin to build up a capital asset, and so release capital for councils in other ways. The hon. Gentleman should be an enthusiast for the scheme. Yet again, however, any opportunity to spread ownership is opposed by Labour Members, who want to keep people under the control of local authorities.

Sir Anthony Durant: Will my right hon. Friend tell the House the Opposition's views on this new scheme? We do not seem to have heard anything from the Opposition.

Madam Speaker: Order. As the hon. Gentleman knows, the Minister answers for his own Government.

Mr. Battle: It is not the Secretary of State's duty to issue a "buyer beware" notice, instead of wasting more public money advertising this latest scheme? More than 70,000 people who have bought council flats under the right to buy now face massive repair and lease bills and service charges that they cannot pay. As mortgage companies are now refusing to lend money on former council flats and houses, what will the Secretary of State do about those people who have huge debts, who are unable to sell and who are trapped in their own homes? Will he endorse the comments of the Council of Mortgage Lenders, which recently told Wandsworth council simply to buy them back?

Mr. Gummer: What a miserable party the Labour party is. Here we have the largest extension of freedom that we have known in Britain for many, many years; here we have hundreds of thousands of families owning their own homes; here we have the removal of Labour party control over large sections of people's lives; and all that the hon. Gentleman can do is to moan on in that particular way. It is about time that the people of Britain see that if they want an optimistic future, they will have to support the Government.

Right to Buy

7. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to seek to extend the right to buy their homes to tenants of all housing associations; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: The Government have no plans to extend the statutory right to buy, which is enjoyed by secure tenants of non-charitable housing associations, to tenants of charitable associations and to assured tenants. All associations are able to sell homes to their tenants on a voluntary basis, and we have encouraged them to apply the proceeds of such sales towards the provision of new social housing. The Government also provide grants to enable housing association tenants to buy into forms of shared ownership with a housing association or into outright ownership in the private market.

Mr. Greenway: Is my right hon. Friend aware that in Northolt, tenants of the Kittiwake road housing associations' development will have no right to buy? Local people have been required, through an unwilling Ealing council, to contribute £300,000 towards the land given to the housing associations for the development scheme. At the Perivale hospital site, 133 homes are being built by the housing associations which will not involve any right to buy or shared ownership. Does that not mean that housing association tenants, in cases where there is no right to buy, are second-class citizens compared to council tenants? Is it not time that this situation was ended?

Sir George Young: As my hon. Friend may know, the Government proposed legislation in the 1980s to extend the right to buy to tenants of charitable housing associations. Those proposals were twice rejected in another place. To bring home ownership within the reach of housing association tenants, we have developed alternative schemes, including the tenants' incentive scheme and the do-it-yourself shared ownership scheme, so that housing association tenants do have the opportunity of becoming home owners.

Mr. George Howarth: I welcome the Minister's lack of agreement with his hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway). The attention that the Government continue to lavish on owner occupation at the expense of rented housing is unworthy of the Minister. Would it not be better if he spent some time looking at positive alternatives to the irrelevant rent-to-mortgage scheme? It is about time that the Minister—who came to his job with something of a reputation—stopped scapegoating single-parent families and did something constructive about housing instead of continuing the present destructive policies.

Sir George Young: On the first point, we are devoting substantial resources to providing more affordable homes for rent, as the hon. Gentleman knows. The figure is about 60,000 for the current year, three times more than it was two or three years ago. We are investing substantial sums to provide homes for rent. As to the second point, before the hon. Gentleman mines that quarry much further, he should read *The Independent* of Wednesday 7 July, which said:

"Labour slants homes policy against the single parent".

Mr. Duncan Smith: Does my right hon. Friend accept —in line with what was said by my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway)—that we have a problem with the housing associations? In areas such as mine—Waltham Forest, whose socialist-controlled council has been very dilatory in selling council homes to council tenants—housing associations are now buying up more land, locking more people into social housing and not giving them the opportunity to take up the right to buy, of which all Conservative Members are justifiably proud. May I urge my right hon. Friend to look again at the possibility of breaking down the position in regard to housing associations, so that we may change it radically?

Sir George Young: I am very interested in what my hon. Friend has said. A growing proportion of the Housing Corporation's budget is being spent on schemes that promote home ownership rather than renting. Shared-ownership incentive schemes, for example, now account for a larger percentage of the budget.

I am anxious for the housing association movement to be directed back towards its roots—towards urban regeneration, modernisation and improvement for sale, rather than towards extensive new building schemes for green-field sites. I said in Blackpool that I intended to bring about that redirection, which would be welcomed by many in the housing association movement.

Housing Associations

8. **Mr. Raynsford:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about the level of housing association grant in 1994-95.

Sir George Young: I announced on 4 August that the published grant rates for the rented programme in 1994-95 would average 62 per cent. and that they would be a ceiling against which housing associations would be invited to bid.

Mr. Raynsford: As the Minister well knows, all informed opinion in the housing world—including the Housing Corporation itself and the Select Committee on the Environment—advised him not to make further cuts in housing association grant. That advice was given in the light of overwhelming evidence of the devastating impact of rent increases on tenants, which has forced them into benefit dependency and the poverty trap. When will the Minister recognise his responsibility to tenants, rather than acting—as he increasingly appears to be doing—as George the gopher, delivering cuts for the Treasury?

Sir George Young: That was an unusually unintelligent question from the hon. Gentleman. He knows perfectly well that the reductions in grant rate have nothing whatever to do with the totality of resources available. Those reductions enable more homes to be built for a given public pound. By progressively increasing the amount of private funds going into housing associations, we have enabled 30,000 more homes to be built than could have been built otherwise. If the hon. Gentleman wants to put the grant rate back to where it was, he must accept that fewer homes would then be available to meet the needs of those who require good-quality accommodation.

Mr. Tracey: Is not my right hon. Friend bothered by the impression that housing associations are too regularly using their grant to outbid private sector developers? Will he amplify what he said in Blackpool about controlling the position and taking housing associations back to their roots in the way that he has just described, so that they can renovate out-of-date property and bring housing up to a proper standard, rather than building new housing?

Sir George Young: In the past few minutes, I have certainly noticed some antipathy towards housing associations—particularly those in London—among my hon. Friends. I readily accept my hon. Friend's invitation to describe in more detail the proposals that I outlined a few weeks ago, to ensure that the resources of the housing association movement are devoted to what housing associations originally set out to do: improving conditions, particularly in inner-city areas, doing more conversions and improving houses for sale, rather than building new houses. That could equally well be done by house builders building for sale.

Mr. Straw: Will the Minister come clean for once and confess whether he is any more comfortable with the disingenuous poppycock with which he answered my hon. Friend the Member for Greenwich (Mr. Raynsford) a moment ago than he was with the undignified role that he was put up to play at the Conservative party conference? There, as my hon. Friend the Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth) said, he had to resort to scapegoating the children of single parents to pass on the blame for the housing crisis over which he presides. Will he admit that a reduction in the grant rate to housing associations necessarily requires an increase in private funding for housing associations, which in turn will force up rents—which have already rocketed—and that that, in turn, will force up housing benefit contributions from the Treasury? Will he admit that the overall consequence of those policies is to deny choice to any potential tenant who is in work and earning above housing benefit levels and to create ghettos out of what were once decent housing association estates?

Sir George Young: We all understand that there are shadow Cabinet elections today, which means that Opposition Members have to put more spice into their questions. The hon. Gentleman knows that there is a trade-off between rent levels and the volume of output. I have decided that the priority is to increase the output of affordable homes for rent. That is why the grant rate has decreased and imputed rents have increased. Housing benefit is there to take the strain for those who cannot pay housing association rents. One must remember, however, that the average new rent on a housing association property is £42 a week. In my view that is affordable, given that housing benefit is there to take the strain for those on low incomes.

Bathing Waters

9. **Mr. Robathan:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many bathing waters were designated by the Government for the purposes of the 1975 EC bathing waters directive by May 1979; and how many are designated now.

Mr. Yeo: No bathing waters were identified by May 1979. Since that date, 458 bathing waters have been identified.

Mr. Robathan: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that answer. I am glad to hear that our bathing water is as clean as anywhere else. Does he accept that there is concern in this country that we seem to fare badly in European Community league tables with regard to the cleanliness of our bathing water? Will he reassure the House that in future dealings with our European continental partners he will insist that European officials also enforce the standards rigorously and ensure that their testing is done without bias?

Mr. Yeo: I am glad to be able to reassure my hon. Friend that, of the 3,165 European Community bathing waters that do not reach the mandatory standards laid down in the directive, only 3 per cent. are in the United Kingdom. We shall press for revision of that directive. We want it, first, to take more account of the subsidiarity principle; secondly, to be subject to a proper cost-benefit analysis; and, thirdly, to confine its scope to protecting the health of bathers. We shall require an even-handed approach to enforcement of that directive and all others. That is central to the credibility of the European Community and we will make the most strenuous efforts to achieve it.

Mr. Chris Smith: Will the Minister confirm, however, that in July the Government were found guilty in the European Court for the condition of Blackpool's bathing water? Will he confirm that in August his own reports showed that two thirds of all our beaches failed to meet the European guideline standards for safety and that that is the second worst performance of any country in Europe? Will he admit also that he is engaged in discussions with the French Government about the repeal, withdrawal and amendment of the bathing water directive? Why is the Government's response to failure to try to bend standards, not to improve performance? Is not it time that the Government put people's health and safety before the profits of the privatised water companies?

Mr. Yeo: That was quite a mouthful from the hon. Gentleman. The case in relation to Blackpool was purely a technicality because everyone who goes to Blackpool—I have just had the pleasure of spending a week there—will be aware that the programme of improvement to the bathing waters at Blackpool is well in hand. It is part of the £2 billion programme of the water industry in this country to ensure that we achieve full compliance with the standards of the bathing water directive by the end of 1995. I will happily assure the hon. Gentleman, however, that the British Government have had productive and positive talks with the French Government and with other member states about the scope for extending the important principle of subsidiarity to the bathing water directive, the drinking water directive and many others. The whole country will wish to know that it is the Labour party that wants to overthrow the principles of subsidiarity and is not interested in pressing ahead because it wants all those decisions to be transferred to Brussels lock, stock and barrel.

Mr. Mans: Does my hon. Friend agree that beaches such as those at Blackpool have never been cleaner? In the wider context, does he also agree that one of the problems is that the directive is deeply flawed and that many other countries refuse to designate beaches as bathing beaches? When he is next in Brussels will he ensure that those countries that do not designate bathing beaches do not get subsidies from Brussels to improve their tourist industry?

Mr. Yeo: My hon. Friend is right. First, the quality of the beach at Blackpool has never been higher, is improving all the time and will be even better by the time that we next visit Blackpool for another harmonious and triumphant week in October 1995. Secondly, my hon. Friend is also right that there has been much confusion in the interpretation of the directive and over what constitutes a bathing water. That is certainly one of the areas that we shall be dealing with through our efforts to have the directive revised and a greater element of common sense introduced into it.

Area Cost Adjustment

10. **Mr. Beith:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from northern local authorities about the area cost adjustment.

Mr. Curry: We have received many representations from all parts of the country about the area cost adjustment in the course of our review of standard spending assessments.

Mr. Beith: Has the Minister taken particular note of the feelings of northern authorities, such as Northumberland, which have to meet the same pay settlements for firemen and teachers as authorities in the south but are not compensated in the same way? The system appears to have cost Northumberland £2·5 million in the past year. Since some of those authorities have widely scattered populations and, therefore, very high costs in other respects, will he consider carefully some way to ameliorate the situation quickly in next year's settlement?

Mr. Curry: The fact is that those who get the area cost adjustment think that it is indispensable and that those who do not think that it is disgraceful. We are subjecting the adjustment to careful scrutiny to decide whether it stands up. If it does it will be retained; if not, it will be modified or we will get rid of it. On the right hon. Gentleman's question about sparsity and scattered rural communities, when we announce the review—we are nearing the final stages—I am sure that he will realise that we have sought to identify all those factors that genuinely compel local authority spending. I am sure that he will find that the adjustment is comprehensive, rational, fair and a great improvement on what we have now.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: Will my hon. Friend contrast the question of the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) with the stance of Liberal county councillors in Hertfordshire, who are saying exactly the opposite, as Liberals tend to do? Is not it a fact that no proper case has been put for the abolition of the area cost adjustment? The left-wing majority on the Association of County Councils formed by Liberals and the Labour party is out to cane the district and county councils of Hertfordshire and Surrey.

Mr. Curry: All the elements that go into the standard spending assessments are being subjected to careful examination and scrutiny. I am determined that that should be done fully and that the outcome should be balanced and fair. Where an element has stood up to that scrutiny and it

is clear that it is justified, it will be retained. Where it is clear that the weighting is wrong, we shall seek to adjust it and when it should go it will go. We shall end up with a more rational and transparent system, which will more accurately reflect the real costs pushing up local government expenditure.

Mr. Henderson: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that the real issue is not merely the point made by northern region councils, although that is important, but the absurdity of the present system? Under the all-ages social index, which, as the Minister knows, is an important component of the standard spending assessment, Oxford is calculated as more deprived than Liverpool and Cheltenham as more deprived than Newcastle. Will the Minister admit that if a fair and accurate system is to be found it must take into account the real factors of deprivation, such as unemployment and income levels? Will he tell the House today that, before the announcement on local government finance in December, he will make an announcement on any changes that he may propose to the SSAs?

Mr. Curry: The answer to the second part of the question is no, because we shall make the announcement about that when we announce the rate support grant settlement. On the hon. Member's third question about the all-ages social index, because the discussions that have taken place with the associations have not been behind closed doors, he will know that we are examining whether unemployment and health indicators should be brought into the index. We shall announce those conclusions and if those indicators are included it will be because our analysis shows that they should be and that they show areas of real need.

Local Authority Associations

11. **Mr. Hall:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many meetings he has had with representatives of the local authority associations since April 1992.

Mr. Baldry: Between April 1992 and May 1993, my right hon. and learned Friend the then Secretary of State met representatives of the major local authority associations on nine occasions. My right hon. Friend has since met representatives of those associations on four occasions, most recently at the Consultative Council on Local Government Finance on 12 October.

Mr. Hall: I thank the Minister for that reply. Is he aware that section 143 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 has not yet been given a commencement date? That section requires local authorities to compile a register of contaminated land. So far, only six local authorities, including my local authority in Warrington, have compiled such a register. Those registers enable local authorities to identify tracts of contamination, neutralise them and allow development to take place, thus removing areas of blight in our towns. Has the Minister informed the local authority associations when section 143 will be implemented? If he has not been able to give them a date, can he say when implementation will commence?

Mr. Baldry: The policy review of contaminated land is going extremely well. Every developer has to be responsible for discovering the history of particular pieces of land. Our work on the register of contaminated land has made sure that every solicitor and every developer is conscious of his need and responsibility to discover the history of any land that he wishes to develop.

Mr. Vaz: Does the Minister recall that on 14 September the local authority associations discussed with the Secretary of State an agreed list of members for the Committee of the Regions and that on 29 September that list was submitted in writing? As the Minister knows, the list was carefully prepared and agreed by all the parties, including his own. Why has the Secretary of State refused to accept that list and why has he ignored the views of the associations? Will the Minister assure us that the Secretary of State will stop delaying this matter and accept the views of the associations, or is this just another example of the Government's blatant disregard for democracy and consultation?

Mr. Baldry: It is a function of the local authority associations to nominate and it is the responsibility of the Secretary of State to choose. I have no doubt that the Secretary of State will choose extremely well.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: When my hon. Friend met the local authority associations, did he discuss market testing and compulsory competitive tendering, because there is still a huge cultural barrier to overcome with local authorities in this respect? This is the second-largest area of public expenditure, and a substantial sum could be saved if those concepts were advanced.

Mr. Baldry: My hon. Friend makes an extremely good point. Independent research by Birmingham university shows that substantial savings of between 7 and 20 per cent. have been made through competitive tendering. Every local authority will need to be able to demonstrate to local council tax payers that they have made the maximum possible savings through competitive tendering. I hope that, increasingly, we will not have to force local authorities to do that through compulsory competitive tendering regulations, but that they will see the value and virtue of exposing services to competitive tendering to get the best cost and results for their council tax payers.

Local Government Reorganisation

12. **Mr. Olner:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last met representatives of the local authority associations to discuss local government reorganisation.

Mr. Curry: On 14 September.

Mr. Olner: The Minister said earlier that he wanted local government reorganisation to become closer to the people. I would not disagree and suggest that we should look at unitary authorities based on districts. As well as closeness, those authorities need a degree of freedom.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Reading.

Mr. Olner: I can read. They need that freedom to be able to conduct their affairs to the best of their ability on behalf of the people whom they represent. Bearing that in mind, and because of all the uncertainty that the Minister has created by advancing this reorganisation, will he agree

to suspend compulsory competitive tendering for blue and white-collar workers within those organisations until reorganisation has been completed?

Mr. Curry: The hon. Gentleman is behind the times. We have made it clear that we will not introduce white-collar competitive tendering during the course of reorganisation so as not to give local authorities more than they could handle at any time.

Mr. Milligan: Will my hon. Friend convey to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State my enthusiastic support for his remarks a few moments ago about the need for variety in local government? Is he aware that in Hampshire there is support for unitary government in Southampton and Portsmouth, but elsewhere in the county there is strong support for the existing two-tier system? Will my hon. Friend confirm that if the Local Government Commission finds that there is strong popular support for maintaining the county council and also finds that it is the most cost-efficient way of running the rest of the county, it will be able to recommend the continuation of the present two-tier system?

Mr. Curry: The Local Government Commission acts independently in the framework of the guidelines that we have laid down. The fact that those guidelines have been modified reflects the request of Sir John Banham that the Government should clarify their intentions in that area. Having clarified our intentions, the Government clearly wish to see that the bulk of recommendations should be consistent with those new guidelines. I temporarily suspended the review—about which there has been some comment—to achieve that consistency. When the Commission makes its recommendations, we will have to examine them and make our judgment and, at the end of the day, the House will have to make its judgment. Only when the House has done so will we be in a position to implement.

Mr. Tipping: Has the Minister discussed with local authority leaders the cost of local government reorganisation? Does he accept that the transitional costs will be in the region of £1·2 billion? Will he give an assurance to local authorities and the House that services will not be cut just to reorganise local authorities?

Mr. Curry: Everybody is chasing a piece of paper that came from the county councils which quotes that figure. That is not my Department's estimate. If I may say so, the county councils who expect their lives to be relatively short-lived perhaps have some interest in exaggerating the transitional costs.

Water Bills

13. **Mr. David Nicholson:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent consultations he has had on proposals to moderate the burden of water bills for domestic consumers.

Mr. Gummer: In recent months, I have met the Director General of Water Services, the European Environment Commissioner, the chairman of the National Rivers Authority and representatives of the water industry. Those discussions have formed part of my consideration of the issues as addressed in a letter to Mr. Ian Byatt entitled "Water Charges, the Quality Framework", which I and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales have just published.

Mr. Nicholson: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for the vigour that he is showing in those matters, but he will be aware that the figures that are being talked of for increases year after year, especially in the south-west, are quite intolerable. Will he therefore concentrate his efforts on minimising those costs in the coming years, not only in the area covered by South-West Water, where they are at their greatest, but in other areas such as that covered by Wessex Water, which includes most of my constituency? Will he not lose sight of the benefits to single-person households, especially, which might be obtained from sensible metering?

Mr. Gummer: I am sure that my hon. Friend is right to say that we want the lowest possible charges consistent with providing the standard of water quality and the cleanliness of beaches that we are all seeking. That means that we must strongly draw to the attention of companies the ways in which they can keep their costs under control and to talk in the European Community to ensure that we are seeking sensible standards in sensible time scales. I agree with my hon. Friend that metering has many attractions, but that is a matter for the water companies.

Mrs. Anne Campbell: Will the Minister join me in condemning Anglia Water, which has the highest water charges in the country at £248 per head? Will he also condemn it for compulsorily metering households and recognise the hardship that that will cause to families with young children?

Mr. Gummer: I believe that the hon. Lady's constituency is covered by the private Cambridge Water company. My constituency is largely covered by Anglia Water, which I would not condemn at all. I think that it is an extremely good company which provides a good service and it has been much improved since privatisation, as I am sure my hon. Friends would agree. Metering has a number of advantages and it is necessary to look at them.

Mrs. Peacock: Many people in Yorkshire find it difficult to pay their water charges. What action can the Government take to moderate the huge increases in those charges which many people cannot afford to pay?

Mr. Gummer: I am happy to look at any particular incidents that my hon. Friend would like to bring my attention. Obviously, that is the case. However, the fact is that water charges reflect the cost of providing water. It is very much better to direct our help to those who need it than to say that there should be some way in which to subsidise water itself. We should recognise that water is one of the necessary parts of life and, in an attitude of promoting sustainable development, we must ensure that water is properly cared for. That means a pricing system that reflects its cost.

Ms Short: Will the Secretary of State give an undertaking that he will not pressurise the European Commission to repeal the drinking water directive which would mean that standards of cleaning up our water in Britain were reduced? People in Britain want clean, decent water at reasonable prices. They know that prices have escalated since privatisation largely because directors of water companies have given themselves intolerable pay

increases and because investment plans have been funded over far too short a period. The south-west needs help with the burden of cleaning up its beautiful coastline in which we all have an interest. Will the Secretary of State give an undertaking that he will not reduce bills by reducing standards?

Mr. Gummer: The people of Britain have very good-quality water at very reasonable prices. That is the position today. We want to raise standards progressively and sensibly. There is no doubt that within the European Community there are many other countries, like ourselves, which from time to time may say that they have some details in the arrangements for reaching those standards which are out of kilter. It is perfectly reasonable to discuss those matters and I will certainly do so.

I agree with the hon. Lady. What we want is what we already have, on which we can improve—high-quality water at reasonable prices. The reason for the increase in water charges is overwhelmingly the need for massive new investment to raise standards. The hon. Lady does her party no good by suggesting to the public that there is any reason for it other than that, which is manifest from the figures.

Local Authority Debt

14. **Mr. Hendry:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the current extent of local authority debt; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: At 31 March this year, the total outstanding debt of local authorities in England was £37·6 billion. We shall continue to encourage authorities to reduce their debts.

Mr. Hendry: Can my hon. Friend confirm that the level of indebtedness is markedly worse in authorities that are Labour controlled than it is in those that are Conservative controlled? Can he also confirm that those indebted Labour authorities are, all too often, the authorities that have the highest average levels of council tax, the highest levels of uncollected rents, the highest levels of empty council properties and the worst services for looking after their population?

Mr. Curry: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Some authorities seem to believe that debt has no impact at all. The fact is that debt costs the equivalent of £110 per adult in the country. Of course, that is money which must be paid in interest charges; it is money which cannot be spent on services. The taxpayer and the ordinary citizen have every interest in ensuring that that debt is brought down because services immediately benefit.

Mr. Betts: Is not it a bit rich for Conservative Members to talk about debt in the current situation? Does the Minister accept that the debt of local authorities, by law, is incurred in investment in long-term infrastructure projects? Labour authorities that have debt have it because they have invested in housing, in schools and in public transport systems over the years. The difference between their debt and the Government's debt is that the Government have frittered away the long-term assets of this country and have their debt because of their short-term economic crisis.

Mr. Curry: One need only go to Sheffield to find out how untrue that is.

Mr. Matthew Banks: Is my hon. Friend aware of how much local government in Southport is in debt? It is in debt to my hon. Friend for listening so carefully and for acting so decisively to ensure that the structure of local government in my constituency will be reviewed shortly so that we can recapture the unitary authority status that we lost in 1974 and the independence that Southport rightly deserves.

Mr. Curry: We have made it clear that the Boundary Commission will examine the boundaries in the metropolitan areas when it has concluded the present review. I have no doubt that where there is an overwhelming demand for change, it will listen to those demands.

Water Disconnections

15. **Mr. Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he next expects to meet representatives of the Office of Water Services and the water companies to discuss water disconnections; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: Ministers and officials do, from time to time, meet representatives of OFWAT and the water companies to discuss matters of mutual interest. My right hon. Friend has no immediate plans for meetings to discuss disconnections.

Mr. Barnes: Is the Minister aware that there are 50 disconnections of water supply per day in homes in England and Wales? There is evidence to show a clear link between rates of dysentery and disconnections. Why do not we have a more sensible system such as that which exists in Scotland where there are no disconnections? Debts are dealt with through the courts and evidence is passed from the citizens advice bureaux to OFWAT to deal with debts and payments. We do not want prepayment meters to be introduced so that people cut themselves off and dysentery spreads in their areas.

Mr. Yeo: The hon. Gentleman is entirely wrong in his assertion of a connection between dysentery and disconnections. In Scotland, where disconnections are illegal, the incidence of dysentery shows exactly the same trends as in England and Wales. A water company has to go through a most elaborate procedure before any customer is disconnected. Disconnection is an absolute last resort for those who will not pay their bills; it is not for those who cannot pay their bills. If we were to ban disconnections it would do nothing to help poorer families; indeed, it would add to their costs as they would carry a share of the burden of those who refuse to pay. Disconnections would only help the skivers at the expense of the honest customer. That is why the Labour party espouses that cause.

Coal Industry

3.30 pm

The Minister for Energy (Mr. Tim Eggar): With permission, Madam Speaker, I should like to make a statement outlining recent developments affecting the coal industry.

The House will first wish to join me in offering sympathy to the families of those men involved in the tragic accident at Bilsthorpe on 18 August, and pay tribute to the rescuers.

Last month, the Government announced their intention that British Coal's mining assets should be offered for sale in five regional packages. Potential purchasers will be given the opportunity to bid for one or more of the businesses. The bids will be assessed on their merits. We have offered financial assistance to management and employee buy-out teams towards the cost of preparing bids.

The Government have issued two consultation papers covering the pensions and concessionary fuel regimes after privatisation. Copies of the documents are available from the Vote Office.

The Government have repeatedly made it clear that they regard safety in the coal industry as paramount. I have sought the comprehensive advice of the Health and Safety Commission on all aspects of the post-privatisation safety regime. I expect to hear from the HSC shortly, and I will make its advice available to the House when it is received.

The Trade and Industry Select Committee recommended that a high priority should be placed on reforming working practices, especially working hours. Following the Government's White Paper commitments to consult, I can announce to the House that I have today made the necessary commencement order bringing the repeal of the Coal Mines Regulation Act 1908 into force on 20 November.

In our White Paper, we said that we would establish an Energy Advisory Panel. I am pleased to announce that Dr. Martin Holdgate, the former chairman of the Renewable Energy Advisory Group, has agreed to become chairman of the new panel. I have also written to other experts in the energy field asking them to serve as members.

The White Paper made clear the Government's view that the private sector should be given the opportunity to operate pits which British Coal does not wish to keep in production. Twenty pits have now been offered for licence. I understand that British Coal is currently considering 12 tenders for seven pits.

The Government are continuing their financial help for the coal industry. They are providing more than £1 billion this year, and funding will now total nearly £20 billion since 1979. The Government have informed British Coal that we are prepared to extend our funding for the current redundancy terms for miners until 30 April 1994. British Coal has today informed the mining unions that it is resuming consultations under the modified colliery review procedure as the mechanism within which it will consult them on the performance and prospects of collieries.

The Select Committee recommended a subsidy to help the coal industry to achieve additional sales. The Government accepted that recommendation for sales from deep mines for electricity generation. But, as my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade made clear, there could be no guarantee of additional sales. It would be up to the coal industry to make the most of any new opportunities that arose.

As the House knows, the chairman of British Coal has said that he is pessimistic about the current market conditions and the prospects for genuinely additional sales this year. However, my Department has received applications for the subsidy, and I am pleased to tell the House that, subject to European Community clearance, the Government are now making the first offer of subsidy to British Coal in support of additional sales from Ellington colliery to British Alcan's power station at Lynemouth.

The coal industry will continue to face further challenges. The Government are convinced that privatisation offers the best way of meeting those challenges.

Mr. Robin Cook (Livingston): First, I join the Minister in expressing our sympathy for the relatives of the men who lost their lives at Bilsthorpe. That accident reminds us of the constant danger of winning coal 1,000 ft below the earth's crust. I therefore find it deplorable that, in the same statement, the Minister should proceed to confirm that the Government will repeal working practices brought in by Parliament to impose decent safety standards on private pit owners.

We will not accept that the clock can be turned back to the working practices of the 19th century without putting at risk a century of improvement in safety. We will oppose those regulations, and the best tribute that the Minister could pay to the relatives of those who lost their lives at Bilsthorpe and the men who put their lives at risk in mine rescue would be to drop that proposal now. The best way of maintaining the best safety standards of British Coal, which are the finest in the world, would be for the Minister to drop his plans to bring in privatisation which will cut corners with safety.

The Minister referred to £1 billion being spent by the Government in the coal industry this year. Will he confirm that the overwhelming bulk of that £1 billion is the cost of the redundancy as a result of the Government's strategy for the coal industry, that, despite the public outcry, more than half the jobs in Britain's pits have gone in the past year, and that Britain, with the largest coal reserves in Europe, is now on course by next spring to have a mining work force of barely 1,000 men? Is not that the real message of the Minister's statement? [HON. MEMBERS: "How many?"] Ten thousand men, against a work force of almost 40,000 only 12 months ago.

Does not the Minister now expect a second wave of pit closures? How many pits has British Coal said that it wants to put up for closure? Six? Ten? Fifteen? Will the hon. Gentleman tell us how many? If he cannot tell us how many pits will be left open in April, how can he seriously ask the House to privatise those pits in mid-November?

Last March, the Government claimed that they had reprieved 12 pits. Can the Minister tell the House whether any of those pits will still be open by next March? Will he now admit that the threat of further closures finally exposes the Government's White Paper of last March as a total fraud? Will he admit that his statement today that they have managed to sell extra coal to British Alcan merely throws into relief the fact that not a single bag of coal has been bought by either of the major generators, even though that coal would produce cheaper electricity than any other fuel? [HON. MEMBERS: "No."] Cheaper than gas, cheaper than nuclear and cheaper than French imports.

The Minister promised us that the White Paper would produce market testing. The market has been tested, and it has been found to be rigged. Why have not the Government taken a single step in the past 12 months to remedy the rigged market that they created? Since it was the privatisation of electricity that created the problem, how do they imagine that it will be solved by privatisation of the pits?

Finally, why did not the Minister find it in himself to acknowledge the tremendous success of Britain's miners in increasing productivity by a third in the past 12 months? Why did he not congratulate them on the fact that most of the market-testing pits now produce coal as cheaply as imported coal? If any other Government in Europe had such efficient pits and such large coal reserves, they would be safeguarding that national resource, not shutting pits down. It is not the miners who should face the sack, but the Ministers who have betrayed them and Britain's coal industry.

Mr. Eggar: Even by the standards of the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook), that was a grudging response. Surely even he could find it in himself to welcome the extension of the redundancy terms. Surely he could have found it in himself to welcome British Coal's return, as announced today, to the modified colliery review procedure. After all, that was something for which he and his hon. Friends have been arguing for some time.

As for the hon. Gentleman's comments on the 1908 Act, he seems to forget, rather conveniently, that the Trade and Industry Select Committee, which is chaired by a member of his party, pointed out the need for changes in working practices and made it clear that consultation would be needed on the 1908 Act.

No corners will be cut with regard to safety. The preservation of safety in the mining industry is paramount. That is why, as long ago as June last year, I asked the Health and Safety Commission for advice on safety matters if the industry was to be privatised. I have already told the House in my statement that, when we receive the advice from the HSC, it will be made available to the House.

The hon. Gentleman said that somehow the market had been rigged against coal. Let us be clear about how much money the Government have put into the coal industry —£20 billion since 1979. That means £1 million for every miner now working in the coal mining industry, and the hon. Gentleman has the nerve to say that we have rigged the market against coal. Massive amounts of taxpayers' money have gone into the coal industry from this Government.

Nationalisation of the coal mining industry has been part of the industry's problems, not part of its solutions. We believe that the best way to ensure the biggest and most economically viable coal mining industry in the future is privatisation and a commitment by the private sector to make a success of a great British industry.

Mr. Michael Alison (Selby): Does my hon. Friend appreciate that probably very few people outside the House have grasped the sheer scale of the £20 billion to which he referred as having been spent by the Government on the coal industry since we took office? If only a fraction of that sum had been spent by Labour Governments, who closed far more pits than Conservative Governments, there would be far more happy and healthy families in the world outside today.

Does my hon. Friend appreciate that the £20 billion includes a substantial investment in the Selby complex of pits, where high productivity and output produces low costs? Will my hon. Friend continue to concentrate support on those modernised and new pits into which so much investment has been placed?

Mr. Eggar: I completely agree with my hon. Friend about additional investment in British Coal. I think that I am right in saying that £1·5 billion of taxpayers' money was invested in the Selby mine, which, despite initial difficulties, is now operating very effectively and is producing low-cost coal. Considerable commitment has been shown by miners and management at Selby. It is not just that the Labour party closed mines when it was in office; it made commitments to the nuclear industry and to the interconnector. Indeed, the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), who I see in his seat, made the commitment to invest in the interconnector.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): I associate myself and my party with the remarks from both Front Benches about the families of those involved in the tragedy at Bilsthorpe, which reminded us how dangerous coal mining is. Having said that, it is not an excuse for reducing the industry to virtual extinction.

Having told the House that he would leave no stone unturned in his determination to find a market for coal, what did the Minister do in the summer to stop the continuing erosion of the industry? I welcome the appointment of an energy advisory panel at last, but would not it have made more sense to appoint it 10 years ago, before the Government began privatising the energy industry so that it was not dominated by a free and open market but characterised by monopoly, oligopoly and restriction, which is leaving it at the mercy of that market?

Are not the Government now washing their hands of the industry as they hand it over to a rigged market that will leave few pits in Britain and will lead to the destruction of an asset which the British people asked the Government to save and which the Government said they would save?

Mr. Eggar: I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman did not specifically welcome the appointment of Dr. Martin Holdgate, who was the distinguished chairman of the Renewable Energy Advisory Group. As his party is committed to windmills on a massive scale, I should have thought that it would be keen on that appointment.

The advisory panel will play an important role in assisting my Department in drawing up the energy report, which will be generally welcomed and which was a commitment in the White Paper. Our market for energy must provide an opportunity for the different forms of energy generation to succeed. We believe that the best way to achieve that on behalf of coal is to ensure that it is returned to the private sector.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. Because of the number of hon. Members who are seeking to question the statement, may I ask for brisk questions and equally brisk answers?

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): Does my hon. Friend agree that pessimistic salesmen do not often win new markets? Is he entirely satisfied with the performance of the chairman of British Coal?

Mr. Eggar: British Coal and its chairman have a difficult task to perform, and he is tackling that difficult task with gusto.

Mr. Jimmy Hood (Clydesdale): Twelve months ago, on black Tuesday, the closure of 31 pits was announced, since when 21 pits have closed and 20,000 mining jobs and 60,000 related jobs have gone. The Minister is fooling no one. His announcement is preparing the ground for the demise of another 15 pits and another 20,000 miners. I pay tribute to those men who gave their lives at Bilsthorpe and to those who sought to rescue them. I hope that the report is debated in the House, because use of the skin-to-skin technique is normal in Nottinghamshire; the only difference in the system was the roof bolts that were used. We want more examination of that.

Mr. Eggar: As the hon. Gentleman knows, the preliminary report of the HSC on the Bilsthorpe tragedy has been published. It is appropriate to resist making a judgment on the causes until we have the full report. I hope that the report will be with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment next month.

Mr. Richard Alexander (Newark): Is it not a matter of regret that, 12 months after the statement by my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade to the effect that the private sector would be able to take over pits that British Coal did not want, no pits are yet licensed in the private sector? Will my hon. Friend confirm that, prior to privatisation, British Coal will not close or even propose to close any more coal mines until other people have had the opportunity to see if they can make a go of it and find new markets for coal?

Mr. Eggar: I share my hon. Friend's disappointment that British Coal is not yet able to announce the lease and licensing of specific pits. I know that it is involved in detailed discussions about a number of pits, and wholly accepts the need to proceed as quickly as possible. Any possible future closures are a matter for British Coal, but we have made it absolutely clear that in future pits will be offered either for sale or for lease and licensing, if that is the correct way to proceed.

Mr. Richard Caborn (Sheffield, Central): May I put the Minister right on one point? He mentioned working practices. The 1908 Act was superseded by the 1992 legislation on working hours, which was introduced because of the Community directive. He should not mix that up with the point made by the Select Committee.

The announcement by British Coal is more important than the Minister's statement. How many pits are now to go through the modified colliery review procedure? Many believe, rightly, that this is merely a more humane way of shutting the remainder of the 31 pits. The Rothschild report of 1990 said that we would be down to 14 pits.

Will the Minister tell the House what answers he has to the Select Committee's report on opening the market for coal? The Government have not yet responded to that matter, which was posed by the President of the Board of Trade in October last year. They have ducked the issue, and they are letting down not only the miners but the nation.

Mr. Eggar: The hon. Gentleman's report—I say it is his report because he was the Chairman of the Select Committee—did refer to the fact that we wished particular attention to be paid to the reform of working hours. It is impossible to deal with that issue without dealing with the important 1908 Act. We have had consultations, and I believe that the Select Committee was in favour of the process. I announced today that I have signed the commencement order.

As for the market for coal, the Government made their position absolutely clear in the White Paper. We said that there was no guarantee of additional markets, and we accepted the Select Committee's recommendation that a subsidy should be made available. We have made that subsidy available, and I announced today that the subsidy will be paid in connection with Ellington colliery for sales to British Alcan.

Mrs. Elizabeth Peacock (Batley and Spen): Will the Minister tell the House and the rest of the country, which is listening intently, whether the Government subsidy is available for coal to be exported for electricity generation? If so, what action is British Coal taking to explore such markets?

Mr. Eggar: We look at all applications for subsidy. If people have identified markets for export, we shall consider such applications.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): Does the Minister accept that most people regard the Government's stewardship of the £20 billion of taxpayers' investment in the coal industry as astonishing? Does he agree that it is hardly right for him to claim as an improvement the new safety proposals, which would expunge the title and statutory capacity of the colliery deputy? Will he assure the House that neither the British coal industry nor any part of it will be sold to overseas owners whose safety record in their pits is less than satisfactory?

Mr. Eggar: I believe that the hon. Gentleman is referring to what has become colloquially known as the MASHAM package—after the Management and Administration of Safety and Health in Mines Regulations —put forward by the Health and Safety Commission. As the union that sponsors him is currently taking court action against a Government Department, the hon. Gentleman will know that it is impossible for me to comment on that, because it is sub judice.

Sir Cranley Onslow (Woking): As a member of the Select Committee, I welcome what my hon. Friend has said, especially his emphasis on the continuing need for safety, and the words about the reform of working practices with which he began his statement. I especially welcome the use of the subsidy for the first time. That subsidy was a key recommendation of the Select Committee, and the Government have accepted it. It is clear from the exchanges, both today and on previous occasions, that the best way forward for the coal industry is to get on with privatisation as soon as possible.

Mr. Eggar: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for his support, and I very much agree with his last point.

Mr. George Stevenson (Stoke-on-Trent, South): Does the Minister accept that his statement represents another cynical event in this shabby process, which abuses the trust that many Conservative Back Benchers put in the

Government about 12 months ago? Will he tell the House what has happened to the promised nuclear review as a result of the White Paper, and what is to be done about the burning of orimulsion in this country? How much of the subsidy, other than what has been announced today, has been used over the past year in seeking markets, which was critical to the future of the collieries?

Mr. Eggar: We shall make an announcement on the nuclear review before the end of the year. With regard to orimulsion, the precise environmental controls, to which I believe the hon. Gentleman referred, are of course the responsibility of the independent inspectorate of pollution. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman and his party would not want Government interference in that independent statutory role. Finally, as one of the pits that is the subject of negotiation between British Coal and the prospective purchasers, Trentham, is in the hon. Gentleman's constituency, I am suprised that he did not refer to it.

Mr. Winston Churchill (Davyhulme): What steps have Ministers taken to honour the undertakings given to me and to some of my hon. Friends that they would use their best endeavours to carve out a wider market for coal? How many of the reprieved pits does my hon. Friend expect to be in production by the end of the financial year?

Mr. Eggar: My hon. Friend has raised a key point, which we accepted by saying in the White Paper that we would follow the Select Committee's recommendation and make a subsidy available. That has been done and, as I have announced today, the first successful subsidy application has been granted. My hon. Friend's detailed question about the number of pits is a matter for British Coal. British Coal's announcement today that it will use the modified colliery review procedure means that it will consult the unions, and it would be wrong to speculate about that.

Mr. Paddy Tipping (Sherwood): Miners in Bilsthorpe and other coalfield communities in Nottinghamshire will welcome the Minister's concern about the accident, but that is about all that they will accept in his statement. That statement confirms that there is no extra market for coal in electricity generation, and that the path to closure is being prepared. It also extends redundancy payments to the spring of next year. What people in Bilsthorpe, throughout Nottinghamshire and throughout the country want to know is whether they will have jobs next spring. They think that they will not. Why does the Minister not come clean now?

Mr. Eggar: I am sure that there will be a wide welcome in Nottinghamshire and in all the coalfields for the announcement to extend the redundancy terms. That point was made to me by the Union of Democratic Mineworkers and by the TUC delegation that came to see me. It is also fair to say that people in the coalfields will unreservedly welcome the return to the MCRP—I believe that the hon. Gentleman urged that course some months ago. As British Coal has announced a return to the MCRP, it is right that that procedure be followed, because it involves careful consultation and discussion with the unions.

Dr. Michael Clark (Rochford): Will my hon. Friend confirm that, in recent years, all the assistance for which British Coal has asked has been provided by the Government, including the promise of a massive subsidy at the beginning of this year? If not. What help has British Coal requested which the Government have been unable to give? Will my hon. Friend also confirm that his Department has been working alongside British Coal to try to find markets for coal, and has not been working at arm's length from the company?

Mr. Eggar: We have provided large sums of financial support to British Coal. The level of financial support has not been an issue between the Government and the company. I failed to get my hon. Friend's second question.

Dr. Clark: Are they working together rather than at arm's length?

Mr. Eggar: Yes. The major commitment that we made —making available the subsidy—enabled British Coal to look for additional markets. It has succeeded in finding a market with British Alcan, which is an important development.

As for the wider issues in the discussions with the generators, the chairman has made it clear that he is pessimistic about the outlook. I think that I am right in saying that, in the letter which British Coal has sent to the unions, it has made it clear that it is considering the position with regard to the background market conditions, which are far from good.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): Is the Minister aware that the statement that he has made today exposes for all to see the colossal and deliberate fraud perpetrated by the President of the Board of Trade personally and the Cabinet collectively when the review was announced? Authorisation of the importation of coal, of opencast extension, of the dash for gas and of nuclear power at three times the cost give the lie to the idea that there is no market or need for British coal in British power stations.

Is the Minister also aware that, when the industry was privately owned, 1,200,000 miners were injured and 7,800 were killed in a nine-year period in the 1920s and 1930s when the mines were under private ownership? Does not the Minister realise that the public contrast those facts with the actions of the Labour Government who authorised the Selby coalfield and the Drax B power station, and made public—as I did—that the link with France enabled us to export coal from this country by wire to France?

Mr. Eggar: I share the right hon. Gentleman's determination that we should not return to the safety record of the 1930s. That is precisely why, more than one year ago, I asked the Health and Safety Commission for advice on the safety regime in the post-privatisation period. I am delighted that the right hon. Gentleman—I think for the first time in the House—has recognised his role with regard to the interconnector. He said that the interconnecter was for exporting coal by wire. If he had paid more attention to the details, he might have realised that it was also there for importing electricity from France.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Will my hon. Friend bear in mind the fact that the news today, particularly the rumours circulating that British Coal has suggested that all the pits are up for review, will be met with deep dismay in north Staffordshire, in the light of what happened at Trentham and what is likely to happen at Silverdale?

On the issue of market demand, will my hon. Friend take account of the new technologies available, such as the integrated gasifier combined cycle system currently running in the United States and the topping cycle

[Mr. William Cash]

announced by and developed by GEC Alsthom in this country? We are told that that will enable us to provide almost inexhaustible supplies of energy from the conversion of coal to gas, with pollution levels comparable to natural gas.

If the Government are seriously interested in applying market demand to innovation and technology, will they provide enough incentives and interests for those developments to take place in the interests of future energy supplies and to ensure that we are not dependent on imports?

Mr. Eggar: I apologise to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Central (Mr. Caborn) for not picking up that point in my reply to him. The procedure under the modified colliery review procedure—after all, British Coal is resuming it—is that all pits are automatically reviewed. That is what the general review meetings are all about, so there is nothing surprising about that development, and it will be widely welcomed.

As for my hon. Friend's understandable emphasis on the need for expenditure on new technologies in coal, I and the Government agree with him. That is why we have increased expenditure on the coal research establishment by more than 110 per cent. this year. That was announced in the White Paper.

Mr. David Hanson (Delyn): Is the Minister aware that every action that he has announced will lead to further demoralisation among the miners in my constituency at the Point of Ayr colliery, and will lead to a continued haemorrhage of workers? We have already lost 75 per cent. of the workers from that colliery in the past year.

Will the Minister answer one straight question? Are there any circumstances during the next six months in which he can see himself intervening if British Coal seeks to close a pit such as Point of Ayr?

Mr. Eggar: Of course, any decision about the future of collieries is a matter for British Coal and has to be followed through under the MCRP. I repeat what I have already said: if, by any chance, closure proposals were made and proceeded with after consultation, the Government have made it clear to British Coal, which has accepted this in respect of existing pits, that such pits will be available for lease and licence. We want to give the private sector the opportunity to make a success of pits which British Coal may or may not want to close.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): The President of the Board of Trade gave me an assurance in this House some 12 months ago that, if bias against coal were identified in the electricity privatisation legislation in the course of the reviews that his Department was undertaking, that bias would be removed and a level playing field established. Why has not that been done? Can it be sound practice for a Government who are encountering severe economic difficulties—the Budget deficit and the trade deficit—to allow this country to import coal, thereby putting people out of work, when we have some of the finest and most competitive deep-mined coal in the world to offer for sale?

Mr. Eggar: The Government's position in respect of the Electricity Act 1989 is clearly set out in the White Paper, and we stand by it. Imports of electricity coal are 50 per cent. down this year on last year, and overall imports of coal are 15 per cent. down.

Mr. Lawrence Cunliffe (Leigh): Why does the Minister place such great emphasis on the modified colliery review procedure? Is he not aware that many pits that have already gone through that procedure, regardless of their productivity, economic value and viability, have been closed? If there is no market for coal, what is the point of reintroducing this red herring for the miners—as though it were something that would ultimately save them and their industry? Would it not be far better to act instantly by cutting coal imports further, by ceasing opencast mining, and by controlling our oil imports and gas reactor services more closely?

Mr. Eggar: I am surprised by the hon. Gentleman's comments on the MCRP. After all, it was the Select Committee that recommended that it should be used. It was also recommended in an early-day motion tabled by several hon. Members, although I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman signed it. I believe that the unions also welcomed the MCRP.

Sir Patrick McNair-Wilson (New Forest): Will my hon. Friend agree that, although there is a tactical case for contracting the industry, strategically it is essential to retain the four-fuel option of oil, coal, gas and nuclear? Have the Government decided not to press ahead with the mothballing of recoverable resources; and will the new owners be expected to play a part in this so that, should the need arise, the resources can be opened up again?

Mr. Eggar: My hon. Friend, whose long commitment to the four-fuel option I recognise, is aware that currently 60 per cent. of our electricity generation comes from coal —which is likely to remain the single largest source of electricity generation for many years to come. On his point about accessing reserves of coal, we agree that that is something that needs to be considered.

However, what is important is not the absolute number of reserves, but the number of economically recoverable. The Select Committee was helpful on that matter, because it pointed out that, roughly speaking, we have about the same amount of economically recoverable coal reserves as we have gas reserves—about the 30 to 40-year mark.

Mr. Joseph Ashton (Bassetlaw): Is the Minister aware that the three pits in my constituency—Harworth, Manton and Welbeck—are the finest in Europe and that their miners have broken every productivity record year in, year out, by the sweat of their backs? Can he give a guarantee to the local Conservative party that the pits will still be open come next election day, or will the miners be laid off by a privatised industry and then set back on again at half the pay and with worse conditions? Will there be seven-day working, with pollution, heavy lorries, traffic and klaxon horns on Saturday and Sunday nights? Will a denigration of the industry be the reward for the miners' hard work? Is not the Minister just polishing the brass plate on the coffin instead of putting the lid on?

Mr. Eggar: The Government made it clear at the last election—and repeated it in the White Paper—that we attach some priority to privatising the coal industry. Given that circumstance, I should have thought that the hon. Gentleman would be stressing the advantages of his mines

and the co-operation of their work forces in making a success of the pits, whether they be in national or private ownership.

Mr. Spencer Batiste (Elmet): My hon. Friend is aware that various groups of employees in the industry are considering making bids as part of the privatisation process. Can he confirm that financial support for the preparation of those bids will be available for any bids that embrace more than one of the five areas into which British Coal will be divided?

Mr. Eggar: Yes, I can certainly give my hon. Friend that confirmation.

Mr. Eric Clarke (Midlothian): I welcome the fact that the Minister has come to the House to make a statement, but I do not welcome its contents. Will the Minister give us the opportunity to debate the matter in the Chamber? We want to discuss many aspects of the Minister's statement and we would like him to join with us and give us time to do so. I do not want the House to go into recess again—I would rather discuss the matter because it affects people's wages and livelihoods. It certainly affects those whom I represent in one of the areas suggested in the consultative document. Will the Minister join us in seeking time to debate the matter thoroughly?

Mr. Eggar: As the hon. Gentleman knows, we are consulting. I am aware that a particular concern of his relates to pensions and concessionary coal. Indeed, he has raised those points with me in Committee. I have sent him the consultation papers, and I look forward to receiving responses both from him and from those of his constituents who have an interest in the matter.

I know that the hon. Gentleman, as an adviser to Mining (Scotland) Ltd., will welcome—as it did—the proposed privatisation structure. I believe that it offers an interesting avenue for Scottish interests, which transcend all political groups within Scotland.

Dr. Keith Hampson (Leeds, North-West): Will my hon. Friend remind Opposition Members who have refused to read the Select Committee report and acknowledge what it says that its first recommendation is to place a high priority on reforming working practices? We have dispelled the myth, so beloved of Opposition Members, that Britain has huge reserves of coal. In fact, the report shows that 50 pits have access closer to 20 rather than 40 years, as the Select Committee put it. The figures are absolutely clear.

If the market for the generation of power had been rigged, as it was, and the generators required to continue buying 70 million tonnes at an artificially high price compared with the world market, everybody's electricity bills—whether domestic or business—would be a lot higher.

Mr. Eggar: It is entirely right that my hon. Friend should seek to set the record straight. I must tell the hon. Member for Sheffield, Central that I do not wish to intrude into private grief, but the pamphlet that he and his Labour colleagues issued in advance of the Labour party conference was a gross distortion of what the Select Committee had actually said.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Why does not the Minister come clean and accept that the Government are prepared to throw another 15,000 miners on to the scrap heap, at a cost to the Exchequer and the public sector borrowing requirement of about £500 million; that they are adding another £1 billion to the balance of payments deficit of £16 billion by importing coal; that they are prepared to go through with their lunatic policy of buying French subsidised electricity, which is throwing another 6,000 miners out of work; and that they are engaging in a conspiracy with British Coal, prior to privatisation, so that Neil Clarke and other members of a consortium will buy out a small number of pits, when all the rest have been closed—in cahoots with the Government—so that Neil Clarke will be able, along with his fellow members of the board, to operate a tiny little industry without any competition whatever? That is the conspiratorial plan between the Government and British Coal. That is why the Minister has made his statement today.

Mr. Eggar: That is an outrageous statement, and I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would not have said it outside the House.

I should also say to the hon. Gentleman that he must look at the figures. Imports of coal are down this year on last. With regard to the French interconnector, perhaps the hon. Gentleman should have had words 15 years ago with his right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn).

Finally, I ask the hon. Gentleman, who from time to time is fair, why he did not refer to the fact that he wrote to me only a week ago on behalf of the NUM general secretary for north Derbyshire, asking for an extension of the redundancy terms. Why did he not thank me for enabling British Coal to do just that?

Mr. Simon Burns (Chelmsford): Will my hon. Friend expand on the implications of repealing the Act of 1908, which he announced today? What working practises will be most affected by that decision?

Mr. Eggar: The repeal of the Act, which restricted the number of hours that could be worked, plus winding time and travelling time, was generally recognised throughout the industry to be delaying productivity improvements. There is little doubt that the repeal of the Act will, within proper safety parameters, ensure that the cost of British mined coal comes down further, and therefore that British Coal is better able to compete with other fuels.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): On what is otherwise a bleak day for the coal industry, can we read into the Minister's comments about Ellington colliery, which is in my constituency, a real and personal commitment to try to see Ellington through to a successful future, which will depend on the signing of a contract with British Alcan but will also benefit from British Coal having disclosed today that it intends to proceed with development work there?

Mr. Eggar: I thank the right hon. Gentleman for that. He, with the hon. Members for Blyth Valley (Mr. Campbell) and for Wansbeck (Mr. Thompson), came to see me earlier. I understand the particular problems at Ellington, the connection with Lynemouth and also with Blyth power station and Blyth port. I have no doubt that the subsidy will enable British Coal to go on producing from Ellington. I think that I am right in saying that the subsidy covers the whole of British Alcan's needs for coal for the next 18 months. That has important implications for the future of the pit.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): Will my hon. Friend confirm that, when British Coal announced recently that it was doubling its imports of coal, it was talking about between 400,000 and 800,000 tonnes this year, but that was only for the domestic market and for blending with less superior grades of coal? Is it not perfectly possible that, in private ownership, the mines, with sensible working practices and new technologies, can go after that market and save those imports?

Mr. Eggar: My hon. Friend is right. The references in the newspapers were particularly to household and industrial coal imports. The total level of imports is down by 15 per cent.; electricity generation imports are down by 50 per cent. A number of private sector entities that are interested in purchasing mines believe that, by using different mining techniques, they could produce much more household coal and industrial coal than British Coal is currently doing from existing pits.

Mr. Jack Thompson (Wansbeck): I welcome the fact that British Alcan and British Coal have come to a conclusion about seeking support from the subsidy, and I congratulate the negotiators, because the relationship between the two has been extremely good. I am pleased that a response may come from this. Of the £500 million made available a year ago, the sums of money involved in that agreement are small.

However, the negotiations with National Power and PowerGen have not been successful. I endorse the earlier criticism of the chairman of British Coal, who has not been able to persuade those companies to take extra coal, but some blame also attaches to the Secretary of State and his Department. In March 1993, in a statement recorded——

Madam Speaker: Briefly, please.

Mr. Thompson: Can I make this point?

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman will recall that I made a strong plea for brisk questions and answers. Many hon. Members are waiting to be called.

Mr. Thompson: Does the Minister endorse the comment made by the Secretary of State in March 1993, in a report in *Coal News?* When talking about the use of the subsidy, he said:

"I have to talk to them"—

that is, to National Power and PowerGen—

"and persuade them that things are possible, and that I am working on them at the moment."

Does that not reflect the lack of salesmanship by the Secretary of State, who has failed in his negotiations with National Power and PowerGen?

Mr. Eggar: Without wishing to ruin the hon. Gentleman's reputation, I want to pay tribute to the constructive role that he has played in the negotiations between British Alcan, the local council and British Coal that led to the agreement. The Government have made it clear that the subsidy for coal will be available on the terms outlined in the White Paper, but if the market is not available and if there is not extra demand for coal, the availability of subsidy cannot expand that market of itself, as everybody accepts.

Mr. Keven Barron (Rother Valley): The Minister knows that the problems that faced British Coal last October and that face it now are caused by the shrinking market for its product. He told the House earlier this year that the Government would provide a subsidy to increase the market, but that subsidy has been available only in the past few weeks. I am pleased that at least one contract has been struck.

When British Coal tried to negotiate for additional tonnages with National Power and PowerGen, the subsidy was not available, as the Minister knows. One of the reasons why a new deal was not struck is that the Secretary of State allows those companies to lift coal from stock for use in the power stations. While that takes place as a result of the inaction of the Government, more coal mines will close, although they are doing everything they can to supply coal efficiently. When will the Government take the action that they promised Parliament and the country they would take earlier this year?

Mr. Eggar: There must have been a misunderstanding. The subsidy has been available——

Mr. Barron: In the past few weeks.

Mr. Eggar: No, it has been available and British Coal was aware that, if it came to us with propositions, we would have processed those applications.

Mr. Barron: That is not true.

Mr. Eggar: Unusually for the hon. Gentleman, he is being unreasonable. The other coal producers applied for subsidies some months ago. Those subsidies have been available.

The hon. Gentleman might like to know that we have been discussing stocks with the generators and they have explained the position to me. They believe that, almost certainly, the stock levels will be above 20 million tonnes at the end of March 1994, and that they could be substantially higher than that. The Chairman of the Select Committee will understand the implication of that.

Mr. Cynog Dafis (Ceredigion and Pembroke, North): I welcome the announcement that Dr. Martin Holdgate is to be chairman of the Energy Advisory Panel. He is well known for his expertise in environmental matters and for his commitment to environmental sustainability as the underlying principle of all economic and industrial policy.

Will the panel have an environmental remit, and will Dr. Martin Holdgate be able to advise how we can avoid a second rape of the fair country of Wales through the expansion of opencast mining, which is both under way and envisaged for the future? How can we make sure that that will be stopped, because it is unacceptable to the people of Wales?

Mr. Eggar: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his tribute to Martin Holdgate. When the names of the advisory panel are published in full, the hon. Gentleman will realise that people with environmental considerations will be at the forefront. That is as it should be.

With regard to the hon. Gentleman's comment about opencast, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment will publish shortly a full draft consultation of the revised mineral planning guidance.

Mr. John Cummings (Easington): The Minister will recall that Budge Mining expressed an interest in Easington colliery which was later withdrawn because of the large amounts of money—several million pounds—involved in underground pumping operations.

The Minister will be aware that pumping operations at Easington are linked inextricably with other pumping stations in the Durham coalfield. If pumping operations cease at Easington and elsewhere in Durham, there will be a serious threat to potable water supplies. Is it the Minister's intention that the successful tenderer for the north-east area meets all the pumping costs, or are such costs to be met by local authorities?

Mr. Eggar: I think that I am right in saying that this is a matter for British Coal. Budge has withdrawn its offer for Easington, so there is no outstanding offer for the colliery.

With regard to the environmental impact of pumping, the hon. Gentleman will be aware that, following debates in the House, detailed discussions are taking place between the National Rivers Authority and British Coal about future pumping operations in the east Durham coalfield. There are serious environmental consequences of the change in pumping practices, and everyone is keen that we should do all we can to avoid any adverse consequences.

Mr. Bill Etherington (Sunderland, North): It will not have gone unnoticed by my constituents who work at Wearmouth colliery—the last deep mine in Durham—that, not for the first time, the Minister has been selective in emphasising recommendations from the Select Committee report with which he agrees. It is obvious that, if the positive proposals by the Select Committee on Trade and Industry had been adhered to instead of ignored, we would not be in the mess that we are in today.

Does the Minister understand that the massive public and political backlash against the White Paper last October was because the public did not accept the Government's policy which has led to the rigged market? Does he also understand that the public did not expect the DTI to proceed with another form of rigging to ensure that the original proposals were adhered to?

I believe that today's statement will be seen for what it is—political chicanery of the worst type. Will the Minister tell the House how much additional coal is to be sold to British Alcan following today's announcement?

Mr. Eggar: I remind the hon. Gentleman that we published the White Paper, on which the House then voted. We have followed the recommendations of that White Paper.

With regard to the sales to British Alcan, the hon. Member for Wansbeck (Mr. Thompson) will be able to fill the hon. Gentleman in on the situation. The contract comes to an end at the end of December, but British Alcan has been able to renew the contract for 18 months. That will have positive effects for Ellington, and the subsidy was a critical element in the renewal of the contract.

Mr. Eric Illsley (Barnsley, Central): Will not most of this afternoon's statement simply make it easier for British Coal and the Government to close more collieries in advance of privatisation and so leave a small rump industry to be sold off to people in the City?

Is it not the case that, if we repeal the Coal Mines Regulation Act 1908, we shall decrease safety underground? We are not improving working conditions—that is a misnomer—but extending miners' working hours to about 12 hours. We shall not only decrease safety but increase stocks, and it is stocks for which there is no market that have led to the problem within the coal industry. It is not up to British Coal to try to find new markets. Only the Government could have found those new markets.

With the return to the modified colliery review procedure, which, incidentally, was not available for the 10 pits, every colliery in the country can go straight into that procedure—with the recommendation at the end of it that that colliery close.

Mr. Eggar: I am not entirely sure whether the hon. Gentleman is in favour of or against the resumption of the MCRP.

Mr. Illsley: It has not kept one colliery open.

Mr. Eggar: Surely, though, the hon. Gentleman is in favour of a system that enables full consultation with the unions, which is well established.

The hon. Gentleman asked about the 1908 Act. He will recognise that there are considerable advantages in allowing more flexibility in working hours than is currently allowed under that Act. As regards the safety implications, of course safety will not be imperilled by the commencement order that I have laid, because safety is governed by rules laid down by the Health and Safety Commission, and those rules will apply regardless of whether or not the 1908 Act is in place.

Mr. Ronnie Campbell (Blyth Valley): I welcome the Alcan-Ellington contract, but will the Minister confirm that that contract is only for 18 months? Will he also tell us what subsidy per tonne has been given? Will he take a very serious look at the amount of opencasting that is taking place in Northumberland—approaching 3 million tonnes a year? It seems as though every farmer's field in Northumberland is up for grabs, and we already have 12 applications waiting to be processed. It is really becoming a nightmare.

Mr. Eggar: I understand—although this is a matter for British Coal and Alcan—that the contract is for 18 months and that the subsidy paid is the difference between the contract price and Ellington's production costs. That is the basis set out in the White Paper. However, the details concerning the level of subsidy and the competitiveness of Alcan's position are commercially confidential, as I am sure the hon. Gentleman will understand.

The hon. Gentleman asked about opencasting. I understand his point. That is why my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment will shortly be coming forward with the revised draft guidelines—minerals planning guidance 3—which I understand will be consulted upon. On the other hand, the hon. Gentleman will recognise that it is widely understood in his part of the world that there is a role for large-scale opencast operations, which provide jobs and which provide competitively priced coal necessary for blending. Nevertheless, I take the hon. Gentleman's point.

Mr. Kevin Hughes (Doncaster, North): The Minister has produced a package that will increase working hours for men working underground, decrease safety underground and open the door for further pit closures. Why does not he come clean—I am sure that he knows—and tell the House which collieries the Government and British Coal intend to close? Can he tell me how anyone can justify closing the two collieries in my constituency—Hatfield, where people are queuing up every day waiting

[Mr. Kevin Hughes]

for the product to come from underground, and Bentley, which is producing coal at less than £1 a gigajoule? How can the Government justify closing those two pits or any other?

Mr. Eggar: The question of working hours is a matter for discussion and negotiation at pit level. The Government are merely laying the commencement order for the repeal of the 1908 Act. There will not be a reduction in safety standards—either in the near future or post-privatisation. The responsibility for safety rests with the Health and Safety Commission, which has a statutory duty under the 1974 Act to ensure that there is no diminution in safety standards.

I understand that the hon. Gentleman was the NUM secretary at Bentley. Surely he knows perfectly well——

Mr. Hughes *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Eggar: He is shaking his head—my apologies.

The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that the question of closure or non-closure is dealt with under the MCRP as part of the normal consultation procedure. I know that the hon. Gentleman is a very reasonable man: could he not have welcomed the extension of the redundancy terms, particularly as he wrote to me last week and urged me to make money available to British Coal to extend them?

Mr. John Evans (St. Helens, North): Does the Minister think that at the next general election the electorate will forget that the Conservative party is now in the process of virtually destroying Britain's deep-mined coal industry? Does he think that succeeding generations will ever forgive the Government for leaving millions of tonnes of coal to rot in the ground, as they have done at Parkside colliery in my constituency?

Mr. Eggar: The electorate at the next election will recognise that the Government made it clear in their party manifesto that they wished to privatise the coal industry, and were committed to achieving the largest possible economically viable coal industry in this country. The electorate at the next election will recognise that we have done just that.

Dr. Tony Wright (Cannock and Burntwood): Is the Minister aware that some hon. Members are receiving letters from the chairman of British Coal in which he says that he can no longer give assurances about the future of any pit—any pit—in the country? That includes pits such as Littleton in south Staffordshire, which, a year ago, was said to be safe. Is that not the real meaning of the Minister's statement today?

Did not Baroness Thatcher write to the Minister a few months ago and say that, unless the Government were prepared to take action to produce a market through a guaranteed tonnage of coal for the generators, we would see the destruction of the British coal industry? Was she not right?

Mr. Eggar: Lady Thatcher did not write to me in those terms. As to the hon. Gentleman's question about pits, all pits go through the process under the MCRP, and are part of the general review meeting. Everyone who is familiar with the MCRP—as other Opposition Members are—recognises that.

Mr. Derek Enright (Hemsworth): First, is the Minister aware that miners in my constituency will be enraged by his proposals about safety, for the simple reason that it is their heads and not his that are on the block day in and day out? Secondly, those miners will be extremely cynical about the proposals that are being made to opencast in North Featherstone and South Hiendley—both pleasant country areas—at the same time as pits are being closed. Thirdly, the miners who work in Frickley—and their families—have been in despair for over a year, not knowing what is going to happen to them.

Does the Minister not think it disgraceful that he belongs to a party that claims to be concerned about families, yet he puts families through this misery and hell?

Mr. Eggar: There is no question of imperilling safety. No miner would agree to anything that imperilled safety, no management would seek to impose anything that imperilled safety, and the Health and Safety Executive would never permit changes that imperilled safety—and the hon. Gentleman knows that. As to opencast in his constituency, that is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. I have already said that he will be introducing revised guidelines shortly.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): What are the Government's plans for the energy market after coal privatisation? There is a fortune to be made from coal. Will not the existing rigged market have some of its rigging uncoupled after privatisation to enable those who have got their hands on the coal industry and opencast mining to make a fortune?

Mr. Eggar: No, that is not the case.

Madam Speaker: Mr. O'Brien.

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): Always save the best until last.

Nothing that the Minister said today will safeguard any jobs in the mining industry. He makes great play about the extension of redundancy pay. Will he explain who will be responsible for the redundancy pay when that runs out? If miners go into the private sector and their pits close when run by private operators, will those miners receive redundancy pay equal to that which is in the process at present?

Will the Minister give an assurance to the House and to the mineworkers that no foreign mine owner who operates unsafe practices abroad will be allowed to purchase an interest in the British mining industry under the privatisation plan?

Mr. Eggar: May I just clarify the redundancy terms situation? The Government extend the funding to British Coal that enables it to offer the redundancy payments. In other words, the Government reimburses 90 per cent. of the cost of redundancy terms. The Government announced today, and British Coal confirmed, that we shall continue to fund British Coal until 30 April 1994.

If British Coal were to be involved in closure consultations which begin this year, but which are likely to continue beyond that date, the funding would have to continue because of the implications of the MCRP.

The safety record of purchasers from overseas is one of the factors that will be taken into account, but no decision has yet been taken on the criteria that will be applied during the privatisation process.

Mr. Martin O'Neill (Clackmannan): Does the Minister appreciate that, when I contacted British Coal today and asked which collieries would have their prospects reviewed under the review procedure, I was told that all collieries would be considered? Therefore, by definition, all collieries are under threat. When he tells us about the extension of the redundancy payments scheme, a picture begins to emerge of the prospect of far more collieries closing than the ones that we had expected and feared the worst about.

When the Minister tells us about the MCRP, can he confirm that he is merely following the dictates of the decision in the court case which he lost last year, and which he now has to invoke every time that a colliery has to be closed, if the miners want? The MCRP gives little comfort to anyone who has had anything to do with the coal industry in this country, because no collieries that have gone through that procedure have ever survived for any length of time.

Mr. Eggar: I am not surprised that the hon. Gentleman received the response from British Coal that he says he did, because everyone who knows how the MCRP works knows that all collieries are involved in the general review meeting which I understand British Coal is likely to call on a regional basis fairly soon—but that is a matter for British Coal and the unions.

British Coal makes the decisions about starting up the MCRP and, as the hon. Gentleman would expect, British Coal has to take into account legal considerations when it makes its decision. I would have thought that the hon. Gentleman would support that.

Points of Order

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. You will recall that yesterday, during the statement by the Secretary of State for Wales about the Welsh Development Agency, he was asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Neath (Mr. Hain) about regenerating the valleys and he replied:

"I have announced today the next five-year programme for the Welsh valleys initiative."

Later, on a point of order, I asked the Secretary of State why he did not have the courtesy to come to the House to make the statement so that he could be examined on the content of the initiative, which is of vital concern to us in the South Wales valleys.

You kindly invited the Secretary of State to comment on that point of order. He then said:

"I am grateful for the opportunity. I meant to say that I would make a statement tomorrow." *[Official Report,* 19 October 1993; Vol. 230, cols. 156-57].

I asked that the statement be made to the House.

Today I was waiting, as were my hon. Friends, for the Secretary of State to make a statement to the House so he could be questioned on the content, which is of such vital importance. The Secretary of State has not come. Yesterday, he was confused between yesterday, today and the day before. Has he confused the days again?

I wonder whether you could use your good offices, Madam Speaker, to get the Secretary of State for Wales to come here. At best, he is treating the House with absolute contempt—and I think that he is treating you, Madam Speaker, with the same lack of courtesy—but at worst, he is being economical with the truth, because I understand that today he has gone outside the House and issued a statement in Wales, where he cannot be questioned or come under parliamentary scrutiny for what he is doing.

Madam Speaker: As the hon. Gentleman and the House are aware, Ministers determine for themselves whether they make a statement orally at the Dispatch Box or choose to do so by means of answer to a written question. The best I can do is to refer the hon. Gentleman to written question 356, which was answered today by the Secretary of State for Wales. It became available at 3.30 and is headed "Programme for the Valleys".

Mr. Ron Davies (Caerphilly): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker, we all understand that the question to which you refer was tabled after the Secretary of State had given an assurance to the House. What compounds the error is that, yesterday morning, the Secretary of State took it upon himself to conduct an extensive press briefing. Thirty-six hours before Members of the House with a direct constituency interest, the press knew of the nature of the statement that the Secretary of State was making this afternoon. It is, as my hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) said, a blatant disregard of the rights of Members of the House with a direct constituency interest.

I would ask that you reflect on previous rulings that you have given to the effect that, when Ministers have statements to make, they should be made in the House before statements are made to the press.

Madam Speaker: I have always taken the view, as the House knows, that, when a Minister has a statement to

[Madam Speaker]

make, he should make it here to hon. Members who are elected, rather than outside the House. We now proceed with our business.

BILL PRESENTED

FORMER CABINET MINISTERS (INTERESTS)

Mr. David Winnick presented a Bill to prohibit former Cabinet Ministers, within a period of five years after leaving office, from accepting any employment with or payment from a company which was privatised while they were members of the Cabinet or which had a commercial or contractual relationship with a Department of State for which or in which they had ministerial responsibility: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon 22 October, and to be printed. [Bill 253.]

Human Organ Transplants (Amendment)

4.47 pm

Mr. John Heppell (Nottingham, East): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to amend the Human Organ Transplants Act 1989 further to provide for the circumstances in which an organ may be retrieved from a dead person for the purposes of transplant; to require the anonymity of the donor and the recipient; to define death for the purposes of that Act of 1989 as the total and irreversible loss of brain function; and for connected purposes.

I notice that the Minister for Energy had so much support for his statement that hon. Members have disappeared from the Government Benches. I hope that when I make my contribution I do not empty the rest of the Benches.

The main purpose of the Bill is to do away with the current opt-in system for donors of kidneys and other human organs, and to bring in a new opt-out system, under which it will be presumed that people are willing to donate their organs unless they have expressed a wish not to do so.

Every year, the number of people who have transplants in this country grows. Last year, more than 5,000 people had major organ transplants. Thousands of other people would have benefited from cornea transplants, heart valve transplants, bone grafts or bone marrow transplants, and the only reason that those operations did not go ahead was the lack of donors.

Many other countries recognised the difficulties in obtaining donors and chose opt-out schemes several years ago. Those countries include France, Belgium, Switzerland, Sweden, Denmark and Israel. They have a higher rate of donors for heart transplants as a result. Let us compare. Austria manages to achieve a rate of 53 donors for every million of its population each year and Belgium manages 40 per million, but the United Kingdom receives only 30 per million. If we could achieve the same record as Austria, 1,000 more kidneys would be available for transplant, and 1,000 people would be spared the indignity of constant dialysis and would effectively be given a new lease of life.

There are 4,000 people on dialysis machines in this country, and they need them to stay alive. However, because they stay alive, people believe that that is an end to the problem, and see dialysis as a cure. It is not. People would realise that it is not a cure if they spent a major part of their life—three times a week—attached to a machine. They would realise that it is not a cure if they had to suffer the pain and discomfort of constant dialysis.

If people knew that their child could have rosy cheeks and be healthy instead of being pale and weak, they would realise it. If they had seen the knots caused by the constant insertion of needles in people's arms, legs, stomachs and elsewhere on their bodies, they would realise that dialysis is not a cure. People must recognise that children who are on dialysis will still be on it when they die. For them, the transplant will never come. If it did, the transplant would not merely keep them alive but would give them life.

I am sure that I am not alone in having carried a donor card for many years. I am sure that many right hon. and hon. Members do the same, because they have made a conscious decision that, after their death, they want one, or several, of their organs to be available to help other people. They have a right to have their views considered, and people should respect their wish.

If I had requested to be buried or cremated after my death, I think that everyone would respect my wishes. I think that they would respect them if I said that I wanted my ashes to be scattered across the Nottingham Forest football pitch, or the Oval or in the Thames or Trent. So why, when I say that I want my body to be used to help other people after my death, is my view so blatantly ignored?

For years I was under the illusion that I had already made the choice, as I carried a donor card, which meant that my organs would be used to help someone else when I died. I now know that when I die—I nearly said, if I die—my choice will not be respected. If I am involved in an accident, even if the donor card is found on me, my next of kin will be asked for their permission for my organs to be used.

I find that totally unacceptable. It is my choice, not my wife's, my son's or my daughter's. If I am involved in an accident, I do not want someone to ask my wife whether they can have my organs. It would probably be a doctor she had never seen before. I do not want her to suffer that sort of trauma while I am lying dead in hospital or on a mortuary slab. I do not want her to suffer that sort of pain at such a time. If my organs can be of use, I want my body to be used for other people.

It is time for us to accept that the present system is inadequate.

Dr. Joe Hendron (Belfast, West): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. Interventions are not allowed in ten-minute Bill speeches.

Mr. Heppell: The present system was introduced 22 years ago, in 1971. Ten years ago, a Gallup poll showed that 70 per cent. of the population were willing to donate their organs, and a recent poll showed that 72 per cent. would be willing to do so. There has been little variance during those years. However, only 18 per cent. of people carry kidney donor cards, and, as I have explained, those cards are not a guarantee that one's organs will be donated. To me, that smacks of failure.

After all the campaigns and education, it is time to consider a different means of organ donation. A recent poll of transplant doctors showed that 40 per cent. were in favour of an opt-out system; 31 per cent. were in favour of the present system; and 29 per cent. were prepared to work with either system. I agree that that result is not conclusive, and that there is no overwhelming majority. However, in all the reviews carried out during the past few years, the public seem generally to accept the idea of opting out, and it gets more support as time goes by.

The most recent public poll, conducted by the British Kidney Patient Association, shows that 61 per cent. of the population are in favour of an opt-out scheme for donors. On top of that, the overwhelming majority of recipients of organs are in favour, as are people who are waiting for an organ. I think that such a scheme is sensible.

When hon. Members decide about the Bill, I want them to concentrate on two things, because this is what it all comes down to. The first is the needs of recipients and the second the wishes of donors.

The needs of recipients are fairly clear. Any hon. Member, or their wife, daughter, son or grandchild, may require a transplant, so I hope that they will bear that in mind when they decide. The idea that, as a donor, when I die my eyes could give someone sight, my kidneys could give someone a better quality of life and my heart could give someone life itself is very reassuring to me. It means that death has less of a sting. I want hon. Members to give me the chance to make that choice and to have that consolation. The Bill will do just that.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. John Heppell, Mr. Don Dixon, Mr. David Hanson, Mr. Keith Hill, Mr. John Gunnell, Mr. Paddy Tipping and Mr. Gerald Bermingham.

HUMAN ORGAN TRANSPLANTS (AMENDMENT)

Mr. John Heppell accordingly presented a Bill to amend the Human Organ Transplants Act 1989 further to provide for the circumstances in which an organ may be retrieved from a dead person for the purposes of transplant; to require the anonymity of the donor and the recipient; to define death for the purposes of that Act of 1989 as the total and irreversible loss of brain function; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 5 November, and to be printed. [Bill 254.]

European Economic Area Bill *[Lords]*

4.57 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): I beg to move,

That in respect of the European Economic Area Bill *[Lords]*, notices of Amendments, new Clauses and new Schedules to be moved in Committee may be accepted by the Clerks at the Table before the Bill has been read a second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Since the two motions on the Order Paper are related I can allow them to be debated together and so it will be convenient to discuss at the same time the following motion:

That, if the European Economic Area Bill *[Lords]* be committed to a Committee of the whole House, further proceedings on the Bill shall stand postponed and that, as soon as the proceedings on any Resolutions come to by the House on the European Economic Area Bill *[Lords]* [Money] and [Ways and Means] have been concluded, this House will immediately resolve itself into a Committee on the Bill.

Mr. Newton: In the light of what you have just said, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it may be for the convenience of the House if I speak briefly about the second motion at the same time.

I do not need to detain the House for a great length of time. It is perhaps unusual for the House to be debating the motions in this way and I shall give the background as a fact, rather than as a conclusive argument. It has been agreed through the usual channels that the Bill should be taken through all its stages tomorrow *[Interruption.]*—I said that I was stating it as a fact and not an argument, but the House should be aware of it.

In the light of that agreement, it has also been agreed that we should make what are well-established procedural arrangements—that is what the resolutions do—for that to be done in a way that Members have historically found helpful and with which the House is familiar, so that the debates can proceed in an orderly fashion. I again emphasise that they are well precedented and in line with the practice that has been used on many occasions. However, as there were objections on two occasions when we sought to move them at other times—and I make no complaint about that—I have to ask the House to spend some time on them today.

The first motion allows amendments to be considered in Committee to be tabled before Second Reading. As I have said, the House is familiar with that procedure, which is used when all stages are proposed to be taken in one day. That allows the orderly tabling and printing of amendments in time for the Committee stage, which will immediately follow tomorrow's Second Reading. The second motion simply allows the Money and Ways and Means resolutions to be considered. That is again normal after Second Reading.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): These would be starred amendments. Has my right hon. Friend heard from Madam Speaker or from the Speaker's Office whether they would be treated as normal amendments and therefore automatically taken tomorrow?

Mr. Newton: It is for the Chair to determine that, but it is well within the experience of many hon. Members that in such cases and against the background of the resolution, the Chairman would not wish to rule that out. Perhaps it would be helpful, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to have some guidance.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Perhaps I may assist the House by saying that as Chairman of Ways and Means I am prepared to accept starred amendments.

Mr. Newton: I hope that that helps my hon. Friend: it is certainly helpful to me in dealing with this matter.

The whole of tomorrow has been set aside for proceedings on the Bill and the associated financial resolutions. I understand that that was agreed through the usual channels, and the time allowed should be adequate properly to consider the principle and detail of a Bill whose straightforward objective is to incorporate into United Kingdom law an agreement between the European Community and EFTA to extend the benefit of the free movement of goods, services, capital and people throughout the area.

That agreement has widespread support, and its supporters include the overwhelming majority of Opposition Members. I did not say all Opposition Members in view of the muttering that I hear from time to time. All that we seek to do is to advance discussion of that matter in an orderly and sensible way.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I remind the House that the motions are fairly narrowly drawn and that the debate on the merits of the Bill is for tomorrow.

5.2 pm

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Of course I shall not attempt to discuss the Bill's merits today. However, in view of the nature of the Bill and of the treaty to which it refers, perhaps you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will allow me to make some animadversion. The Leader of the House let the cat out of the bag when he spoke at least two or three times about the usual channels. That phrase was first used in the 1920s or 1930s and referred to a procedure that was not even officially in operation. This House is not for the Front Bench of either party; it is for the representatives of the people, and long may that be so.

The Leader of the House and those associated with him have said that people should have realised that the Government intended to take the Bill in one day. In his notice of 22 July for this week's business—we all remember 22 July because it was the great social charter day—the right hon. Gentleman gave details of proceedings on the Bill. One would have needed a highly attuned ear to know that his announcement was about all stages of the Bill being taken in a day. I admit that textually and in pure terms one might have inferred that, but in the circumstances of that day and other circumstances that I put to the Leader of the House, I do not think that that was so.

The right hon. Gentleman has been here for some time and will know that it is not altogether unknown for a Leader of the House to say when announcing the following week's business that following Second Reading of a Bill other stages may be taken. However, he did not say that on 22 July. Therefore, even for those of us who try to keep up with these matters, Monday was the first day on which we saw on the Order Paper textual amendments or rules that would override the normal Standing Orders or courtesies of the House and permit the Bill to be taken tomorrow in one go. That was why I took the liberty of objecting on Monday

after 10 o'clock. I was trying to prevent that happening, and if I had not objected the dye would have been cast at 10 o'clock on Monday night or yesterday.

I do not object to the first motion, which simply alerts us to when the Government will allow amendments to be tabled. Perhaps they could have been tabled yesterday, which would have been short notice. The second motion contains the guts of the matter. It says that after Second Reading tomorrow, however long that may be, and after the accompanying money resolution—and, as my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) has often said, such resolutions are important—and after the relevant Ways and Means motion, which is not just gobbledygook, the House will grant permission to expand the area of taxation. That matter is central to the historic powers of the House. The debate is open ended, although the closure can be moved. The motion says that after that the

"House will immediately resolve itself into a Committee on the Bill."

Second Reading entails discussion of principles and explanations. I agree that some Bills could be taken in a day. One such Bill was the one that nationalised Rolls-Royce, but in that and other cases there was a need for speed and the intention, method and principle were clear. Although the details of such Bills are matters for dispute, agreement is usually between all hon. Members, not simply a matter of Front-Bench speakers ganging up.

This is not such a Bill. It contains only five clauses, but I defy any hon. Member to say what it is all about. It is twice as obtuse as the famous Maastricht Bill, and the treaty to which it relates has 550 pages and is about three times as obtuse as that Bill. It is not an ordinary Bill, nor is the treaty an ordinary one, yet we are being asked to take it in one day.

Bills are taken in stages to enable their purpose, effects and results to be properly debated. If a Bill is not taken on the Floor of the House by resolution it goes to Committee, and by convention two weekends elapse before the Committee meets. The Committee of Selection has to appoint a Committee and there is time for the Bill's purpose—in this case the purpose of the treaty—to be advertised and for people to make inquiries and table amendments. That leads to proper scrutiny in Committee. No such opportunity has been made available in this case and there are many questions about the treaty. I shall not go into all of them, but Switzerland is mentioned, although I understand that that country will not be party to the treaty in the same way. Many issues arise.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): Does my hon. Friend think that the Bill requires a Special Standing Committee so that it may be scrutinised effectively?

Mr. Spearing: My hon. Friend raises an interesting issue. I have not thought of such a Committee, but my hon. Friend may be right about that, although I do not think that this is the type of Bill for which such a Committee should be established. Of course, such a Committee would enable us to ask Foreign and Commonwealth Office Ministers to give evidence. However, the Government have not considered that, and in any case I object to the speed and not to the procedure. That time scale does not give anyone time to think, to find out, to write letters or to make telephone calls. If we are properly to scrutinise matters relating to our relationships with the Community to which the Government have committed themselves, why the need for speed? Why could not we have had the Committee stage even—I am not suggesting an ideal—after 10 o'clock some time next week or a few days later, let alone within only a few hours or minutes of the Second Reading?

I was accosted when arriving this morning by a colleague who said, "I hear you objected last night. You have precipitated a debate tomorrow. What mischief are you up to now, Nigel?" It is not my mischief, but the mischief of the Government. We do not have conventions in the House or ways of conducting business without good cause. When they are dispensed with, there must be a motion to do so. If it is a genuine reason, there is usually no problem. But there is a problem here and the Leader of the House should tell us why because the Bill is about the prerogative. Not only is the treaty conducted, and the negotiations to which it relates, by prerogative, but the consequence is that we will mix Foreign Office prerogative powers with obligations in legislation and, indeed, obligations in taxation. We all know from experience what that prerogative is. I quote from the explanatory memorandum to the Bill:

"Section 2(1) of the 1972 Act will apply so as to give legal effect in the United Kingdom to present and future provisions of the Agreement"

—that is the treaty—

"which, under the Treaties, are to be given legal effect without further enactment."

I remind the Leader of the House that the House does not have a good record in regard to proper scrutiny. I understand that the Select Committee on European Legislation wanted debates about general post office matters in the Community and did not get them. Rushing the Bill through in one day without an opportunity for reflection or to table amendments after Second Reading at least raises the big question "why?". The Government are devoted to open government, so they say. This looks like a closed shop between the two Front Benches.

5.12 pm

Sir Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): I hope in all sincerity that the Leader of the House will think carefully about the wisdom of shoving through a massive and important Bill and effecting the equivalent of a treaty or agreement in one day with Second Reading, Committee stage, Report stage, money resolutions and Third Reading.

There are only three reasons of which I can think for doing all that in a day. The first is that everyone agrees to it. The Leader of the House correctly said that everyone is agreed, but why? He specifically said that the Labour party had agreed with the Government that all the stages should be completed in a 24-hour sweep. We should pay attention to that. We understand that the Labour party, for the same reasons as the Conservative party, has found EC issues rather divisive of late—partly because of the failure to have a referendum on Maastricht. As long as we are discussing the EC, members of the Labour party and Conservative party will disagree, fight Whips, use obscene words in all kinds of places and, when we vote, all kinds of things will happen. The wish of the Government and the Opposition to hurry through the Bill is not valid.

The second reason for doing all that in a day would be if the Bill was non-controversial. The Government could argue that it is non-controversial, but they should ask themselves why. We know that the countries of EFTA say that they want an agreement in the same way as the

[Sir Teddy Taylor]

Government. That is as if, for example, the recipients of social security were to give £1 to the Conservative party and £1 to the Labour party and were then asked if that were preferable to not having social security. Most people would say that even if they had to give money to the Labour and Conservative parties, they would rather have the remaining social security. EFTA countries are anxious to have the agreement not because they regard it as a bonus, but because it is the only way in which the EC is prepared to allow them continuing free trade.

To the countries of EFTA it is a significant agreement. They will become involved in a mass of bureaucracy. Clearly we cannot consider the merits of the Bill in this debate, but if the Leader of the House considers title V on page 59 of the agreement, he will see that, as a consequence of the Bill, poor countries will have to go through the most absurd, ridiculous bureaucracy to engage in normal trade. The second thing that he will see if he looks at the agreement properly is that the countries of EFTA will have to change a mass of laws to abide by European laws. The House of Commons Library has said that about 60 per cent. of all the laws passed by the EC must be adopted by EFTA, whether it wants to or not. Article 4 of protocol 31, for example, says that all the education, training and youth provisions will have to be adopted by EFTA, even though the Parliaments and Governments may not want them.

Page 212 says that all the social provisions passed by the EC will have to be applied to EFTA whether the countries want it or not, as well as all the laws on consumer protection. Page 215 shows that there is a pile of cash that will have to be paid out in an assessment of contributions. All that is significant for Europe as a whole and for Britain in particular.

If we are to pass a Bill which is linked to an agreement that forces the countries of EFTA to adopt a mass of laws, directives, rules and requirements that their Parliaments are not going to take part in deciding, it should be discussed at length.

Mr. Ian Taylor (Esher): I do not wish to prolong the debate, which is on a point of procedure, but my hon. Friend should recognise that the matter of which laws are attached to the treaty is one for the individual countries. Is not it significant that the EFTA Governments want to join the European Community ultimately, not just the European economic area, because they understand the importance not only of the economic benefits, but of the political benefits, as the Prime Minister of Sweden said at the fringe meeting of the Conservative party conference?

Sir Teddy Taylor: My hon. Friend is totally out of date. If he considers the recent elections in Norway and the opinion polls there, it is apparent that the last thing in the world that the Norwegians want to do is to join the EC——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It is not possible under the motion to discuss the merits of the present political feelings in Norway.

Sir Teddy Taylor: I am sorry, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I was misdirected by my hon. Friend. It is rather unfortunate that my hon. Friends say silly things to force me to contradict them and be out of order, which never happens to me under my own volition. I am always glad to receive interruptions, but it is unfair of my hon. Friend to interrupt me and try to drive me out of order.

Is the agreement significant for Britain? I am sure that we know, as we have all had communications with the Chief Minister of Gibraltar, that the Bill will have devastating consequences for Gibraltar and its economy by introducing further discrimination. That is certainly what the Chief Minister and his Cabinet think. They are worried that throughout the proceedings Britain has been neglecting Gibraltar shamefully. We should discuss such an issue in good time and not late at night. It stands out a mile that the Bill is significant. It is not non-controversial, but it is a measure of great constitutional significance which involves a change in democracy in Europe and is of great significance to Gibraltar.

The third reason that may be given for rushing the Bill through in a day is that it is of no consequence to Britain, the Treasury and its policy. I could give a multitude of examples why that is not the case, but I shall mention just one.

From looking at the financial effects of the Bill, one can see that it will add enormously to the Government's social security costs. I hope that all the civil servants have looked at that point. The Bill refers to the fact that there will immediately be about £1 million extra for social security. My constituents and your constituents, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will have to pay for that.

I want to talk about that point, especially in reference to what is loosely called "one of our Cabinet Ministers" at the Conservative conference. I do not know whether any hon. Members here today heard him. He talked about "Euroscroungers" and alleged that people were coming from the EC to have a holiday in Britain at the taxpayers' expense. That would now appear to apply to people from EFTA.

If a Bill that will increase the extent of Euroscrounging is passed, will the Government tell us what they can do about it? We heard a statement from a Minister at the party conference. Although Ministers are all splendid people who have high principles, and who are very kind to children and to dogs, I have sometimes found that Ministers' statements do not turn out exactly as one would think.

We should decide on and discuss this matter so that we have policies that are important for Europe, policies that are desperately important for Gibraltar and policies that are important for the British taxpayer, who will have to pay a lot of extra money as a consequence of the Bill.

A fourth argument that could have been used was that there was a tight timetable. Let us suppose that the Government were rushed off their feet and that we had no time because of a mass of legislation that was to be discussed very soon. You, Mr. Deputy Speaker, know what the score is. We have had a very long summer break. We are told that we shall have another big break before the Queen's Speech and that we shall have a long Christmas holiday. Largely because of the massive surrenders of power to Brussels, there is not really much to do here.

I dare to suggest to the Government that the one argument that they cannot use is that we do not have parliamentary time. We have had loads of parliamentary time with precious little to do, so there is no reason why we cannot have Second Reading one day and the Committee stage the next.

Apart from the point about democracy, I ask the Government, "Please can we start to look for solutions?". All we are asking is to have Second Reading tomorrow and to have some time next week or the week after for the Committee and Report stages. We are asking only for two days: one for Second Reading and one for the Committee. What is wrong with that? If the Government agreed to that, everyone would be happy. In fairness, I point out that the majority of hon. Members are not listening to this debate and have probably never heard about the agreement about which we are talking. However, if the Government agreed to my suggestion, the problem would be solved and finished.

With the Maastricht treaty, the whole problem could have been solved if we had had a referendum, but the Government chose not to do so. We could solve the problem with the Railways Bill tomorrow if the Government said that there would be no foreign railway companies as well as no British Rail. I appeal to the Leader of the House, "Please start looking for solutions." All we are asking is for one day for Second Reading and one day for the Committee and Report stages.

I and many other older hon. Members—it is mainly older hon. Members here today, with the exception of one or two of my hon. Friends—have seen democracy dying in this House. There is no point in people trying to forget about that; we all know that it has been happening. There was a time when we used to discuss things, when we used to debate them and when we used to have fights. Sadly, with the help of, I am afraid, the Foreign Office, democracy is largely dying.

Here we have legislation that is terribly important for Europe, terribly important for the taxpayer and terribly important for democracy. With the agreement of Labour Front-Bench Members, Ministers and, possibly—I do not know—Liberal Democrat Members, we are being asked to shove the Bill through in one day. They say, "Let us get it over with. Let us get it finished. Do not talk about it. Do not vote on it."

I have been appalled to hear that the Government have tamed the Labour party with a one-line Whip. The last thing in the world that I want to do is to attack parties and to say, "We are the goodies and they are the baddies," but I must say that that is not the way to run a democracy. I tell the Leader of the House that something worrying has been happening in Britain. We are shoving through legislation using brutal methods. We are shoving it through at a breakneck speed. Probably at 3 am or 4 am, we shall be talking about something fundamental to the future of the people of Gibraltar, fundamental to British taxpayers and fundamental to the future of Europe. We shall also be passing legislation that will require the good people of Norway, of Sweden and of the other EFTA countries to adopt and to implement laws which they did not discuss and to which they did not contribute. That is not right.

I know that the Leader of the House is a fair person. I had the pleasure of sharing a platform with him at the Oxford Union last week. We had much in common and we agreed on at least one point. I say to him in all sincerity, "Surely, for the sake of democracy, we should have two days to discuss the Bill." It is a massive treaty and a very important Bill. It will cost my constituents a lot of money. It will cause a great deal of injustice. Surely we can talk about that and debate it. I can see no reason for not agreeing to what we want, except for the fact that Labour Front-Bench Members and the Government have done a deal. Surely that it not a proper explanation.

I make it clear that the last thing in the world that I intend to do is to cause trouble over this matter. We know that when the bells ring, the vast majority of the troops will pour in, and will go into the Lobbies and ask what they are voting about. There is no point in having a row. I simply appeal to the Government to remember that democracy matters and to remember that freedom matters. Even though fat Whips will sit smiling away and will use abusive language to try to get legislation through, that is not what matters. What matters is the power belonging to the people. We represent the people and we are meant to decide matters properly and fairly. We are not supposed to have dirty, squalid deals being done between Front-Bench Members of each party.

Let us, therefore, have a proper and reasonable solution. Let us have two days instead of one. Let us cut down our extra, glorious holiday by one day. Let us represent the people and stand up for the people. Once again, we should remember what Bob Marley said in his great song. It is time for us to stand up, to wake up and to start fighting. If we do not do that, we may as well close down this place, we may as well all go home and we may as well forget about the whole idea of democracy.

5.25 pm

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): The hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) said that there should be two days of debate. I have reason to believe that, before the long recess, Labour Front-Bench Members put forward the proposition that there should be two days. My hon. Friend the Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) may intervene in this debate and he may be able to confirm that. The fact that that was the proposition needs to be put on the record.

When I came in here, I thought, "Here we go again." It is like Maastricht all over again. It is as if the House of Commons in recent years is besotted with the idea of the Common Market. There is an alternative argument to the argument that we should have a long time for the Bill, which is what the hon. Member for Southend, East has just proposed. There is an argument that we should not be messing about with this thing at all.

Everybody knows that the Common Market has been an unmitigated disaster. We have just had a short debate and questions and answers on the coal industry——

Mr. Spearing: It was a statement.

Mr. Skinner: We had questions and answers about the demise of the coal industry. One point which was not made then but which has been made many times is that the Common Market was set up, presumably, to produce economies of scale so that countries could trade with one another. Yet they do not buy a single cobble of British coal even though it is the cheapest in the whole of the Common Market. The whole thing has been a fraud from beginning to end.

Here we are, going off again on another tangent to deal with EFTA. It is always the same with these Common Market fanatics. They always say that one can never get perfection in the Common Market unless one does something else. In the beginning, they said that the Common Market would produce jobs. They said that if we passed the Common Market Bill in 1971, when the grocer

[Mr. Skinner]

was in charge, unemployment would be written off the map. What happened? When we went into the Common Market in 1973, there were about 700,000 people out of work. With the help of this Tory Government and the Common Market, more than 4 million people in Britain do not have a job—I do not believe the fiddled figure of 3 million.

What do the Common Market fanatics, including Liberal Democrats, who are besotted with the idea say? They say that we shall have to have direct elections to the Common Market. They say that if we have direct elections, we shall be able to produce all the jobs about which we talked before. They say that we shall feed the third world. Do hon. Members remember that story? All those people said that we would feed the third world. There are now more people in Africa and in other third-world countries starving than at any time this century. What is being done with Common Market food? It is being destroyed.

After that, the Common Market fanatics tried another gamble, and that was to increase the number of nation states. First it was six, then it was seven and now they have upped it to 12 and still we are not reaping the so-called benefits from the Common Market. The truth is that we can never have the benefits.

As a socialist, I want to make it clear to everybody, including the Labour Front Bench, that I do not believe that we can resolve the problems of the working class in Britain with the help of that Tory Helmut Kohl and that Tory in France, Balladur. I believe that we have to build socialism wherever we are. If that means association with other people, so be it, but we have to prove that it was there in the first place.

We have had the Maastricht treaty that was supposed to produce wonderful things for Britain and get people back to work. They are still on the dole. We have a massive balance of payments deficit with every Common Market country, yet when we started we had a trading surplus with those countries. We have a public sector borrowing requirement of more than £50 billion. What is the Common Market contributing to that? Nothing—it is making it worse all the time. What is it all about? Is it doing the British citizen any good at all? It takes £20 a week from every family in Britain to prop up a tinpot common agriculture policy to line the pockets of the rich farmers.

Sir Teddy Taylor: That figure was reviewed by one of the Treasury Ministers last week. It is now £24 extra a week for the average citizen, not £20. The hon. Gentleman's figures are wholly out of date.

Mr. Skinner: There we have it. That proves my point. We discussed it in the Maastricht debate, and the figure was £20 a week. Parliament has been in recess—our euphemism for a holiday—for about 11 weeks and what has happened? The amount has gone up to £24 a week. It is no wonder we have a public deficit on the PSBR and the Government want to enlarge it even more, at least on the economic front.

They talk about a level playing field. There is no such thing in world economics. It is impossible. How can we produce food on the same basis as Mediterranean countries and fruit like they can in California? I have never heard such claptrap as people saying that we need the EFTA countries in to produce a more level playing field. As a socialist I believe in intervening in the economy.

Sir Teddy Taylor: Shame.

Mr. Skinner: The hon. Gentleman says, "Shame" because he believes in the market system. I do not believe that it is possible to produce things in the same way in every single nation state.

The British people know that the Common Market has failed. They know that it is not what it was before. They can see mass unemployment in all the Common Market countries. They can see the rise of neo-fascism in Germany, Italy and France and now it is beginning to rear its ugly head in Britain. What has the Common Market done for them? Nothing at all.

It is time that people understood that there comes a moment when we have to accept that treaties such as the Common Market treaty, the Maastricht treaty and the one they are proposing now do not last any longer. Treaties between nation states do not last for ever and we have seen the best inside the Common Market.

I am not hoodwinked by the business of incorporating the EFTA countries to make it all better. It will not make things better; it is defunct. We can talk about it, we can talk a donkey's hind leg off for three or four days, or even a fortnight—I will be here. I do not mind seeing the Tories ripped apart on this issue. In fact, I am on the horns of a dilemma. Would it be a good idea to spend a fortnight discussing this matter? We would have to have a splash-plate in front of us to stop Tory blood splashing us.

The Labour Front Bench should have been smarter. They should have said, "Let us have a fortnight on it. We can get all the Tory rebels back into business and Lady Thatcher could have little seminars to tell them what to do. It would be hilarious." I am beginning to think that it would be a good idea. We could scrap the fortnight's recess. Is anybody in favour of that?

They tell us that on 4 November we are to pack up again for another fortnight. Will anybody volunteer to talk about the EFTA thing for a fortnight? I can see one, two, three volunteers, and I shall be here. It would be better than VAT on fuel. I would settle for debating this thing instead of having VAT on fuel. I would settle for debating it instead of shutting the pits or taking action against some of the impoverished people in Britain, in the knowledge that it will not get us anywhere but at least it will divide the Tory party even more.

You heard it all before, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when you where chairman of the Committee on the Maastricht Bill. They were pulling the wool over people's eyes. We are now at it again, all because 30 years ago some people had the daft idea that somehow or other we could call on other nation states to resolve problems that we did not have the guts to resolve ourselves. That applies to both sides of the House. That is roughly what it is about.

People are elected here to be Members of Parliament in Britain. They say, "We would love to get you better pensions but we cannot, we would love to find you employment but we cannot, we would love to be able to do all these things to make your lives better"—but in the real world we have to go with a begging bowl to Helmut Kohl, to France and to the rest.

It is an abdication and a dereliction of duty. We are about to debate another piece of that escapism that makes my blood boil.

5.36 pm

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): On 25 September, the Prime Minister wrote an article in *The Economist* saying:

"Some differences in the Community are stark and simple. We counted the financial cost of our membership. Others counted their financial gain."

He continued with the point I want to emphasise:

"We subjected each proposal to the scrutiny of Parliament. They relaxed in the sure knowledge that their public opinion uncritically endorsed the European idea. Hang the detail. Never mind the concession of power to Brussels. Maastricht changed all that."

We seem now to be faced with yet another enormous raft of legislation. It is impossible for anybody to begin to imagine how much there is in the papers we are expected to get through in one sitting tomorrow afternoon. Although I personally do not believe it would be necessary to have an extended debate of the kind that we had before, we must consider the sheer volume of this stuff.

One has only to look at the references, each one of which is absolutely massive in its own right, and then realise that it is being amended in its application to the European economic area as well as to the United Kingdom, to realise that this rather shabby, behind-the doors deal between the Front Benches is a travesty of our democratic system. My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) made a very important point about the way in which democracy in the House is being drained away. This is a typical example.

It may come as a surprise to many hon. Members that I did not particularly enjoy much of the debate on the Maastricht treaty, but I knew that it was essential that, in procedural terms, we ensured that we examined properly the detail and matter in the Bill and the treaty.

I shall make just one more point, because there is no need to go into matters in great detail today. In the preamble and the provisions of this massively complicated agreement, there is a reference to the relationship between Parliaments. We are being asked in this sittings motion to consider the impact upon our democracy when the matter is debated at short notice and in short time tomorrow.

Hon. Members may not know that it effectively bypasses the British Parliament for the following reason: it deals with the relationships between the European Parliament and EFTA national Parliaments, yet we are being asked to implement the provisions in a Bill which affects our constituents.

If I could find any excuse for that, it would be—this may have escaped the notice of some hon. Members—that the Bill came here from the House of Lords on 25 November 1992, 11 months ago. Surely, in the aftermath of, and having regard to, the debates on Maastricht, we could at least have been given an opportunity to consider the Bill in a reasonable and proper manner. "Maine's Ancient Law" contains the maxim:

"Justice is to be found in the interstices of procedure."

The motion is a travesty of that maxim.

5.40 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): I, too, strongly object to the way in which, yet again, the Government are using Parliament as some sort of legislative convenience. It is quite outrageous that, when a Bill of this importance is being considered, the Government, because of their majority, will introduce a timetable motion that will sweep to one side the very important considerations involved in the Bill.

In years to come, when the Government are producing delegated legislation through Ministers, they will refer to section 2 of the European Communities Act 1972, which is also referred to in the Bill, because that is the section that gives the administrative machinery extra power to produce delegated legislation and to bypass this House.

As the Leader of the House knows—I have raised the matter several times—timetable motions sweep Bills through the House without adequate debate and without adequate time to table amendments and to have a proper Committee stage. There is a different pattern of consideration for other Bills, so the House presumably regards the longer period allotted to them as adequate. If the time available for this Bill is to be curtailed, by definition that amount of time must be inadequate.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) and others have raised a wide range of issues, and we need time to discuss them. For example, the Bill gives untrammelled powers to Ministers. It provides for the removal of

"exceptions and modifications as may be prescribed by regulations"

from the operation of clause 2. In other words, even though we will be forced to pass the Bill so hurriedly, Ministers will still be given untrammelled powers to make exceptions by means of delegated powers.

The Government claimed that they would take the legislative burden off the backs of the people, yet they treat this place with such contempt that the vast majority of their legislation emanates from subordinate instruments produced by Ministers. It is not on a trivial scale; they have produced more statutory instruments than any Government in the history of Parliament—3,500 last year.

Mr. Skinner: Never!

Mr. Cryer: My hon. Friend expresses surprise, as well he might. Many of those instruments exceed the power, size and extent of much primary legislation.

As the Leader of the House knows, the opportunities to debate subordinate legislation in the House are extremely limited. When this Bill is regrettably passed and hon. Members table prayers against the potentially huge raft of subordinate legislation produced by Ministers, will the right hon. Gentleman guarantee that, while he holds office, time will be provided for all those prayers to be debated? Of course he will not give such a guarantee—he cannot, because he has competing demands on time in the House.

Some hon. Members—the new, trendy intake—want to shut up shop at 5 o'clock and go home for tea and crumpets. They want a four-day week. There simply will not be the time for scrutiny of the potentially huge amount of subordinate legislation that will affect people's daily lives. The law is the law, whether it is made through primary legislation, through a truncated version of primary legislation—such as we are being asked to approve this afternoon—or through the whole process of Second Reading, Committee stage, Report and Third Reading, the House of Lords and then back to the Commons.

The delegated powers used by Ministers have the same effect as primary legislation, and often include criminal sanctions. It is important that time is provided to debate the

[Mr. Cryer]

powers that this Bill will hand to Ministers. People are sick and tired of the huge volume of legislation introduced by this Government and their predecessors. Clause 5 states:

"The power to make regulations . . . shall be exercisable by statutory instrument".

There is no definition showing whether they will be made under the affirmative procedure—a resolution by the House to approve an instrument—or under the negative procedure. Apparently, that is to be left entirely to the Minister. That is not right. More instruments should be subject to the affirmative procedure, so that the House can have some sort of bite at the cherry. It is called democratic scrutiny.

The Government want to curtail the democratic processes for producing primary legislation. Then, within that curtailed process, they want to produce primary legislation that will give further powers to Ministers to produce subordinate legislation, which we are certain will not receive any scrutiny in the House.

The Bill provides for subordinate legislation to be produced to cover a wide range of instruments, including

"Orders in Council, orders, rules, regulations, schemes, warrants, byelaws and other instruments made under any Act."

That is not a narrow range. It is true that "any Act" is defined to some degree in the Bill, but it is important that the House has an opportunity to curtail such wide powers.

I object to Ministers being given such huge powers, because of the way that the Whips carry out their business —Conservative Whips and, I regret to say, Labour Whips reaching agreement to hand Ministers a huge range of subordinate powers.

Mr. Spearing: My hon. Friend illustrates the need for proper scrutiny. Does he agree that the motions, especially the ways and means motion that will be debated tomorrow —I hope we do not actually get as far as that—include the power to lay a tax at some future time, under any existing Act, for purposes unknown? To that extent, the motions are "open sesame"—not only for regulations, but possibly for taxation for specific purposes.

Mr. Cryer: My hon. Friend clearly shows the need for more time. It is a relatively short Bill—indeed, the Maastricht Bill was also relatively short—but it is important. It is disgraceful that the Government should attempt to curtail proceedings on it. There is no need to do that. We have just been on holiday for 11 weeks. Hon. Members perform various tasks during that time and so are not completely free for those 11 weeks but, nevertheless, we have just had an 11-week recess. We will be here for a few days and on 4 November, so it is said, the House will go into recess again so that some Members of Parliament can recover from the shock of returning here after 11 weeks' holiday. Then we shall have another fortnight's holiday, coming back on 18 November. Why should the House have a fortnight's holiday at the convenience of the Government?

The Government want this place shut up to reduce scrutiny and challenge. Ministers make statements on television with no challenge other than a few soundbites from Opposition Members, who are in a subordinate position because the Minister is given prominence. Why should we not take two or three of those 10 weekdays? If the Leader of the House is in difficulty, I shall table a resolution to curtail that fortnight's recess and, by a nod and a wink, he can tell his troops to slip off and let the Labour party approve the resolution.

It would not be popular among some hon. Members but, none the less, on the basis that we have plenty of time, I am prepared to do it. We can then have an additional two or three days in which to scrutinise the legislation without any difficulty.

Mr. Cash: Has it occurred to the hon. Gentleman that one reason why the Government are so anxious to get the legislation through as quickly as possible before 1 November may be that that is the date on which the Maastricht treaty has legal effect in the United Kingdom? The drafting of this Bill is based on the assumption, which I am glad some of us managed to prevent being realised, that the Government would get the Maastricht treaty through in a jiffy. For practical purposes, the Government must get this Bill on the statute book before 1 November. Therefore, although it would be a good idea to have more time, we would need to have that time between now and 1 November.

Mr. Cryer: I am not in favour of this Parliament being subordinated to the convenience of other members of the EC. If Parliament wishes to take extra time to scrutinise legislation, we are entitled to do so. I do not accept the notion that we should be subordinate in the headlong rush for integration into the Common Market.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) said, the Common Market has been a millstone around the neck of the British people. It has not provided jobs; it has reduced them. It has eroded our manufacturing base. We import from the Common Market nearly half the total number of cars registered on our roads each year. The Common Market exports much more to us than we export to it. Our economic relationship with the Common Market is dependent on its economic survival. It is diminishing —hence the stalling of our recovery. We face a deluge of legislation from the Common Market, much of it irrelevant.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman was doing well and keeping entirely in order, but he is now going beyond the scope of the two motions—far further than even the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) went.

Mr. Cryer: The implications of our relationship with the Common Market are relevant, because the treaty that the Bill implements links the EFTA countries with the Common Market. Therefore, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what you say is right, and I do not challenge it.

But, as the lawyers would say—although they are not here because they are in the courts—that demonstrates beyond peradventure the need for extra time to debate this comprehensive, complicated and extensive legislation. Your remarks, Mr. Deputy Speaker, demonstrated the nature and range of the debate that would be in order if adequate time were given, and that shows how shoddily the House is being treated by the Government.

We are always in some difficulty on motions such as this. The first motion, which allows amendments to be tabled, was objected to because we wanted time to debate the motions and that was the only way to achieve that. But in the final analysis, if we are presented with the Government's organised majority, perhaps with some

absentions from pro-market fanatics on the Labour Benches and all the Liberals who vote for anything from the Common Market without any critical thought passing between their brain cells, we must decide whether we take advantage of the motion in order to table amendments.

Therefore, perhaps on balance we should allow the first motion to go through, but vote against the second motion, which compresses the amount of time to an unacceptable degree. It is in effect a guillotine. It is the sort of thing that the trendy tendency in the House wants for every bit of legislation.

People can take warning from this. Those who want to finish at 5 o'clock in the national legislature to get home for crumpets and tea, and who are prepared to accept a guillotine at the beginning of each piece of legislation, should note that this is what it is like—compressing time at the Government's convenience so that we cannot exercise proper scrutiny. I am opposed to that, and we should vote against the second motion.

5.56 pm

Mr. Christopher Gill (Ludlow): I support and endorse the remarks made by my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor), who spoke bravely and well about the serious constitutional issue at stake here. I am sure that what he has said will be widely appreciated by the British people whom we represent. It is a great shame that not more of their representatives were in the Chamber to hear what my hon. Friend said.

Hon. Members will not be unaware of a certain election which took place in Tower Hamlets a few weeks ago. Before you rule me out of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me explain the significance of that for what we are discussing this evening.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will recognise that we are debating only motions Nos. 1 and 2, and he will have to be highly creative if he wishes to go down the track that he proposes and stay in order.

Mr. Gill: I shall do my best, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I hope that you will bear with me if I expand my argument. What I am saying in all seriousness is that history is repeating itself. An event in the history of this country 30 or 40 years ago on which the British people were not consulted had a profound effect on this country and, had they been consulted, they might have concluded quite differently.

You will remember, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that in the 1950s and 1960s, anyone who spoke against mass immigration to this island was pilloried and vilified——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We are debating motions Nos. 1 and 2 on the European Economic Area Bill, not mass immigration or a part of London. Every other hon. Member who has spoken has stayed in order, and I urge the hon. Gentleman to stick to the two motions.

Mr. Gill: The debate has been wide-ranging, but had you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, allowed me to complete my next sentence, you would have understood the drift of my argument. Had the British people been allowed a referendum in the 1950s or 1960s on that important issue, we might have avoided one of the great difficulties that we are now experiencing.

There is a real danger that history will repeat itself, and that what we do in the Chamber today, carelessly, will, in 30 or 40 years' time, be regarded by the British people as a serious and fundamental dereliction of duty.

Therefore, my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East and others are right to say that we should have more time to debate these matters because they deal with the fundamentals of our constitution. It is only right and proper that the argument in this place should be extensive. It is regrettable that that argument has not been allowed to include the British people. Many of us believe that they should have been consulted through a referendum, in the same way as they should have been consulted on the other important issue many years ago.

One of the things that determined me to obtain a place in this House was that, throughout my adult life, I have seen this Parliament backing away from tough decisions. I have seen my country drifting rather than facing up to reality. I believe also that, on these important fundamental constitutional issues, the people should be consulted. At the end of the day, the people will be the all-time losers as a result of our failure to represent their interests adequately and well.

6 pm

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): I wish to refer to motion No. 2. The first motion causes me no concern. It specifies, rightly, the tabling of new clauses and schedules. However, motion No. 2 should be rejected by the House.

The House has been denied a detailed scrutiny of the treaty. I think that I am right in saying that the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs has not reported to the House on the treaty. I am a member of the Select Committee on European Legislation, and I can inform the House that that Committee's terms of reference have prevented it from examining the treaty. If the Bill were deliberated in a sensible way, it would allow us to voice some concerns that we have about the treaty. I am interested particularly in parts 2, 3 and 7 of the treaty.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sure that the House is interested in all parts of the treaty. However, this afternoon we are concerned only with the two motions. I should be grateful if the hon. Gentleman would address his remarks to those motions.

Dr. Godman: If the second motion is passed, it will deny us the opportunity to voice our reservations. I have already tabled a reasoned amendment to the Bill. If the Leader of the House were to apply Standing Order No. 91 to the Bill—the setting up of a Special Standing Committee—it would allow for the sort of scrutiny that hon. Members have demanded.

If I am in order, I should like to quote from Standing Order No. 91:

> "A special standing committee to which a bill has been committed shall have power, during a period not exceeding 28 days . . . from the committal of the bill, to send for persons, papers and records, and, for this purpose, to hold up to four morning sittings of not more than three hours each."

That is what the Bill needs. In those circumstances, if needs be, the Foreign Secretary could be called to give evidence about the treaty and its implications for many communities in the United Kingdom.

The Standing Order also says that oral evidence can be given and

[Dr. Godman]

"shall be printed in the *Official Report* of the Committees' debates together with such written evidence as the Committee may order to be so printed."

If that procedure were to be followed, the Bill would be given the scrutiny that it needs. It would allow us reasonable time to table amendments and new clauses to the Bill if we thought fit. The proceedings need not be too lengthy, but a Special Standing Committee would meet some of the reservations that have been expressed.

6.5 pm

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud): There seems to be some familiar voices and faces in this debate. I wonder whether one day is adequate for all the issues being raised. I know that, during consideration of the Single European Act, four or five amendments were grouped together. During consideration of the Maastricht treaty, we changed gear and up to 30 or 40 were grouped together. Now, we have changed gear again and 550 pages have to be dealt with in one day.

We spent 27 or 28 days debating the Maastricht treaty because we thought that it was wholly wrong. However, I wonder whether it is slightly perverse that we should have spent 27 or 28 days debating the Maastricht treaty when the House had no power to alter a semi-colon, colon or even a comma, and then to spend just one day on a 550-page measure when we do have some power to look at the amendments.

If my wife wants to go shopping, she may come back to me and say that there may be a

"small amount of additional expenditure as a result".

However, I wonder whether that is the type of phraseology that we need for this type of Bill, when we are talking about the application for income support by EFTA nationals, of whom there are many millions who can, presumably, make claims. It seems to include Switzerland, which many of us thought had turned down the entire notion, no doubt wisely.

We must look also at the movement of people and our dependencies. My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) has mentioned Gibraltar. Also, Bermuda is considering whether it wishes to remain in the Commonwealth. We are not necessarily treating them badly, but I understand that all the citizens of the French dependencies can enter this country freely.

We will end up with the extraordinary situation—I wonder whether my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House will be able to confirm this—in which the citizens of British Guyana will not be able to enter this country, while as EC citizens people from French Guyana will be able to do so.

Those are just some of the major items that we will have to debate in one day. Is that right and reasonable?

6.7 pm

Mr. Newton: Despite the numerous references to the length of the recess, I have to say, I hope rather wryly, that during the past two hours it has seemed as if we have never been away. Although not without interest, there was a sense of déjà vu. I remind the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) that I made it clear that the fact that there had been an understanding in what are conventionally called the "usual channels" was not being used as a matter of argument. I re-emphasise that to my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) and others. It is simply part of the background that the House should understand.

The hon. Member for Newham, South referred to the use of the word "proceedings" in my statement before the recess. I am sorry if that misled him. It is perfectly conventional terminology, and is usually taken to mean that the debate is not expected to be confined to Second Reading. I shall consider on future occasions whether there is any way in which I can make that clearer.

Mr. Spearing: I thank the Leader of the House for that remark. It would be helpful to say that "further stages" may also be taken. Despite the right hon. Gentleman's comment about déjà vu, that is not quite the same. Does he agree that democracy has not only to be done but must be seen to be done? In respect of the time for this Bill, it might have been better to do it in a different way.

Mr. Newton: If I may, I shall deal with that point in what will not be an extensive speech. What I have just said is without commitment, but I assure the hon. Gentleman, who follows these matters closely, that I did not intend to mislead him by the wording of the statement that was made before the summer recess.

I say to a number of hon. Members who have spoken, including the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) and my hon. Friends the Members for Southend, East, for Ludlow (Mr. Gill) and for Stroud (Mr. Knapman), that the second motion simply provides for the Ways and Means resolution to be taken after the money resolution and Second Reading. Sometimes there is a difference, but normally that is precisely when money resolutions and Ways and Means resolutions are taken.

My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East maintained that this is a further demonstration that democracy is dying, yet gave a convincing demonstration that it certainly is not. He has been able to spend much time looking at points that he thinks should be raised under this Bill.

Were I to respond to many of the other matters about which we heard from the hon. Members for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) and for Bradford, South, they would, although they were in order, take me into a wide-ranging defence of our current economic arrangements with and beyond the Community. I say, however, to the hon. Member for Bolsover, who comes from Derbyshire and who adverted to jobs in Britain, that I do not believe for one moment that Toyota, which is in Derbyshire, would have located in Britain if we were not a member of the European Economic Community.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash), although he may not have meant it in this way, used the phrases "short notice" and "short time". I shall deal with "short time" in a moment. The Bill was ordered to be printed in the Commons on 25 November 1992, so it can hardly be said that there has not been time to study it. Equally, I gave notice of the proceedings intended for tomorrow before the summer recess. There can rarely have been an occasion when the House has had more time to study a matter or to consider the proceedings that we expect to have tomorrow.

Many hon. Members, most notably the hon. Member for Bradford, South, spoke of the motions as though they constituted guillotine or timetable motions. All they allow is for amendments to be tabled before Second Reading and

for the Money and Ways and Means resolutions to be taken immediately after Second Reading. There is no timetable motion before the House. These are sensible procedural motions to enable the House to proceed from Second Reading to detailed discussion, and I hope that the House will now pass them.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That, in respect of the European Economic Area Bill [Lords], notices of Amendments, new Clauses and new Schedules to be moved in Committee may be accepted by the Clerks at the Table before the Bill has been read a second time.

Motion made and Question put,

That, if the European Economic Area Bill [Lords] be committed to a Committee of the whole House, further proceedings on the Bill shall stand postponed and that, as soon as the proceedings on any Resolutions come to by the House on the European Economic Area Bill [Lords] [Money] and [Ways and Means] have been concluded, this House will immediately resolve itself into a Committee on the Bill.—*[Mr. Newton.]*

The House divided: Ayes 287, Noes 35.

Division No. 365] **[6.14 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliffe)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Durant, Sir Anthony
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Grant, Sir Anthony *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian

Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wolfson, Mark
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Timothy Wood.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Ashton, Joe
Barnes, Harry
Bayley, Hugh
Beggs, Roy
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Boyce, Jimmy
Chisholm, Malcolm
Corbyn, Jeremy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Etherington, Bill
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gordon, Mildred
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Hardy, Peter
Leighton, Ron
Livingstone, Ken
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Mullin, Chris
Parry, Robert
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Simpson, Alan
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Spearing, Nigel
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Bob Cryer and
Mr. Dennis Skinner.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Sir Jerry Wiggin (Weston-super-Mare): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Since the opening of the office building at No. 1 Parliament street, it has been the custom during Divisions for the police to obey the Sessional Order and allow hon. Members free access to this building. That service was not provided during the latest Division, and I understand from a police officer at the carriage gates that the police had been instructed no longer to provide it.

I wish to register a strong protest. If there is no way of providing such a service, I suggest that at least three minutes should be added to the time available for Divisions, so that hon. Members are able to get here. I do not expect you to be able to respond to my point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I should be grateful if the House authorities could consider it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, and I shall bring the matter to the attention of Madam Speaker.

National Lottery Etc. Bill

Lords amendments considered.

Clause 7

LICENCES UNDER SECTIONS 5 AND 6: FURTHER PROVISIONS

Lords amendment: No. 1, in page 3, line 31, at end insert—

("( ) to refer matters to the Director General for approval; ( ) to ensure that suchy requirements as the Director General may from time to time determine or approve are complied with;")

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for National Heritage (Mr. Ian Sproat): I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): With this it will be convenient to take Lords amendments Nos. 2, 3, 4 and 5.

Mr. Sproat: The amendments allow for certain additional provisions to be included in the licence to ensure that the lottery is operated fairly and efficiently. The Bill, as originally drafted, already included a wide range of powers for the director general of the lottery to control the operator and the new provisions merely complete the regulatory picture.

Amendment No. 1 will enable the director general to ask the operator to prepare codes of practice for certain elements of the lottery, in particular to cover advertising and customer relations. The operator will, therefore, be asked, within these areas, to establish his own regime according to which he intends to operate for the benefit of the playing public. Codes will have to be approved by the director general, who will then monitor the operators' performance against their requirements. If there were breaches of the codes, it would be open to the director general to introduce new licence conditions covering appropriate matters.

The requirement to develop codes of practice will be included in the draft invitation to apply for the licence which the director general will issue shortly after he is appointed, following Royal Assent. Once the draft document has been considered, the final invitation to apply will be issued, enabling him to license an operator by, we hope, next spring.

As part of the tendering process, applicants will be asked to outline their codes of practice and explain how they see them operating in practice. When the successful applicant has been selected, the director general will agree codes with him before the lottery is finally up and running.

Despite the fact that we could not complete the Bill's parliamentary process before the summer recess, we still hope that the first draw might be held towards the end of 1994 or in early 1995, with money flowing to the distribution bodies in the following month. Of course, the distribution bodies will need to prepare themselves for handling applications some time before that.

6.30 pm

The timetable is especially tight for the new bodies to be established under the Bill and particularly for the Millennium Commission, which will be handling major projects due for completion in time for the year 2000. In order to allow work on establishing the commission to get

ahead quickly after Royal Assent, my Department intends to bring forward a supplementary estimate this autumn for £150,000 for the Millennium Commission. That expenditure during the current financial year was not anticipated in the earlier stages of the Bill, so I wanted to put it on the record for the House now.

Amendment No. 2 would allow the director general to publish information relating to the performance of the operator. That would be in addition to the annual report that the operator must produce and would make him even more accountable to the House and to the general public.

The remaining amendments deal with the situation that will arise when, for whatever reason, one licence ends and another begins. They would require the licensee to take certain actions in connection with the end of his period of holding the licence so that the new licence holder could operate the lottery effectively with as little disruption as possible.

Some examples of the kind of action that might be required may be helpful. For example, the director general might have to ensure the transfer of rights over the national lottery logo or identity. The identity of the national lottery must, of course, be able to continue even if the operator's licence is transferred to another body. Secondly, the director general might also require the former operator to provide information on accounting matters connected with the running of the lottery. Finally, the outgoing operator might still have information relating to his period as licence holder that the director general needed for completing unfinished games, reissuing the licence or reporting on the running of the lottery in a particular period. Clearly it is important that the director general should be able to gain access to such information and that the licensee should be fully accountable to the publicly appointed regulator for his actions even after the licence has expired.

I emphasise that it will not be possible to include variations in the licence relating to the transfer of property or rights without the prior consent of the operator. The draft licence sent out with the invitation to apply will make those conditions clear so that all those who bid for the licence will know of their obligations before they make their bid.

It is important that a certain degree of continuity be maintained in the event of a change in the operator. The amendments are needed to ensure the smooth operation and continuation of the lottery and I commend them to the House.

Mr. Tom Pendry (Stalybridge and Hyde): The Opposition recognise that the amendments are, in the main, sensible and that amendments Nos. 3, 4 and 5 are technical. We also welcome the news that supplementary estimates will be brought forward to help the Millennium Commission to get on with its work.

Amendments Nos. 1 and 2 deserve some comment. The Government have said that amendment No. 1 would make it possible for the director general of Oflot to place additional requirements on the lottery operator, such as a requirement to adhere to a code of conduct on advertising. The amendment also offers the possibility of developing other codes of conduct if necessary. We welcome that addition to the Bill.

A code of conduct for advertisting is important. Those who took part in previous debates will recall that concern was expressed about the possible nature of the advertising. For example, it is plain that in some lottery advertising campaigns in the United States marketing material is targeted on low-income groups. Concern has also been expressed about the possible impact of careless lottery advertising on the incomes of charities. The amendment is welcome because if offers an opportunity for those concerns to be tackled, at least partially, through a condition in the licence that would require the lottery operator to adhere to a code of conduct on advertising prepared by the director general of Oflot.

I believe—perhaps the Minister will confirm this—that the Government intend that if the need arose the code of practice could cover the use of charities in lottery advertising. We believe that it is important that it should do so. It appears inevitable to us that "good causes" will be a secondary feature of lottery promotion; and that could affect charities' income and give rise to concern about how images of charitable work are presented in the lottery's promotional material.

Amendment No. 2 provides that the director general may publish some of the information that the licence specifies that he may require from the lottery operator. That, too, is welcome because it will enable the director general to obtain from the lottery operator for publication information that could help to assess the social effects of the lottery. We sincerely hope that that is one way in which the information will be used; the Minister may wish to comment on that idea.

Research from the United States shows that lottery operators have a tendency to concentrate lottery terminals in the poorer districts of cities. The Government said in the House of Lords that the director general would require the lottery operator to provide information about the number and location of ticket sale terminals across the country. We believe that that information should be published. Indeed, the Government should go further. The director general could be required to include in his annual report a statement about the social impact of the national lottery. That would probably mean requiring the operator to make available to the director general for publication all its market research, including information about patterns of purchase of tickets according to social class, geographical area and so on. That could form one element of the director general's statement about the social impact of the lottery. I hope that the Minister will respond positively to that suggestion.

In another place the Government also gave an undertaking to publish before the Bill left Parliament a document giving information about what would be in the licence, including details of the headings. They had better hurry up. So far as we are aware that document has not been published. In fairness I must say that that is probably because the regulatory adviser, who will become the director general of Oflot when the Bill is enacted, was appointed only a couple of weeks ago. However, it is a shame that the document will not be made public before the Bill leaves Parliament. I hope that the Minister will comment on that matter, too.

Subject to those provisos, and taking the group of amendments as a whole, we support it as a positive move in the right direction.

Mr. Tim Renton (Mid-Sussex): First, I declare an interest as chairman and shareholder of a new company, Interactive Telephone Services, in Southampton. Our automatic call-handling facilities may well be used by the

[Mr. Tim Renton]

winning consortium that will operate the lottery, so it is only fair to mention that fact to the House, although my interest is of course declared in the Register of Members' Interests.

My purpose in speaking in the debate is not, however, to advertise my new company, but, as someone who has consistently and eagerly supported the cause of the national lottery over the past three years, to say how extremely pleased I am that its gestation period has nearly come to an end. I hope that we shall soon see a thriving baby alive and kicking. I am especially pleased about the Millennium Commission, and the commitment of 20 per cent. of resources after expenses to projects commemorating the end of this millennium and the start of the next, because that concept originated from my desk two years ago when I was the last Minister at the Office of Arts and Libraries. I therefore wholly support the idea, and believe that over the next six or seven years we shall have an exciting time —together, I hope, with communities throughout the country—making suggestions to the Millennium Commission about how the money could be spent in a manner that will make our children and grandchildren proud and pleased, and by which they will remember us in years to come. That said, I have to say to my hon. Friend the Minister that I am a little dismayed, particularly by the language in Lords amendment No. 1, which states in a general manner that matters should be referred

"to the Director General for approval;".

If I am correct, that would come at the end of the lines in the Bill which state that the director general's consent must already be obtained by the operator before he does

"anything specified, or of a description specified, in the licence;".

I wonder whether the Minister would have inserted the amendment if the House of Lords had not insisted on his doing so. He has told us that the matters to be referred are limited in scope, but the terminology seems all-embracing. The Bill's provisions afforded enough protection when it left this House and went to another place. We do not need to tie down still further the hands and feet of the operator, but the words

"refer matters to the Director General for approval"

could be interpreted as doing so. I hope, therefore, that when the Minister winds up this short debate he will reassure the House that it was not the intention to provide a further bureaucratic stranglehold on the operator.

If the lottery is to succeed, it is essential that a vast hierarchy should not be created around the director general of the national lottery, which would generate further expense and reduce the amount of money available for distribution to the five good causes—small charities, arts, sport, heritage and the millennium fund. It would be a tragedy if the idea of a national lottery, which has existed for so long, were not to succeed. I am told that the idea first came before the Treasury about 30 years ago when Robert Armstrong, now the noble Lord Armstrong, was a very junior civil servant in the Treasury. If the national lottery is now to be created, it is essential that there is not a huge hierarchy of civil servants and that excessive profits do not go to the operator, but a lot of money goes to the five good causes.

The reason for my enthusiasm for the lottery when I was Minister at the Office of Arts and Libraries was that it was the only way in which I could envisage bringing a lot of new money into the arts, heritage and sport. There was no other likely avenue available to achieve that. Let us now ensure that that concept is not dissipated by excessive bureaucracy in the administering of the lottery. Administrative expenses should never exceed more than 5 per cent. of the gross total. If there is to be a gross revenue of £2 billion from the lottery as the first annual figure, ideally 50 per cent. of that—£1 billion—after prizes, the operators' profits, taxes and administration have been accounted for, will be available for the good causes. There should be £200 million for each of the five good causes out of the initial turnover of £2 billion. That should remain the target over the months ahead as the idea is developed and the first national lottery is introduced before the end of 1994.

The hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry) mentioned points of sale. I have written to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for National Heritage once or twice to emphasise the argument that I hope that points of sale will be mainly in small corner shops such as tobacconists and newsagents, not concentrated in the supermarkets. I think that all hon. Members want the lottery not only to help the small corner shop to survive, but to provide it with another useful source of revenue by attracting more customers. Therefore, if the points of sale and the vending machines—whatever technology is used—were concentrated in the big supermarkets, it would be a tragedy. We would be throwing away an opportunity to bring new life back to a sector of this country's retailing industry which has suffered in recent years and which we would all like to help.

I agree with the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde. It would not be a bad idea if the director general's report were to contain an analysis of points of sale and of the social effects of the lottery. That is an acceptable idea, but I have a twist to that argument. I very much hope that points of sale will be concentrated in the small corner shop.

6.45 pm

Mr. Peter Kilfoyle (Liverpool, Walton): The amendment relates to clause 7, which deals with the issue of the licence for the promotion of the lottery. When the Minister replies, will he enlighten us on some small but important points? Will matters to be referred back to the director general include details on the companies involved in some of the consortia? That subject is of great public interest and has been heavily covered in newspapers and on television in recent weeks.

I refer specifically to three of the consortia which are said to be interested in the lottery franchise. The consortia have dealt with two American companies, one of which is Automated Wagering International, which is currently suspended for its activities in Victoria. I understand that it is involved in the bid of the Great British Lottery Company and is also assisting the Rank Organisation in a bid for the lottery franchise. G-Tech, which is involved in the Camelot consortium, has been under investigation for some time in Maryland in America. It was also under investigation in New York and its lobbyists were prosecuted in California in connection with anti-lottery legislation in that state.

It is of great concern that companies that are to be involved in the lottery should be beyond doubt. I hope that the Minister will give an assurance that the companies'

involvement in the consortia will be closely examined as it is said that the annual turnover could be as much as £4 billion.

Dr. Joe Hendron (Belfast, West): I wish to refer to amendment No. 10——

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. We have not reached that amendment, although I am sure that many people wish we had.

Mr. Sproat: I take your subtle hint, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I thank the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry) for his general welcome for what we have introduced in the amendments. He raised the extremely important issue of controls on advertising and their place in the draft licence. We are concerned that the lottery should not be promoted in unsuitable markets. The licence issued to the lottery operator will oblige him to draw up a code of practice covering the way in which the lottery is to be advertised. That code will go into great detail——

Mr. Robin Corbett (Birmingham, Erdington): Will the code include promotions?

Mr. Sproat: The hon. Gentleman makes a fair point. The code will include promotions and public relations.

The code will ensure that the lottery cannot focus advertisements on those under the age of 16. It must also stipulate that advertising should not link the lottery with the sale of alcohol or drugs, or with betting and gaming.

The hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde made an interesting point about charities and the nature of advertising as it might affect them. The code of practice could cover the use of charities. It will be made clear to operators that if they wish to use the image of any beneficiary, including a charity, they cannot do so without that organisation's permission. I hope that that will set to rest any worries which the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde might have.

The hon. Gentleman also asked whether it would be possible to include in the annual report produced by the operator some sort of social impact. My right hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Sussex (Mr. Renton) also raised that issue. It is an interesting idea and I will draw it to the attention of the director general designate, who can discuss it with the operator when the operator is finally chosen. I certainly see no reason why that should not be done.

The hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde also asked whether it would be possible to see the draft licence, and when. It is certainly extremely important that the public and the House should know what is in the licence. When it is issued—shortly, I hope—I will ensure that a copy is laid in the Library of the House for all to see.

Mr. Joseph Ashton (Bassetlaw): The Minister is giving us rather bland assurances, but the public want to know more about the nitty-gritty. For instance, will people who win the prize be able to claim it anonymously? Will those who operate outlets have to be insured; and if they are refused insurance, what redress will they have? What will happen if someone walks into a greengrocer's shop and sticks up the manager and takes all the funds? These are the practical difficulties, but the Minister is fobbing them off and saying that they are the responsibility of the director general. Apart from during one or two sessions of cross-examining the Minister, the Select Committee has not had a chance to probe this matter either. Will we have another chance to debate these matters in the House?

Mr. Sproat: These matters, important as they are, may arise on another amendment when we will discuss the revocation of licences, improper behaviour and so on. The hon. Gentleman says that I am laying an awful lot at the door of the director general, but that is what the House decided to do when it passed the Bill earlier this year. Of course, these matters will be taken seriously by the director general and I am not fobbing off my responsibilities on to him. It is just that the House has decided to give him certain powers.

It is entirely up to the Opposition whether we hold further debates and if the House considers that we need them, we can have them. This is certainly an important subject; we are moving into a new area and no doubt we will want to refine many things at a later stage.

Mr. Ashton: Would it then be in order for hon. Members to table questions in the House on the workings of the national lottery? Will the Minister answer them, or will he say that they are not a matter for him and his Department?

Mr. Sproat: As the hon. Gentleman well knows, the answer is that if the Table Office accepts the questions I will be glad to answer them. I will be glad to answer as many questions as I possibly can, but the rules of the House will decide that, not me.

I welcome the support for the millennium fund offered by my right hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Sussex. We all pay tribute to his tremendous contribution to the national lottery. He was rather worried that various aspects of the code of practice would have to be referred back to the director general and might thus be a cause of more bureaucracy. I agree wholeheartedly with him about the need to avoid unnecessary bureaucracy. In order to make sure that the code of practice is as realistic as possible, the director general, in his invitation to apply, will issue a draft licence which will give draft examples of what we want in the code of practice. He will then suggest that the applicant state what he would like in the code and the matter will then be the subject of discussions between them. In this way the code of practice will be practical and realistic and will fit in with the plans of the operator as well as meeting the needs of the director general and the public. I can assure my right hon. Friend that we share his wish that no money be wasted on bureaucracy which could go to good causes.

My right hon. Friend also made the important point that points of sale could be in small shops, rural post offices and so on. That will be a matter for the applicants to suggest as part of their marketing plans, which they will put to the director general, but I have no doubt that the latter has heard what my right hon. Friend had to say and will take it into account.

The hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Kilfoyle) asked a good question about the fitness of operators to take part in various consortia. We take that extremely seriously and I can assure him that the director general will make it his first priority to see that no one who has exhibited criminality or any other kind of unfitness to operate is allowed to be part of a consortium. He will scrutinise people's fitness closely. He has the power to ask for papers, documents and information in any other form that he may

[Mr. Sproat]

need to assure himself that the people asking to run the lottery are fit and proper persons to do so. I give the hon. Gentleman that unqualified assurance.

With those few words, I rest my case.

Question put and agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to.

After Clause 15

Lords amendment: No. 6, after clause 15, to insert the following new clause—

False representations as to the National Lottery

(".—(1) If a person advertising, or offering the opportunity to participate in, a lottery, competition or game of another description gives, by whatever means, a false indication that it is a lottery forming part of, or is otherwise connected with, the National Lottery, he shall be guilty of an offence.

(2) A person guilty of an offence under this section shall be liable—

(a) on summary conviction, to a fine not exceeding the statutory maximum;

(b) on conviction on indictment, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years, to a fine or to both.")

Mr. Sproat: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

The national lottery will, we hope, be a great success, but that may lead to the temptation for unscrupulous competition organisers to benefit from that success by trying to mislead consumers to the effect that a lottery or competition that they run forms part of the national lottery. This amendment, therefore, will make it an offence to make a false claim that a competition or lottery forms part of the national lottery.

Although a person who gives a false indication that his lottery is part of the national lottery would probably also be committing an offence under the Trade Descriptions Act 1968, we cannot be certain that the Act would cover the position for all eventualities. That Act is confined to false statements made in the course of a trade or business; not all lotteries may fall within that description—for example, a society lottery. We would not of course expect the promotion of any society or local lottery to make false claims that it formed part of the national lottery, but we must ensure that such false claims constitute a criminal offence.

There will of course be other safeguards for the consumer to ensure that any player who buys a ticket for the national lottery can be certain that it forms part of the national lottery, not something else that purports to. Three important conditions will be included in the licence to help customers know exactly where they stand.

First, the director general will use the licence to ensure that the operator uses the lottery logo or other signs relating to it in specified places, circumstances and ways. Secondly, the licence and codes of practice will be able to control how the lottery is advertised and ensure that customers are quite clear that the ticket or chance they are purchasing is part of the national lottery and not of any other game. Finally, the operator will have to make sure that the odds against winning on the lottery, including against winning the jackpot, are available to all customers at the point of sale.

Hon. Members will no doubt recall that we had originally intended to issue regulations under clause 12 to control these aspects of the lottery, but after further thought we have decided that incorporating these matters in the licence would provide a more effective, less bureaucratic approach. Certainly, we will not hesitate to use our regulation-making powers should the licence fail to control these aspects of the lottery operation to our satisfaction.

This amendment seeks to prevent the lottery from being undermined by deception and fraud and hence to protect both the general public and the national lottery itself. I hope that the House will support me in adding this important customer protection measure to the statute book.

7 pm

Mr. Pendry: The Opposition are a bit wary of the amendment, as it looks as though the Government have listened to us during the passage of the Bill. They are in danger of being called the "listening party", at least as far as this evening is concerned, with one obvious exception to which we shall come later.

On behalf of the Opposition, I accept the need for the new clause to ensure that there are proper and adequate safeguards for the consumer who plays the national lottery. The customer must be sure that he is playing the genuine national lottery game and not something pretending to be so. Safeguards, as outlined by the Minister, are right and proper. I agree with him also that the national lottery needs to be protected from unscrupulous competitions so that it can be successful. With those words, we accept the amendment.

Mr. Stanley Orme (Salford, East): Would a national daily paper that ran a lottery and called it a national lottery cause confusion? What about the football pools? What is the answer? A national newspaper could quite genuinely say that its lottery is national because it is circulated throughout the United Kingdom. How does one distinguish between lotteries? Perhaps the Minister will explain.

Sir Ivan Lawrence (Burton): I am delighted that the Government have taken this step, through the House of Lords, as it underlines a vital point about the lottery; not only must it be squeaky clean, but it must be seen to be so by the public who invest in it. If it is made absolutely clear, by amendments such as this, that there is no question that the authorities will be watching the way in which the lottery structure operates, the point will be strongly made.

The success of the lottery will depend on people spending money on it and buying their chances. Less money will go to the arts, sport, charities, millennium fund or to heritage unless a vast sum of money goes in to the lottery. I originally envisaged something like £3 billion altogether. If we are to have such advantage, the confidence of the people is all important. If that confidence should ever drain away, the whole thing will end as a pitiful disaster and will be contrary to all our wishes and hopes. That kind of measure must be warmly welcomed by us all.

Mr. Sproat: I begin by thanking the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry) for his welcome, for which I am most grateful, and also thank my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence), to whom the whole House would wish to pay tribute for his contribution to the whole concept of the lottery. He has worked hard and successfully in that matter.

The right hon. Member for Salford, East (Mr. Orme) raised an important point about newspapers trying to pass off something of their own as a national lottery. That would not be allowed. They would be prevented from doing that. Any lottery or other competition that tried to do the same

would be caught by what we propose in the amendment. I can give him the assurance that what he fears would not happen.

Mr. Orme: I must press the Minister on that point. If a national newspaper said that it was running a national lottery, it would be ruled out of order. Is that what the Minister is saying?

Mr. Sproat: Yes, is the short answer, but at the end of the day it would be down to the courts to decide. The right hon. Gentleman should have no fear. That is what we intend in the amendment and I am sure that that will happen.

Mr. Kilfoyle: I wonder whether the Minister can clear up that point. Is he saying that, for example, the *Daily Mail*, which is circulated nationally, cannot promote a lottery? Surely it would be an offence if it gave the impression that the lottery that it promotes is part of the national lottery. There is a big difference in that.

Mr. Sproat: The hon. Gentleman is right. That is what I sought to make clear. I understood the right hon. Member for Salford, East to say that, if a newspaper called something a national lottery——

Mr. Orme *indicated assent.*

Mr. Sproat: I see that he is nodding his head—it would be a passing off. That would be caught by the provisions of the Bill. I am sorry if I did not make that clear to the hon. Gentleman, but that was what I was seeking to say.

Mr. Ashton: I do not wish to waste time, but what would happen if the *Daily Mail* offered a prize of £100-worth of lottery tickets in the national lottery? That, presumably, would be legal. It might say, "You can pick your own numbers. You can have 8, 10 and 4 on the 3; or 7, 6, 4 and 9 on the 4; or 7 consecutive, and we will run it through the machine, to the value of £100." Would that be legal?

Mr. Sproat: As far as I know, that would be legal, but the hon. Gentleman's point is slightly different. The point that I understood the right hon. Member for Salford, East to be making was whether it would be right to call it a national lottery——

Mr. Orme *indicated assent.*

Mr. Sproat: ——and, as it were, passing it off as part of the national lottery. That would not be allowed. What the hon. Gentleman has now said would, as far as I know, be allowed because it would not be passing off what the *Daily Mail* or any other newspaper said as part of the national lottery; it would simply be offering prizes in a competition of its own.

Mr. Ashton: If we come to that, and I am glad that the Minister gave that reply, we have to take up the point made by the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence) about its being squeaky clean. Obviously, the lottery must be totally squeaky clean. When people put their money on it, I understand that they will have to put it into a computerised box at the outlet and are guaranteed that, within seconds, if they are going for the big jackpot prize that will be drawn tonight at 8 o'clock, their entry will be recorded somewhere on a computerised line and they will be guaranteed a pay-out.

People will have no such guarantee if the *Daily Mail* gets the numbers wrong or forgets to feed them in, or comes back and says, "Sorry, but we are changing our mind."

I regret to say that the Minister has not thought through the consequences of much of what he is deciding. He can pass it all on to the director general, but the House is in the process of passing something that is bigger than British Airways. If we look at what we were told in Committee, the cash turnover involved is bigger than British Coal at its height, yet every time that we asked a probing question in Committee we were told, "We shall talk about that later. There will be a director general, we shall have a report and an investigation." All sorts of things were promised, but there have been no definite answers.

When my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, Central and Royton (Mr. Davies) and myself went with the Select Committee on National Heritage to Washington and New York and visited the headquarters there, we found many anomalies that the Department has not considered.

Mr. Sproat: Just to wrap it up, there may be anomalies that we have not considered so far, but I hope not. Details of the kind raised by the hon. Gentleman will be matters for the director general when he comes to decide who should be the operator when he monitors the performance.

As I may mention later, if I catch your eye, Madam Deputy Speaker, there will be provision for the director general to publish his opinions of the performance of the operator in addition to any report that the operator makes. All that will be dealt with in that way, quite publicly.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendment: No. 7, to insert the following new clause—

Extension of powers of Horserace Totalisator Board

(".—(1) The Horserace Totalisator Board may hold a licence under section 5 or 6.

(2) The Horserace Totalisator Board may hold an interst in a body corporate the only or principal object of which is the holding of a licence under section or 5 or 6.

(3) In subsection (2) the reference to holding an interest in a body corporate is to holding, or being beneficially entitled to, shares in that body or to possessing voting power in that body.")

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Peter Lloyd): I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

As most hon. Members know, the Tote is keen to take part in a national lottery, but, as the law stands, it is prevented from doing so. The amendment, which was introduced by Lord Wyatt in another place, will enable the Tote to hold a licence to run the national lottery, or promote lotteries as part of the national lottery. The amendment is purely permissive. It simply places the Tote on exactly the same footing as any operator in the betting industry.

The Tote has a good case to be a contender, it being well equipped with up-to-date technology. I believe that it would be wrong if it was to be prevented from applying because we were not prepared to take this opportunity to amend the law to enable it to make the bid.

Mr. Pendry: We also agree with the amendment, for good reasons. Not only does the Horserace Totalisator Board have a proven track record of efficiency, but the profits to the Tote are vital to the horse racing industry. Any decline in its profit margin would have a devastating effect on the industry at a time when it is facing enormous

[Mr. Pendry]

challenges. Racecourse attendances were down last year by 3·5 per cent. and courses are finding the economic climate difficult to live with.

Despite all those problems, the Tote is alive and well, but it needs a helping hand from the Government and the amendment helps both the industry and the efficiency of the Tote. Without an operating licence for the Tote, horse racing would be badly affected, as it was in France when such a system was introduced. The PMU, the tote betting organisation for horse racing, took a dramatic nose dive —about 10 per cent. of its takings—and it took years to recover.

The Tote is run effectively and efficiently and it would seem an appropriate body to hold a licence under the terms set out in the Bill. The Tote's fast terminal, which is currently on stream, would be of enormous benefit for a smooth operation.

I move on to a subject already dealt with by my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Kilfoyle). While most people consider the Tote to be a fit and proper body to have an operating licence, would the Minister care to comment on the criteria for a potential operator? The words "fit and proper" were raised in the Committee proceedings, and probed there by my hon. Friend, and in another place. Since that time, and until just a few moments ago, there was a deafening silence from Ministers.

I hope that, when he responds to the debate, the Minister will come clean and tell us that the honesty and integrity of those holding the licence will be necessary to ensure the public's perception of the probity of the lottery. It would not be good enough for the Secretary of State or the Minister merely to trot out the stock phrase, "It will be a matter for the director general to determine." There must be clear ministerial guidelines on a matter of such importance. There is a fear that, as they have failed to give such guidelines, the Government will be lax in the conditions that they attach to the successful bidder to operate the lottery.

As we all know, the lottery will be a multi-billion pound organisation and it will be invested with the trust and expectations of millions of British people. Surely they are entitled to expect the highest standards to be enforced on their behalf. One suggestion is that the operator should not be appointed on the basis of any vetting procedures less vigorous than those established over many years by the Gaming Board. Will the Gaming Board's criteria for "fit and proper" form a useful basis for the director general of Oflot when he considers the matter? We would not expect companies that make sizeable contributions to the Tory party to be favoured in such an exercise. There would be a gigantic row if that happened.

I hope that the Minister will spell out the criteria to be used. In the meantime, in general we are prepared to support the amendment.

Mr. James Paice (Cambridgeshire, South-East): I am sorry that the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry) spoilt his speech with that last, rather cheap, political jibe. He knows that I entirely agree with his earlier comments and my hon. Friend the Minister knows that the health of the racing industry is a matter close to my heart.

There is widespread concern in the racing industry that the lottery will have a knock-on effect on the Tote, the general betting industry and the horse race betting levy. The amendment, which was introduced with the vigour that we would expect from Lord Wyatt, and which has been accepted by the Government, is a major step forward. Without prejudging any outcome, it may provide a way for some make-up of the loss of income for the general betting industry and the Tote. It is a good opportunity for the Tote to expand its operations. As has been said, it has great experience and major resources in sophisticated communications equipment. It has a base spread over most of the United Kingdom and is probably more experienced than any other such company operating in the sector.

I welcome the amendment and I thank my hon. Friend the Minister and the Government for accepting it and thereby allowing the Tote to operate on a level playing field. It is a worth while move. If the Tote gets the licence, that will bring into higher profile the Lloyds bank report on the future of the Tote, on which my hon. Friend the Minister has been sitting for a couple of years. That separate issue would then have to be addressed, but I hope that, as a result of the amendment, my hon. Friend will look favourably at any bid from the Tote.

7.15 pm

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I am glad to have support for the amendment from my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Paice) and the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry). The hon. Gentleman asked me about the definition of "fit and proper", the Government's view of that phrase and the seriousness with which we took it. He is right. My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary covered much of this ground in his reply to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Mr. Kilfoyle).

I can add to what my hon. Friend said by telling the hon. Gentleman that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State intends to appoint a director general who takes his responsibilities extremely seriously.

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): Or hers.

Mr. Lloyd: In this case, he embraces her.

The Bill is clear. The director general cannot issue a clause 5 or a clause 6 licence unless he is satisfied that the company concerned, and the shareholders who benefit from it, are fit and proper. He will undertake checks, taking fully into account the standards, experience and methods of the Gaming Board. I am pleased that the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde appreciates the effectiveness of the board, which has served us extremely well. The director general will also look at other regulators, because the operation is different from that of the Tote and he may learn from those other bodies. He will do so to satisfy himself in relation to both criminal and financial matters. The potential operators will have to co-operate fully in any investigations that he makes and he will make them before he makes any appointment.

I hope that this addition to what my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary had to say will give some assurance to those hon. Members who are rightly interested in the matter.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause 24

CONTROL OF DISTRIBUTING BODIES BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE

Lords amendment: No. 8, in page 10, line 36, leave out subsection (2).

The Secretary of State for National Heritage (Mr. Peter Brooke): I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Madam Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to take Lords amendments Nos. 9 to 11, 23 and 24.

Mr. Brooke: The amendments represent a considerable clarification of the powers contained in the previous version of the Bill. Amendment No. 8 removes the earlier subsection, and amendment No. 10 introduces a new clause aimed precisely at the two sets of circumstances in which we feel lottery funds should not be available.

The purpose behind subsection (2) of the new clause is to ensure that the distribution bodies do not act in a way that may give rise to conflicts of interest. That is in line with our stated intention that distributors of lottery moneys should not also be beneficiaries. A conflict of interest would arise if a distributor made grants to a body it owned or wholly sponsored, or whose members were appointed by the distributor, or indeed whose membership was the same as that of the distributor.

In bringing the amendment to the House, it is certainly not my intention that the measure should be seen to imply criticism of any of the existing staff or members of the distributive bodies. However, in taking forward legislation, one has to think of the long term. It would be quite wrong for there to be any question in the future, when circumstances may be quite different from now, that the distributive bodies had feathered their own nests with lottery money. It is obviously important that the Government should have the power to prevent this situation from arising.

The amendment is also concerned with Northern Ireland matters. It provides that when my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland considers that the lottery funding of a particular application could benefit a terrorist organisation in Northern Ireland he will be able to seek information from the distributing body concerned and, if appropriate, direct that body to refuse the application. The distributing body would be able to tell the applicant why its application had been refused, but would not be able to disclose publicly the name of the applicant. The powers could also be used to prohibit the funding of a particular project by what might otherwise be an acceptable applicant.

That explains the broad thrust of the provisions, and it might be helpful to the House if the amendment is placed in context in relation to the fight against terrorism in Northern Ireland. A key part of the Government's security strategy is to isolate terrorists from the communities within which they operate. For our part, we recognise the requirement to win and retain the confidence of all sections of the community in the effectiveness and impartiality of the Government's security policy, in the criminal justice system as a whole and in the operational activities of the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the Army.

The terrorists also recognise the critical importance of public relations within their sides of the community. To that end, they have established in the past organisations which, taken at face value, have legitimate aims and carry out praiseworthy activities. In reality, these organisations are terrorist deceptions and are fostered and manipulated by terrorists for the purpose of raising the profile and enhancing the standing of their organisations.

In other cases, terrorists have infiltrated respectable organisations and sought to use them for own ends. The current provision is intended to prevent that deceitful evil. Against that background in 1985, the then Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, my right hon. Friend the Member for Witney (Mr. Hurd), launched a policy to deny paramilitaries access to funds from the Government. The genesis of the policy was the concern that application of the normal criteria governing financial assistance from the Government could result in public funds being used for purposes that could directly or indirectly assist paramilitary groups. Although that policy has been applied very sparingly indeed—only 28 times in eight years—we believe that it has been effective in depriving paramilitary groups of funds or of an enhanced reputation.

The policy has been applied with sensitivity, and I know from my own experience that the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland takes a decision in any such case only after the most careful consideration of the circumstances of the case bearing in mind, on the one hand, public interest and, on the other, the effect on the organisation or individual concerned. The policy has been applied with a willingness to reconsider decisions in the light of information that has been made available, and funding has been restored in a number of such cases.

The policy has been applied above all as a security measure. There is no question of political vetting. The grounds that are considered are security grounds, and no cognisance is taken of the political opinions of any organisation or individual involved. It has been applied fairly on an even-handed basis to groups or individuals on both sides of the community. We are seeking with the amendment to apply the policy to the proceeds of the national lottery. We are under an obligation to regulate the business of the national lottery and it would be a dereliction of duty on our part if we were not to introduce a procedure to enable the denial of funds and the enhancement of reputation to terrorists in Northern Ireland.

We also believe that it is incumbent on us to provide safety for the distribution bodies so that they are not placed in the invidious position of being seen as targets by terrorists because of their actions. We have chosen to confer on the Secretary of State the power to direct the distributing bodies in relation to their operations in Northern Ireland. That measure will make it clear to terrorists in Northern Ireland that if they are deprived of access to funds and influence, it will be a result of a Government decision and will not be due to any initiative of the distributing body. By doing so, we intend to safeguard the distributing bodies from any unfortunate consequences of the decision to withhold funding in a particular case.

Similarly, we are prohibiting bodies from identifying to the general public those subject to direction, as such direction might be taken as implying that the applicants are themselves terrorists and could thus make them the targets of unlawful threats. Frankly, we see no alternative to the provision we are introducing. There are those who say that

[Mr. Brooke]

the matter should be left to the police with the investigative powers available to them under the emergency provisions legislation, but that reasoning has three major flaws.

First, the experience of the police in Northern Ireland has been that when they investigate a fraud—particularly one that has been perpetrated by terrorists—even a successful prosecution does not result in the recovery of the funds; so money has gone to support terrorists whether or not the investigation has been successful. The second flaw is that criminal law does not provide a remedy where the benefit to a terrorist organisation is an enhanced standing in community. The third and most important flaw is that a reliance on offences is inappropriate for our purposes. We are not in this instance trying to catch criminals but rather are seeking to prevent innocent bodies from being duped into providing a flow of money to terrorist organisations or otherwise enhancing their reputation.

It is quite unreasonable simply to say to such organisations that they are acting at their peril and that, in the event that they provided a benefit to terrorists, they would be in jeopardy of prosecution for a terrorist offence. That would not achieve our aim which is the prevention of the flow of funds to terrorists. It would not result in the prosecution of terrorists but would criminalise innocent parties.

Without the amendment, the Government would find themselves in the position of relying on the other powers of direction in the Bill. But the effect of that would be to require distribution bodies to have regard to the views of the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. The bodies would thus become aware of our view that a particular distribution could benefit directly or indirectly a terrorist organisation, but it would be entirely for them whether or not to make the distribution. We believe that would place the distribution body in a difficult position and it would be wrong to place that burden on the body.

There is nothing sinister in the amendments. They serve simply to define a power that the Government have accepted was too wide ranging and to close off a loophole that might have allowed lottery money to go to terrorist organisations. It is necessary to make explicit provision for matters in the Bill as national lottery grants are not subject to the controls that are available in the case of voted Government expenditure.

I hope that the national lottery will attract an enormous amount of interest and that the distributive bodies receive applications for project funding from a vast number of organisations from all over the United Kingdom. I am sure that the millions of people who are eagerly awaiting the start of the lottery do not intend that their contributions to good causes should end up in the hands of terrorists. The House would be doing all of those people a great service by agreeing to the amendment.

Mr. Pendry: We are in total agreement with the earlier part of the Secretary of State's speech. Most of the points of clarification that are contained in most of the amendments are down to our efforts in Committee, and therefore we agree with them.

We find great difficulty in accepting amendment No. 10. If there were no alternative to the measure, it seems strange that it was not in the original Bill and was not referred to on Report or in the House of Lords.

The Opposition are implacably opposed to the terrorist campaign in Britain and in Ireland. As a former Minister for Northern Ireland, as was the Secretary of State, I am particularly aware of the problems and sensitivities that exist in the Province. I have spent a good deal of time in New York, Washington and Boston talking to bishops and to the editors of certain newspapers trying to stop the funds coming from Noraid. We need no lessons in that area. The Labour party is totally opposed to those particular activities and we support all attempts to block the terrorists' sources of funding. But in our view the amendment will not achieve that aim. We believe that it is unnecessary and could be counterproductive.

7.30 pm

The Government have claimed that the amendment was introduced as a result of various representations—indeed, the Secretary of State will not mind my saying that only yesterday he told me that himself. We have taken a good deal of time researching the matter and, as far as we are aware, no representations were made in Committee or in either Chamber concerning the possibility of lottery funds being diverted to benefit paramilitary organisations in Northern Ireland. As the Secretary of State said, the representations made on the original clause concerned the excessive power that the Secretary of State would be granted to interfere with the decisions of the distributing bodies—indeed, I tabled some amendments in that connection myself. The Government's justification for the proposal was the possibility of a conflict of interest between the receiving and the distributing bodies.

It was not until the Bill reached its final stage in the Lords that Viscount Astor moved an amendment to what was then clause 26, purportedly to enable the Secretary of State to prevent funds from going to proscribed organisations or organisations "promoting or encouraging" terrorism.

The Opposition argue that the present amendment is redundant, however, as legislation already exists to deal with cases where there is evidence of misappropriation of funds and support for paramilitary organisations in Northern Ireland. Section 9 of the Prevention of Terrorism Act makes it an offence for a person to make any contributions intending that they be applied or used in connection with acts of terrorism. Section 10 of that Act makes it a criminal offence for a person to receive from or lend money to a proscribed organisation or to come to an arrangement that would benefit a proscribed organisation.

It is already possible under existing legislation to prosecute in a court of law any individual or organisation giving funds to contribute to acts of terrorism or to benefit a proscribed organisation. Amendments to the present Bill would therefore contribute nothing to the fight against terrorism.

Amendment No. 10 is clearly based on the 1985 Hurd statement, introduced purportedly to prevent Government funds from "furthering the aims" of paramilitary organisations. The Opposition oppose the use of that statement as the basis for the amendment on two clear grounds. First, the funds in question are not public funds but funds from the public. That is an important distinction. The Government have consistently argued that funds accrued as a result of the national lottery will not be treated as public money. That is vital if we are to avoid any problems of additionality at this late stage of the

proceedings. Any amendment based on the Hurd statement would only create confusion about the nature of the funds being distributed.

Secondly—and more important—Northern Ireland's experience of the Hurd statement has been that it leads to self-censorship and fear among those in the voluntary sector. The practice in question has been discredited locally, nationally and internationally by the case of Glor Na Gael, the Irish language group, which had its funding withdrawn by way of the Hurd statement. I am sure that the hon. Member for Belfast, West (Dr. Hendron), who knows much more about the subject than I do, will say more about it if he catches your eye, Madam Speaker. The practice was discredited not because the Government changed their mind but because the matter went to court. We believe that it is vital to avoid a repetition of that case—not least because it served only to damage the Government's campaign to starve the terrorists of cash and, in the process, damage the very Bill that the Government are trying to promote.

Funding can be denied to individuals and groups without any specific allegation of wrongdoing being made —indeed, there is no obligation on the Government even to present any evidence of wrongdoing. The amendment allows funding to be denied on the basis of slurs, innuendo or other unspecified "intelligence" material, which could hardly be considered to constitute evidence and certainly would not do so in a court of law. It is impossible for any group properly to defend itself against unspecified allegations—and in any case there is no right of appeal. That is clearly contrary to all the principles of natural justice and to everything that the House expects.

The amendment would extend political vetting to the whole of Britain as well as Northern Ireland. Decisions taken by the National Lottery Charities Board on United Kingdom funding would be overturned as a result of the amendment.

All the regional voluntary sector organisations in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are opposed to the amendment. It is an insult to the director general of the lottery—when he takes up his post—and to the independent organisations that are to distribute the lottery money to sports organisations, the voluntary sector, arts councils and projects to celebrate the millennium.

The amendment undermines the basis of the Bill. It is completely at variance with the whole idea of independent and transparent decision making in the distribution of lottery funds. The Government should reconsider in the light of overwhelming opposition from the very bodies that are to distribute lottery funds and on the basis of past experience. The Government, in the form of the Secretary of State, should be big enough, even at this late stage, to withdraw the amendment in the interests of justice and common sense. In the absence of a guarantee to that effect, I will certainly ask my right hon. and hon. Friends to oppose the amendment in the Lobby tonight.

Dr. Hendron: I share with the Secretary of State and the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry) their absolute opposition to the men of violence, especially as I represent the constituency of Belfast, West, where murder, terror and bombings are the order of the day—we shall hear more of that subject tomorrow and on Friday.

I oppose amendment No. 10 because I have no doubt that it will allow political vetting and confer on the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland excessive powers, with an absence of any appeal process. I am concerned both about the circumstances in which the power of discretion might be exercised and about that absence of a right of appeal. Speaking on the subject in the House of Lords, Lord Astor made the point that bodies and persons have the normal right of a citizen to make representations to the Government about the operation of their policies, and that scope also exists for a judicial review. All I can say to that in present circumstances is, "Big deal."

The Secretary of State will be able to direct distributors to consult expert bodies on grant applications. I should love to know who those expert bodies are. I have been a political representative in west Belfast for almost 20 years, mainly in local government but also with the Northern Ireland Convention and the Northern Ireland Assembly. I have not seen any of the expert bodies that people are supposed to consult about who should be given funding. As the Member of Parliament for Belfast, West, I have not been consulted. I have certainly had discussions with people about funding that has already been given out, but no one has ever asked me whether I believe that a certain group should be given financial aid. I should certainly like to know who those expert bodies might be.

Like every hon. Member, I should deeply resent it if any public funds, including lottery funds, went into the coffers of the IRA, the UDA or the UVF. It is ironic that, not terribly long ago, hundreds of thousands of pounds were creamed off by the IRA in connection with the building of maisonettes on the Moyard housing estate in west Belfast. Those maisonettes have now disappeared and have been replaced by new housing. I should add that I am in no way criticising the present Northern Ireland Housing Executive, which I believe is doing a magnificent job.

I have given a fair number of years to fighting terrorism in west Belfast, but in the only way that I know that I can, and that is in the political arena. I think it fair to say that I have had some little success in that regard. I believe that responsible public representatives, genuine community leaders, spiritual leaders and, above all, Government bodies must encourage young people, families and community groups and young men and women who have come out of prison—God only knows that there are many of them—away from the evil influence of all paramilitary organisations. They should encourage these people, exhort them and guide them to participate as fully as possible in meaningful, active community organisations.

The Secretary of State will be aware of the Belfast action teams, and will know that money is given to many groups. The Belfast action teams do great work, and I pay tribute to them. I have had discussions with them on many occasions, but I cannot say that I was ever consulted about what money should be given to any particular group. I am therefore cynical about amendment No. 10, and about which bodies will advise the Secretary of State.

Belfast action teams give the money that they receive from the Government to community groups. Strict criteria are laid down for the giving of that money, but it is not vetted by the Secretary of State.

Glor Na Gael, the Irish language group from west Belfast, has won prizes all over Ireland and abroad, but following a statement made a few years ago by the then Secretary of State—the present Foreign Secretary—finance was withdrawn from that group. Legal action was taken, and the Government eventually restored its funding.

The amendment would be dangerous for those active in community and voluntary organisations, because it might

[Dr. Hendron]

be suggested that they were associated with paramilitary organisations. Of that I have no doubt. It is one of the most important things in the debate. Great fear now stalks the streets in every part of Belfast, not just in my constituency. There are terrorists and murderers around, and people who have been in prison. More people have been in prison per thousand of the population in west Belfast than virtually anywhere else in western Europe in the past 20 years.

Some of them are young people who have been in prison for all sorts of reasons, been released and are now involved in community work. Someone will write to the Secretary of State and say that a, b or c is involved in a particular group, and the Government will decide that that group should not receive any funding. I entirely oppose that.

I pay tribute to the many voluntary bodies and community groups, not only in west Belfast but in north Belfast—in the territory of the hon. Member for Belfast, North (Mr. Walker), who is not present now—in the Catholic Falls road and the Protestant Shankill road. Many of those groups are doing outstanding work in those areas; but for them, the city of Belfast would be in a much worse state than it is today. Those groups are keeping many young people out of paramilitary organisations, although some have been associated with such organisations in the past. I would therefore like to know how the political vetting will be carried out.

Mr. Seamus Mallon (Newry and Armagh): My hon. Friend represents the constituency of Belfast, West; I represent the constituency of Newry and Armagh. Can my hon. Friend envisage a situation in which community groups in our constituencies will not contain some people who support Sinn Fein, have previously supported Sinn Fein or have been through the legal process because of their support of that group? Can he tell me how it would be possible to have a dynamic community organisation in our constituencies that excluded such people?

Dr. Hendron: My hon. Friend is right. One of the difficulties is that we cannot name organisations in Belfast, because if we make a general point that some members of a particular organisation hold certain political views, someone will put a bomb at their door and blow them to kingdom come. The person who named that organisation would be directly responsible for that.

Political vetting of any kind would be wrong, stupid, immoral and counterproductive. While I agree with the Secretary of State about the Provisional IRA, the UDA and other paramilitary organisations, the amendment plays into their hands; they will use it and show it in the United States and around the world. I totally oppose the amendment, and I ask the Government and the House to do the same.

7.45 pm

Sir Ivan Lawrence: I do not understand the official Opposition's objection to this provision or that of the hon. Members for Belfast, West (Dr. Hendron) and for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon). I have listened with great care to what has been said, but I do not understand how they can object to this provision if they are opposed to the harm that can be done by money going to evil causes. Even if it is right to say that the present law is adequate to stop the distribution of money to evil causes, surely the belt-and-braces approach being adopted will be of advantage.

An appalling mischief would be done if the profits of the lottery went to evil causes and if, in due course, the public learnt about it. If confidence in the lottery is lost, the lottery is dead. It must be squeaky clean; at no stage should the public suspect that the money that they are contributing through the national lottery is going to an evil cause. If they do that, it will defeat the purpose of the lottery and there will be no money to go to the good causes that exist.

The belt-and-braces approach seems to me to be justified in this particular situation, even if the Opposition are right in saying that it is not strictly necessary because the existing law is adequate. I am not sure that they are right. The existing law may deter the giving of money to evil organisations, but such an action may not come to light until after the money has been given. It may be only subsequently discovered that the law has been broken, that the money has been used—has gone—and only subsequently that criminal charges are brought.

The amendment is designed to pre-empt that. Where it is clear to the Secretary of State that an organisation which benefits from this vast source is likely to use the money for evil ends, he can stop that money from being distributed to that organisation. That will tighten the loophole in the existing law.

Having listened carefully to what hon. Members have said, I am rather surprised that this did not form part of the original Bill. As the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh said, we cannot always guarantee that the money will not go, via some person, to an evil organisation, but that is no reason to say that, when we know that an organisation is evil or contains a sufficient number of evil people, it should not be a beneficiary. As for the argument that has just been advanced, that to introduce the measure would play into the hands of the paramilitaries and others, it does not appeal more widely to hon. Members because it savours of the attitude that one must not do anything which is good in case others who are evil use it as an excuse for stepping up the amount of their evil. I would have thought that the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh, who speaks so movingly and with so much knowledge about terrorism whenever the subject arises, would have appreciated that more than anyone.

Mr. Mallon: The hon. and learned Gentleman knows, I know and everyone in the House knows that during the past 20 years in the north of Ireland millions of people have been creamed off the expenditure of the Housing Executive and other organisations towards paramilitary organisations. The Government knew that that was happening and allowed it to happen, for the good reason that if they had not houses would not have been built. The previous Secretary of State for the north of Ireland knows that as well as I do, and I have no doubt that in different circumstances he would confirm it.

In the north of Ireland, in certain parts of the Protestant community and the Catholic community, irrespective of the circumstances, if an application is made for grant aid in such a situation it will be almost impossible to say that there is no type of antipathetic political definition within that organisation. That is the reality of life in the north of Ireland and, whether we like it or not, we have to live with it.

I know that in an intervention it is not my job to ask a question——

Madam Deputy Speaker: It is not so much a question whether a statement is made or a question asked; it is the length of the intervention.

Mr. Mallon: I agree absolutely, Madam Deputy Speaker. If areas are deprived because there are no decent, upstanding people like the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence) and myself living there, who take the time and energy to try and deal with that community, are those communities to suffer as a result of their absence?

Sir Ivan Lawrence: I thank the hon. Gentleman for that intervention. I have already dealt with his second argument, and I cannot improve upon my answer by repeating it.

As to the first argument, it may be that, as he alleges —though I do not accept it for one moment—the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland's predecessors all knew that some money was being creamed off for evil causes. I do not accept it, but even if it were so, what on earth is the objection to putting a further obstacle in the legislation to the same thing happening through the National Lottery Bill? I simply do not understand it.

Finally, I return to the argument that I began to make, that the issue seems to me to be so important that I am puzzled as to why it did not form part of the original Bill. It may be that we are grappling with a beast so large, with so many ramifications, that as Parliament sits we shall always spot more loopholes, requiring changes, and improvements that need to be introduced, and that we shall end up having an annual lottery amendment Bill, rather like the Finance Bills that we have to consider every year to block loopholes. I know that I have not been especially constructive in saying that, because the Bill that I introduced was an enabling Bill and even less was going to be in the Bill.

An annual lottery Bill procedure might be a bad thing, but perhaps it would be a good thing. Perhaps it would focus hon. Members' minds regularly on the way in which the giant machine will operate. If we do not want such a procedure, however, we shall have to settle down—certainly during the next 12 months—and try to ensure that all that we want in the Bill is written into it. Perhaps we can then suffice with one amendment Bill at this time next year. Perhaps there is a reason why that was not originally in the Bill and perhaps we shall hear that from the Minister when he replies.

Mr. Brooke: I welcome the implacable opposition to terrorism expressed from the Opposition Front Bench by the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry). I am grateful to him for what he said in that context. He referred to a conversation with me on the eve of the debate, and I apologise if I misled him in any sense.

On 25 February, in column 294 of the *Official Report* of the Standing Committee of the Bill, when he was leading for the Opposition and my hon. Friend the Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key)—I was glad to see him in the Chamber earlier this evening—was leading for the Government, the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde inveighed against the dictatorial powers that were then contained in the section. In line with the praise that he bestowed upon the Government in response to an earlier group of amendments, we obviously listened to what he had to say. He commended certain parts of the new clause that we introduced, which were in response to his propositions.

In practical terms, however, the narrowing of powers that we were obviously being invited to undertake concentrated our minds in the context of those particular provisions relating to Northern Ireland. We had to verify, therefore, whether the new wording of the legislation would cover us adequately. In the light of that it brought —here I turn to my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence)—to our attention the fact that the Bill, as originally written, allowed the Secretary of State by order to offer advice to the distributive organisations in the context of the type of organisation that we discussed in the debate. In the process of doing it by order he would be identifying the organisations.

A classic element of what is referred to as the doctrine that my right hon. Friend the Member for Witney (Mr. Hurd) originally propounded when he was Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in 1985 is that the Government do not identify the organisations. On the occasions when the name of an organisation subsequently appears in the public prints, it is because that organisation has put it into the public prints, not because the Government have done so. The Government have avoided doing so and have sought to preserve anonymity for the reasons that I gave in my earlier speech, which is that they wish to protect that organisation from any suggestion that all those who are engaged in that organisation might have a direct paramilitary connection.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Does the Minister appreciate that so far he has not answered the following argument? Where an arbitrary decision is made, albeit after careful consultation within the Department, which prevents funds going to a particular organisation without an explanation, cannot the frustration and anger which that arouses among a perfectly legitimate organisation cause it to act as a recruiting ground for the Provisional IRA, which we would all strenuously deplore and oppose? Cannot the legislation have a backlash effect if it is put into practice?

Mr. Brooke: I thank the hon. Member for the manner in which he made that argument. It is one of the considerations that weigh with the holders of the office of Secretary of State for Northern Ireland as to whether they will invoke the particular doctrine in a particular case. I said in my earlier speech, and will refer to it again, that that has happened infrequently. My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton will be interested to know that that is the reason why we introduced those aspects of the new clause in the other place.

The hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde spoke about sections 9 and 10. He could also have mentioned section 11 in the same context. I have covered the arguments that relate to those, and I would not assist the House by repeating them. I appreciate that these are complex matters, and perhaps the hon. Gentleman did not catch the arguments first time round.

The Bill as originally drafted allowed for advice by the Secretary of State. If it remained like that, he would simply be able to advise the distributive body that it would be ill advised to pass money on. He would not be able to give any reasons because, for reasons that we all understand, there is no tradition for doing that. Therefore, the distributive body would have to make a decision without

[Mr. Brooke]

knowing the precise basis on which the advice was offered. In terms of the sections cited by the hon. Gentleman, one of the problems is that the distributive body might be troubled about whether it was committing a criminal offence by passing on the money.

8 pm

The hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde made play of the distinction between public funds and funds from the public. Clause 21 refers to the national lottery distribution fund. Once the money enters that fund, it becomes public money for which the Government are answerable, and not public expenditure. That element of the hon. Gentleman's argument does not have anything to do with additionality.

The Government have avoided referring to particular cases, and one of the hazards of making references to them emerged in the debate. At least one hon. Member made incomplete reference to a body that had been affected by the working of my right hon. Friend's doctrine. An incomplete reference could have caused the hazard to spread to another body which was not involved.

The hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde said that "political vetting" would extend throughout Great Britain. He will note from the Bill that that simply applies to grants to organisations in Northern Ireland, although I acknowledge that some Great Britain bodies are responsible for making grants to Northern Ireland. I repeat what is said in the Bill—that the issue determining the Secretary of State's decision and direction is security and not political affiliations. I say to the hon. Members for Belfast, West (Dr. Hendron) and for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) that, for reasons given in the debate, these decisions are taken with extreme sensitivity.

The hon. Member for Newry and Armagh, who is no longer in the Chamber, asked his hon. Friend the Member for Belfast, West how many community groups in his constituency and, he implied, in his own did not have associations with people in, for example, Sinn Fein. In a sense, that rhetorical question made the point that, if almost every community group in those constituencies has the associations that the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh implied and if only 28 bodies, a significant number of which were not of the paramilitary persuasion to which the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh refers, have been identified under the doctrine in the past eight years, that shows that the powers have been used sparingly and sensitively.

The House owes a great deal to my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton for his pathfinder work on this legislation. He envisaged the lottery growing to behemoth size. As the legislation reaches its conclusion, I am glad that he has the faith that the lottery will grow to that size.

The hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde opposes Lords amendment No. 10, but he did not table an Opposition amendment. If the House rejects that amendment, the clause will remain as it is, and in that state the hon. Gentleman in Committee inveighed against its dictatorial powers.

Mr. Pendry: It is a bit rich, and stretching matters somewhat, for the Secretary of State to blame me for the amendment. In Committee, my colleagues and I argued that the amendment enhanced the dictatorial powers of the Secretary of State. The Secretary of State is taking away the autonomy that distributive bodies would have by taking more power to himself. His argument does not in any way answer the point. The original clause would be better than the amended one.

We have had a good debate on the matter, and I do not want to detain the House. I had hoped that the Secretary of State would listen more closely to the hon. Members for Belfast, West (Dr. Hendron) and for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon), even if he did not listen too much to me. When all is said and done, they were speaking not only from the heart but from the front line, as it were. They certainly know better than I and, no doubt, better than the Secretary of State, although we both had some say in Northern Ireland affairs for a time. They are at the sharp end, and they should be listened to.

The hon. and learned Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence) is as puzzled as we are that this was not included in the original drafting of the legislation. If it is an afterthought, we are asking the Secretary of State to have another. He should look at the matter again. The Government have listened to representations not only from us, but from outside bodies, and it would be a pity to mar that with acrimony at this stage. I hope that the Secretary of State will be big enough to take the matter back. I agree that it is a difficult area, but we should get around a table to try to work out a way of meeting his points, while at the same time not removing the rights of the distributive bodies and staying in line with the general thrust of what I said at the beginning of my speech. I hope that the Secretary of State will do that. If he does not, I shall ask my hon. Friends to divide the House on this important issue of justice.

Question put and agreed to.

Lords amendment No. 9 agreed to.

Lords amendment proposed: No. 10, after clause 24, to insert the following new clause—

Power to prohibit distribution in certain cases

(".—(1) Where subsection (2) applies, the Secretary of State may by order prohibit a body from distributing money under section 23(1) to a person specified in the order.

(2) This subsection applies if at the time the order is made—

(a) the person specified is a company of which the body, or a wholly-owned subsidiary of the body, is a member, or

(b) the Secretary of State considers that the body is able (whether directly or indirectly) to control or materially to influence the policy of the person specified in carrying on any undertaking or performing any functions.

(3) In subsection (2)—

(a) "company" means a company formed and registered under the Companies Act 1985 or the Companies (Northern Ireland) Order 1986 or a company to which the provisions of that Act or Order apply as they apply to a company so formed and registered, and

(b) "wholly-owned subsidiary" has the meaning given by section 736 of that Act or Article 4 of that Order.

(4) Where subsection (5) applies, the Secretary of State may give directions to a body—

(a) prohibiting it from distributing money under section 23(1) to a person in Northern Ireland specified in the directions, or

(b) requiring it to secure that any money distributed by it under section 23(1) to such a person is not applied for a purpose specified in the directions.

(5) This subsection applies if at the time the directions are given the Secretary of State considers that—

(a) a proscribed organisation for the purposes of the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1991, or

(b) any other organisation that appears to him to be concerned in terrorism in Northern Ireland or in promoting or encouraging it,

might directly or indirectly derive benefit from the distribution of money to the person specified.

(6) In subsection (5) "benefit" includes benefit of a non-financial nature and, in particular, an enhancement of reputation.

(7) A body may not disclose to any other person either the identity of any person specified in directions given to it under subsection (4) or any information that might lead to the identification of such a person.

(8) A body shall provide the Secretary of State with such information as he may require for the purpose of exercising his powers under this section in relation to the body.")

Question put, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment:—

The House divided: Ayes 274, Noes 126.

Division No. 366] **[8.09 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Ruclif)*
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Eggar, Tim
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward

Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Luff, Peter
Lynne, Ms Liz
McCrea, Rev William
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shaw, Sir Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Tyler, Paul
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Winterton, Nicholas *(Macc'fld)*
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Andrew MacKay and
Mr. Andrew Mitchell.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Barnes, Harry
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Bermingham, Gerald
Blunkett, David
Boyce, Jimmy
Bradley, Keith
Byers, Stephen
Campbell, Mrs Anne *(C'bridge)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corston, Ms Jean
Cryer, Bob
Dafis, Cynog
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Dewar, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Gunnell, John
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hendron, Dr Joe
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Illsley, Eric
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mallon, Seamus
Mandelson, Peter
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Miller, Andrew
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Wigley, Dafydd
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Wright, Dr Tony

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Peter Kilfoyle and
Mr. Don Dixon.

Question accordingly agreed to.
Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to.

Clause 47

FREQUENCY OF LOTTERIES

Lords amendment: No. 13, in page 19, line 31, leave out from ("that") to ("under") in line 32 and insert ("may be promoted").

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): With this we may take Lords amendments Nos. 14 to 20.

Mr. Lloyd: Lords amendments Nos. 13, 14, 17 and 18 simply tidy up the drafting of or are consequential on clause 47. However, Lords amendment No. 15 represents a change of substance. Its effect is to double both the proceeds and prize limits for a society or local authority lottery. The proceeds limit is increased from £500,000 to £1 million. As a consequence, the maximum single prize goes from £50,000 to £100,000.

We have taken that step in response to the strongly expressed arguments of many in the charities world. The new limits will further enhance the appeal of their lotteries and will help to ensure that they flourish side by side with the national lottery.

The purpose of Lords amendments Nos. 16, 19 and 20 is to give the Secretary of State a reserve power to set by order a minimum proportion of lottery proceeds that must go to the good causes if he feels that it would be in the interest of the good causes to do so. I commend the amendments to the House.

Mr. Pendry: We agree with this batch of Lords amendments; they are acceptable to us. When the Minister said that he responded to the strong words conveyed to him from the charities, he omitted to mention the eloquent arguments from the Opposition on behalf of the charities. It is a particular pleasure to see a sinner repent, and when that sinner is a Tory Minister it is even more pleasurable. I refer to the Minister specifically. He argued in Committee that a top prize of more than £500,000 would be detrimental to the aims of a national lottery. He went on to say that it would create a series of "mini national lotteries". Since then, wiser counsels have prevailed. With the benefit of hindsight, he can say that he was bent by our arguments —[HON. MEMBERS: "Bent!"] Not "bent" in the way that my hon. Friends mean. The Minister knows exactly what I mean.

As the Minister knows, we argued for a £1·25 million top prize, but we shall not quibble about the fact that the Minister has seen sense and has raised the level to £1 million for the top prize. That makes it far easier for charities to exist in the world that has now been set.

The Government have said that their aim in amending the Lotteries and Amusement Act 1976 in part III was to enable voluntary organisations to maintain their small lottery income in the face of competition from the national lottery. During our debates on the Bill, one of our major concerns was the possible impact of the national lottery on charities. Charities will, therefore, welcome the national lottery if it provides additional resources for them, which they now feel confident will be the case. We especially welcome Lords amendments Nos. 15 and 16, but we support the whole batch of amendments.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: I am ambivalent about this concession to the charities. We must be careful to ensure that the national lottery is a success. I believe that, to some extent, we are diminishing the chances of that success, which was originally the Government's position. However, we can with a better grace give more money to the charities as we can see that the administration costs that they take are on average no more than 4 per cent.

This is a timely moment to remind ourselves that when we give money to the Arts Council, it takes about 9 per cent. to 10 per cent. in administrative costs. When we give money to the Sports Council, it takes about 30 per cent. in administration costs. I hope that my right hon. and hon. Friends who are concerned with the national lottery will keep a very close eye on the way in which the beneficiaries of this great enterprise use on administration some of the resources that should go to grass roots good causes.

Question put and agree to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to, one with Special Entry.

Lords amendment: No. 21, after clause 53, insert the following new clause—Roll-over of prize money—

(".—(1) Schedule 2 to the Betting, Gaming and Lotteries Act 1963 (registered pool promoters) shall be amended as follows.

(2) In paragraph 13 (requirements with which the pool betting business of a registered pool promoter must comply) for sub-paragraph (e) there shall be substituted—

"(e) the total amount payable by way of winnings shall, in the case of each competition, be calculated in accordance with paragraph 13A of this Schedule;".

(3) After paragraph 13 there shall be inserted—

"13A.—(1) In any competition the total amount payable by way of winnings shall be the aggregate of—

(a) the total amount of the stakes in respect of entries in the competition, less the relevant percentage of that total amount; and

(b) any amount that has been duly carried over to the competition from a previous competition in accordance with any provision made under paragraph 14A of this Schedule;

less any amount that falls to be carried over from the competition in accordance with any such provision.

(2) In sub-paragraph (1) of this paragraph "relevant percentage" means such percentage as may be determined by the promoter, being—

(a) the same percentage in respect of all his competitions which depend on the same events or on events taking place on the same day; and

(b) a percentage which is determined and notified to the accountant before that day."

(4) In paragraph 14—

(a) after "paragraph 13(d) or (e)" there shall be inserted "or 13A", and

[Sir Ivan Lawrence]

(b) for "paragraph 13(e)" there shall be substituted "paragraph 13A".

(5) After paragraph 14 there shall be inserted—

"14A.—(1) Subject to any directions under paragraph 14B of this Schedule, the rules applicable to any competition may provide that if none of the bets in the competition qualifies for, or for a share in, the first prize—

(a) the amount of that prize shall be carried over to the next relevant competition, or

(b) part of that amount shall be carried over to the next relevant competition and the balance shall be applied as mentioned in paragraph 14(1)(b) of this Schedule.

(2) In sub-paragraph (1) of this paragraph—

(a) "the first prize" means the highest prize that can be won, having regard to the outcome of the events on which the competition depends (and not any higher prize that could have been won had the outcome of those events been different),

(b) "the next relevant competition" means the next competition to be held by the same registered pool promoter under the same rules within the fourteen days following the day on which the result of the competition is determined, and

(c) the reference in paragraph (b) to part of the amount referred to in paragraph (a) is to such proportion of that amount as may be specified in the rules or as may be determined by the promoter in accordance with the rules.

14B.—(1) The Secretary of State may direct that any provision made under paragraph 14A of this Schedule—

(a) is not to have effect, or

(b) is to have effect subject to such limitations as are specified in the direction.

(2) The limitations that may be specified under sub-paragraph (1)(b) of this paragraph include—

(a) limitations as to the number of competitions from which amounts may be carried over, and

(b) limitations as to the period within which any such competitions may be held.

(3) Any directions under this paragraph shall be given in writing and may be varied or revoked by subsequent directions."

(6) In paragraph 15—

(a) after "paragraph 13(d) or (e)" there shall be inserted "or 13A", and

(b) for "paragraph 13(e)" there shall be substituted "paragraph 13A".

(7) In paragraph 20(1) (information relating to a competition which the promoter is required to include in a statement to the accountant) after paragraph (b) there shall be inserted—

"(bb) the amount (if any) carried over to the competition from a previous competition in accordance with any provision made under paragraph 14A of this Schedule;

(bbb) the amount (if any) carried over from the competition in accordance with any such provision;".

(8) In paragraph 21 (statement as to commission and expenses which the promoter is required to send to every competitor in a competition)—

(a) in sub-paragraph (1)(a) for the words from "after deducting" to the end there shall be substituted "after making in respect of each of those competitions the deductions mentioned in sub-paragraph (1A) of this paragraph;", and

(b) after sub-paragraph (1) there shall be inserted—

"(1A) In relation to any competition, the deductions referred to are—

(a) a deduction of the aggregate of the total amount payable by way of winnings in the competition and any amount carried over from the competition in accordance with any provision made under paragraph 14A of this Schedule, less any amount carried over to the competition in accordance with any such provision, and

(b) a deduction of the amount of pool betting duty payable in respect of the competition."

(9) In paragraph 23(1) (content of annual statement to be sent by registered pool promoter to accountant and registering authority) in paragraph (b) for the words from "after deducting" to the end there shall be substituted "after making in respect of each of those competitions the deductions mentioned in paragraph 21(1A) of this Schedule;"."

Read a Second time.

Mr. Pendry: I beg to move amendment (a) to the Lords amendment, in line 66, after 'paragraph', insert 'may'.

I have already put on record my pleasure at the distance that the Government have travelled to meet our concerns about the potential impact of the national lottery on the pools business and consequently on the jobs of many thousands of employees on Merseyside, in Cardiff, in Glasgow and in London.

From the earliest stages of the Bill, we have always maintained that the two operations, both long-odds and low-stake forms of soft gambling, would compete for similar markets. A number of changes have now been made to the Bill which give us and, far more importantly, the pools companies confidence that the industry and the lottery can exist side by side.

The decision to legalise the sale of pools coupons in shops was the first important step to allowing the pools to compete on fair and level terms with the lottery. The reduction of the minimum age of pools customers to 16, in line with the minimum age which the Government have told us will be applied to lottery customers, was the second step. However, we wish the age limit of 18 years to apply to the national lottery and the pools. Nevertheless, it was a move in the right direction for the pools, as was giving the pools the right to sponsor television and radio programmes unrelated to football. Finally, the acceptance by the Government that the pools companies should be given the same right to roll over their prizes as the national lottery heralded a real victory for reason and common sense.

It is worth recalling the Minister's words on Report. I hate to quote him too many times, but he said:

"I am glad to be able to say that I am convinced that there is a good cause for allowing the football pools to operate limited rollovers similar to the national lottery . . . we intend to introduce our proposals in another place to ensure that, where rollover is involved, the pools will enjoy similar freedom and opportunity to those enjoyed by the national lottery."—[*Official Report*, 28 April 1993; Vol. 223, c. 1019.]

That was said in response to my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Broadgreen (Mrs. Kennedy) on Report.

8.30 pm

The Government introduced a new clause in the Lords, now appearing as Lords amendment No. 21, which permitted equivalent roll-over to the pools in the lottery.

There remains, however, one outstanding issue on roll-over which our amendment seeks to rectify and I hope that the Government will be minded to cede to our request. It concerns the three-month time limit that the Government may place on pool roll-over credits.

Under current Government proposals, it is only when a roll-over has occurred in the national lottery that a pools promoter will be allowed to roll over prize money. At this stage, and not before, a direction will be issued by the Home Office authorising a pools promoter to roll over money on one occasion for each type of competition he promotes, but, as I understand it, within a three-month time limit. At the end of three months, if there has been no opportunity to use the roll-over credit, it lapses. We object to that restriction, particularly as no similar measure is applied to the lottery itself.

If the three-month restriction were to remain, it is quite possible that the lottery would roll over a prize and in so doing enjoy the benefits of additional business that that would generate while the pools credit would expire before there was an opportunity to use it. Clearly, in this instance the lottery would be operating a roll-over on unfair terms and the commitment by the Minister of State would not have been met. I am sure that he recognises that it would be a pity if his generous spirit deserted him when meeting the arguments we ranged on Report and in Committee.

The likelihood of an unused roll-over credit is heightened by the very nature of the pools operation. Unlike the lottery, where it is possible to fashion games in a way that produces a high probability of roll-over jackpots, the pools are subject to the vagaries of match results, as the Minister knows. It is therefore impossible to predict the number of winning chances that may be created from week to week and consequently impossible for pools promoters to engineer roll-overs.

There have been several occasions in recent months when in a three-month period no match result sequence has produced the circumstances which would have allowed the operation of roll-over for the pools. In those circumstances, current proposals for a three-month time limit would have meant the pools missing out on an equivalent opportunity to roll over, placing them in an unfavourable and unfair market position in relation to the lottery.

I hope that the Minister understands the deep concern that we and the pools industry feel in this matter. It is not so much about persuading the Government to agree to the principle of equal treatment—that has already been conceded by them—as about ensuring that the Government carry out their promise of full and equal treatment.

I hope that the Minister will reflect and make a concession to meet that particular point. It may seem technical, or even a bit petty, but it is real for the pools industry. I know that it is grateful for the way in which the Government have moved on the arguments that have been put before them.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: As the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry) said, amendments Nos. 21 and 22 fulfil an undertaking that I gave the House on Report, in the debate on the new clause moved by my hon. Friend the Member for Crosby (Sir M. Thornton). They will give the pools companies the opportunity to roll over prize money on terms similar to those which apply to the national lottery by amending schedule 2 to the Betting, Gaming and Lotteries Act 1963.

The substance of new clause 58 is in subsection (5), which provides that, subject to any directions which may be made by the Secretary of State, a pool promoter may roll over part or all of the first prize in a pools competition in circumstances where that first prize was achievable but not achieved.

I am glad that the hon. Gentleman expressed himself pleased with the distance that the new clause had gone. I wish that I could be equally encouraging about the amendments which he ably moved. It is not so much that my good will has evaporated as that we have a difference of opinion, at least at this stage, across the Dispatch Box as to how the new arrangements would work and who would be at a disadvantage.

The hon. Member's amendments seek to remove any limit to the period in which the football pools could roll following a direction. The effect of this, however, would be to permit the football pools to accumulate credits for roll-over in such a way that they would have considerable freedom to pick and choose the occasions on which to take advantage of the opportunity that the credit gave them.

If, for example, there has been a roll-over in the national lottery, the football pools, knowing that they are likely to roll over with considerable frequency, may not use the direction on the first occasion that they do not have a winner. They might decide to wait until another time which suits their promotional purposes more readily.

We have to bear in mind the fact that the pools are free to change the rules of their competitions, and have done so only recently to make roll-over more likely. The jackpot draw which the pools companies introduced on 27 February this year makes it less likely that there will be a winner each week, and therefore more likely that there will be a roll-over.

Figures which the pools promoters have provided show that, in the six months following the introduction of the jackpot draw, the pools on average could have rolled over at least eight times each. If I remember correctly, for one of them it was up to 14 times, while I certainly do not expect the national lottery to do so more than two or three times a year. If there were no time periods to constrain them, they could plan with reasonable certainty to take the roll-overs in almost any month they chose. That would give them a significant advantage over the national lottery.

Roll-over in the national lottery will be purely by chance, and cannot be planned in advance. The football pools, on the other hand, could be given a considerable marketing advantage in being able to select a season. The national lottery is a new entrant in a competitive market, and I do not believe that it would be right to give the football pools such an advantage as amendments (a) and (b) seem to do.

The provisions of clause 58 and the direction-making power is designed to give the pools equality with the national lottery on roll-over, as the hon. Gentleman reminded me I said before. By that I mean that, if the national lottery rolls, the pool will roll.

Every pools company will have that ability in all the competitions which they run. It is not just the treble chance competition but any other competition as well. That means that, if the national lottery rolls twice, the pools will be able to roll twice, and if the national lottery rolls three times, they will be able to roll three times as well. The same limit on consecutive roll-overs will apply to both cases.

However, we are still in discussion with the pools promoters about the length of the time period in which roll-overs, once triggered, would have to be rolled. It would not be right to accept the Opposition argument for no limit. As the hon. Gentleman correctly said, we have been considering a three-month limit. The pools promoters have made representation that this period should be longer, and we are looking carefully at the arguments they have put to us.

However, there must be some time period so that the arrangements operate in a way that is fair to the national lottery and are clearly and readily understood by everyone. If there were no limits, the postponed use of roll-overs by some pools companies would make it difficult to determine how many they had owing to them and how many they had used. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will not press his amendments.

Before I sit down, I want to emphasise that the operation of the Home Secretary's direction-making power will be kept under review. The great advantage of such a power lies in its flexibility. If my right hon. and learned Friend judges that the restrictions and limits should be changed in the light of experience, he can set different ones. His aim —again I confirm this for the hon. Gentleman and the House—will always be to achieve, as far as is possible, a just and equal balance between the pools and the lottery.

I hope that that provides some reassurance for the hon. Gentleman—and other hon. Members who are concerned about that important matter—that the general principles agreed on both sides of the House will be those that we put not only into the law—the new clause contains that provision—but in the rules that the Home Secretary makes under that provision.

Mr. Pendry: The Minister has been most helpful. Of course I am disappointed that he has not accepted my amendment, but the manner in which he opposed it was constructive. I am pleased that talks with the pools operators will continue. The philosophy that the Minister espoused on Report is still with him. No doubt there will be a healthy clash between the hon. Gentleman and the operators and an acceptable solution will result. The pools companies are satisfied with the negotiations so far. I hope that those negotiations will continue to be satisfactory.

Amendment to the Lords amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Lords amendment agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to, one with Special Entry.

Schedule 5

The National Lottery Charities Board

Lords amendment: No. 35, in page 31, leave out lines 8 to 26 and insert—

("Committees

2.—(1) The Charities Board shall establish four committees for the

purpose of exercising the Board's functions in relation to applications by charities for grants in respect of appropriate activities in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland respectively.

(2) In sub-paragraph (1)—

"appropriate activities" means activities in relation to which the Charities Board consider it appropriate to delegate their functions to a committee established under that sub-paragraph, and

"charities" includes institutions such as are mentioned in paragraph (b) of the definition of "charitable expenditure" in section 41(1).

(3) Subject to sub-paragraph (1), any function of the Charities Board may be exercised by any committee of theirs authorised by them (whether generally or specially) for that purpose.

(4) A committee of the Charities Board shall consist of a chairman and two or more other members.

(5) Subject to sub-paragraph (6), all the members of a committee of the Charities Board shall be members of the Board.

(6) In the case of a committee other than one established under sub-paragraph (1), any member other than the chairman may be a person who is not a member of the Charities Board but is appointed to the committee by the Secretary of State at the Board's request.

Tenure of office

2A.—(1) Subject to the following provisions of this paragraph, a person shall hold and vacate office as chairman or other member of the Charities Board or a committee of theirs in accordance with the terms of his appointment.

(2) The Secretary of State shall not appoint a person to hold office as a member of the Charities Board or a committee of theirs for a term of more than five years.

(3) A chairman or member of the Charities Board or a person appointed to a committee of theirs by the Secretary of State may at any time resign his office by notice in writing addressed to the Secretary of State.

(4) A member of the Charities Board or a person appointed to a committee of theirs by the Secretary of State may be removed from office by the Secretary of State on the ground that—

(a) he has been absent for a period longer than three consecutive months from meetings of the Board without the Board's consent or (as the case may be) from meetings of the committee without the committee's consent,

(b) a bankruptcy order has been made against him or his estate has been sequestrated or he has made a composition or arrangement with, or granted a trust deed for, his creditors, or

(c) he is unable or unfit to discharge the functions of his office.

(5) If a chairman of the Charities Board or a committee of theirs ceases to be a member of the Board he shall also cease to be chairman.

(6) A person who ceases, otherwise than by virtue of sub-paragraph (4), to be a member or chairman of the Charities Board or a committee of theirs shall be eligible for re-appointment.")

8.45 pm

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I beg to move, That this House doth agree with the Lords in the said amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to consider Lords amendments Nos. 36 to 38.

Mr. Lloyd: For the distribution of the charities' share of the lottery proceeds, the Bill envisages a Charities Board of 16 members, plus a chairman appointed by my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary. He has agreed that, of those 16, he will appoint three on the nomination of each of the Secretaries of State for Northern Ireland, for Scotland and for Wales. He will also appoint three in respect of England and four in respect of the United Kingdom as a whole. Those groups of three nominees will collectively form the majority membership of the national committees that the board will be required to establish.

The size of the Charities Board can be increased by order, but anything much bigger, as well as being unduly bureaucratic, would be unwieldy as a central policy-making body. As it is, too, the committee responsible for any constituent part of the United Kingdom will be composed predominantly of those nominated by the relevant Secretary of State. They will sit on the Charities Board and they will form a majority of the board members. Thus the interests both of the United Kingdom as a whole and of its constituent nations will be protected.

However, many important voices in the charitable world have expressed the worry that a board of 16 would

[Mr. Lloyd]

not, by itself, be adequate for the volume of work expected, which might be as many as 100,000 grant applications per year.

Amendments Nos. 35 to 38 address that concern. They enable the Home Secretary, at his discretion but on application by the board, to appoint as members of any board committees, other than the four national ones, people who are not members of the board itself—for example, a committee for charities operating overseas, perhaps in the Commonwealth. The decision-making powers of those appointees will be restricted to the committees on which they serve. The committees will be required to have a board member as chairman and their proceedings at any meeting will not be valid unless at least one of those present is a board member.

I hope that the House will find that a sensible and practical solution to what could have been a considerable pipeline blockage when the board is established. We have made the arrangement to deal with what I expect to be a very large amount of business coming to the board.

Mr. Pendry: We accept amendments Nos. 36 to 38, which are largely technical. I want to speak specifically to amendment No. 35.

I am sure that the charities appreciate the Minister's good will in accepting their arguments and introducing this welcome amendment. The previous requirement would have made it almost impossible for the board to set up the full range of regional or local specialised committees that it might consider necessary to enable it to carry out its work effectively across the United Kingdom. The amendment will make it easier for the board to set up a full range of committees and to maintain the necessary link with the board.

As I am probably speaking for the last time on this Bill, I want to say how much I, my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Erdington (Mr. Corbett) and all those who served on the Committee realise that we have been dealing with some very reasonable Ministers—the Minister of State, the hon. Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key), who was with us during the Committee stage, and, latterly, the Under-Secretary of State.

We believe that we have made enormous progress in ensuring that a true national lottery will take place next year. We hope that it will be very successful.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: As this may be my last speech on the Bill, I want to say that I appreciate the remarks of the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Mr. Pendry). Reasonable Oppositions help to produce reasonable Governments. I am glad that the hon. Gentleman has found our responses to his points constructive. I and my colleagues have found his approach helpful and sensible. Between both sides of the Committee and the House, we now have a better Bill than we started with. I give my thanks and my praise to the hon. Gentleman and his colleagues for that.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: I welcome these final stages of the Bill, for which I claim a modest degree of paternity—if that is possible in genealogical terms. But at this valediction I should say something about how far the Bill has departed from what I originally had in mind.

Originally, I had in mind not only a lottery that would raise the quality of life in Britain to even higher levels by providing new resources for the arts, sport, heritage, charity and the millennium fund, which we added in due course, but a lottery in which the state played a lesser part than it now appears to be playing. I am afraid that we have a nationalised state lottery of a kind that I had hoped we would not have.

I envisaged a lottery in which big business played a lesser part and in which, perhaps, a charitable foundation was responsible for the distribution of the money. Big business may be able to make an efficient business organisation work for the raising of money, but not before it has drained from the national lottery a substantial sum of money. One of the bidders for the lottery has 100 people working for it already, just to put its bid in order. One can look down the list and see that there is a real danger, which I hoped would never happen, that big business will drain off substantial sums of money that would otherwise be devoted to charities, art, sport, heritage and the millennium fund.

That may not happen. One cannot look into the future and see. But the chances are that it will and, if it does, we will rue the day that we were not more dedicated in setting up a charitable foundation, not just in the form that we have been discussing in the amendment, but to control the organisation and distribution of the lottery.

I hope that the charitable committees that will be set up will also adequately supervise the charities concerned in order to ensure that a minimum amount of money is spent on administration and a maximum on benefits, which is what this is all about. I thought that it was inevitable when I introduced my Bill that the Exchequer would want to take a large sum of money out of the national lottery, and we asked for and obtained assurances from the Government that there would be no reduction in the money that was spent on the arts, sport, heritage and good causes as a result of the lottery. But I fear that if the various taxes that will go to the Exchequer from the national lottery are aggregated, again we will find that money that should have benefited the good causes will not do so to the extent necessary.

Sir Dudley Smith (Warwick and Leamington): If that should happen, we shall be blamed for it by the public. I hope that it does not happen.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hope that we shall not open up the argument that we had on Second Reading.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: No. I am talking about charities, which is the subject of the amendment.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The amendment is about committees.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: Charitable committees, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Perhaps I can hang on by my fingertips long enough to say that if, in future, the Government seek to take more money in taxation from the national lottery, they should remember that its benefits come not just from taxation but from the allocation of resources to sport and the arts, which will, for example, distract a fair number of the juveniles who are now turning their hands to crime to good acts within society and that will reduce the cost to the Government of an enormous amount of juvenile crime.

If people are directed by the national lottery to engage more in sport and leisure, there may be a better feeling in society. There will be less absenteeism, harder work and

less ill health and the Government will save enormous sums of money which would justify their raising less in taxation.

I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for your indulgence in allowing me, in the dying moments of the Bill as it passes through the House, to make those remarks about the way that I would have preferred the legislation to go.

Question put and agreed to.

Subsequent Lords amendments agreed to, one with Special Entry.

European Convention on Human Rights

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Michael Brown.]*

8.57 pm

Mr. Graham Allen (Nottingham, North): It is a sad commentary on this place that our democracy and our constitution are rarely debated in the Chamber. The rights of our citizens should be the issue most keenly discussed and most urgently debated, yet it finds no room on our parliamentary agenda, which is given to us by the Executive who control the House. In many ways that is why Parliament has become increasingly irrelevant to finding the answers to our economic and social problems. Above all, it is the reason why reform of the House of Commons is so central to rebuilding democracy in our country.

Nowhere is that inadequacy more laughably illustrated than in the fact that an hon. Member must win a place in the weekly raffle for an Adjournment debate at odds of over 100:1 before using that precious opportunity to raise the issue of human rights. That such a matter is debated only due to a stroke of luck rather than as a deliberate duty of the House may explain why the House and its inmates are held in such low esteem and treated with such deserved contempt by the Government and people of this country.

Contrary to parliamentary mythology, people are interested in democracy. It is not only the chattering classes that talk about the failure of our political process. Everyone discusses the poll tax, pit closures, the state of our schools and hospitals and asks, "Why?". The simple truth is that command politics have not delivered. We need to try something different. Pluralism and a variety of independent and legitimate institutions and defensible human rights are a key part of that agenda.

It is essential that human rights are dealt with seriously and I have particular pleasure in initiating this debate on the day that Amnesty International launches a new worldwide campaign in protest at continuing political killings and disappearances. I am delighted to use this opportunity to extend my thanks and those of all who are concerned about human rights to the work of Amnesty International. In the United Kingdom Parliament ringing tribute should also be put on record to Liberty, formerly the National Council for Civil Liberties, and to Charter 88, both of which have kept the candle of human rights alight in the recent darkest years of centralism.

I was pleased to receive from those two organisations this morning a 6 ft high copy of the Human Rights (No. 3) Bill which I presented in the Chamber yesterday. That Bill, when enacted by the next Labour Government, will incorporate into British law the fundamental human rights that are guaranteed by the European convention on human rights. Those rights are currently guaranteed to citizens of every EC country apart from our own. Incorporation would give our citizens equal protection and equal remedies to those available in virtually all other European democracies. The argument of Charter 88, Liberty, Amnesty International and of those in my party, other parties and of no party is that if we have rights, they should be written down for all to see. If the Government can write down our rights as consumers—I welcome that—why cannot they write down our rights as citizens?

[Mr. Graham Allen]

The 1993 Labour party conference endorsed as the policy of our party the most radical package of democratic reforms ever proposed. My right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the Opposition summed it up when he said:

"We are proposing nothing less than a new constitution of citizenship for a new century. A new and modern conception of citizenship, which recognises the importance of the community acting together to advance individual freedom. A revitalised democracy which protects the fundamental rights of each and every citizen, regardless of race, colour, gender or creed. A system of government that is open, accountable and close to the people it is elected to serve."

He went on to say:

"We in the Labour party—unlike any other party—see the vital link between rights in the workplace and rights at the ballot box. We need both, if we are to create a society of free and self-confident citizens."

Labour's starting point for defining rights in the United Kingdom must begin with incorporating the European convention on human rights. At the moment, any person in the United Kingdom can take out a human rights case, but in Europe, not in our own country. Incorporation would allow the rights of British citizens to be directly protected in our British courts—rights to freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, the right of privacy and many others.

The convention has a good claim to be one of the world's most successful instruments of human rights enforcement. The problems of the European Court of Human Rights—too many cases and lengthy processes—are the problems of success. I am pleased that the need to update the procedures of the court has been recognised, finally, by the Government.

The agreement reached in Vienna on 9 October—draft protocol No. 11—between the Heads of State and Governments of the member states of the Council of Europe has arisen specifically from the escalating demands and from the further cases expected following the admission to full membership of countries in central and eastern Europe. The European convention on human rights will soon need to service 800 million individuals. International barrister Andrew Drzemczewski has argued:

"those in much less privileged parts of Europe—whether they be in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo or in the Caucasus—may have a glimmer of hope that they too have recourse against barbarities which we (mistakenly) considered to be confined to the annals of history".

The problem with existing arrangements in Strasbourg is that, on average, the Commission filtering process takes three years while the court process takes two years. Anthony Lester QC, now Lord Lester of Herne Hill—in my opinion the founding father of the British Bill of Rights movement—warned that cases may take a minimum of 10 years to be heard, and possibly as many as 15 years, unless the system is radically reformed and adequately funded. On average, it takes the court five years to reach a decision, and that does not even take into consideration the domestic proceedings that precede a petition to Strasbourg. The old dictum of justice delayed is justice denied could never have found a more appropriate setting than the European Court as it is currently composed.

It is ironic, however, that proposals to reform the system have been made in secret and without proper consultation with non-governmental organisations. None the less, the proposals are welcome. I hope that the Minister will take the chance to explain whether he has any proposals to open up and make less secretive the process of discussion and negotiation on the reform of the court and the extension of human rights.

The agreement reached at Vienna proposes a number of long-overdue reforms—reforms that have been pressed on the Government by Labour Members. The proposals include the elimination of the unnecessary Commission stage and ensuring that all human rights cases are sent directly to the court. In addition, in the vast majority of cases the new court will sit in a streamlined chamber of seven judges, who for the first time will meet on a full-time basis. Unfounded cases will be sifted out of the system at an early stage by unanimous decision of the court composed of three judges.

The Vienna agreement ensures that all allegations of the violation of the rights of individuals will go before the court rather than the Committee of Ministers. We welcome all those proposals and urge the Government to ratify them next May.

I have a specific concern about one particular area and I should like the Minister to address it. At the moment, a Government must specifically make a declaration to allow the right of petition for their citizens. We believe that the right of petition should automatically accrue to all individuals on accession to the covenant by their Government rather than having to rely on the political good will of a Government. I understand, however, that the Conservatives and France and Turkey do not support the proposal for an automatic right of petition for individuals. Will the Minister therefore clarify the Government's position and confirm whether his Government support an entrenched right or petition in the covenant?

Why must this Conservative Government be dragged kicking and screaming every inch of the way on citizens' rights? Even when they are found to be in breach of European Court decisions they grudgingly implement the minimum level of compliance, which often results in further expensive and protracted litigation.

We welcome the recommendations for reform that were made at Vienna—they are but a first tentative step in the right direction. The creation of meaningful democracy in Europe and the United Kingdom will take more than reform of the procedures of the European Court of Human Rights, important though that is. Rights must be used as a framework for a judicial system here at home. If an individual can seek redress under our domestic court system, we shall dramatically reduce the impediments to securing justice, notably the time taken, the travel that is necessary and the expense. That would make justice accessible to all.

A pressing need now exists to overhaul and modernise the structure of our democracy to break the stranglehold of the Executive and to end the winner-takes-all approach to politics. The political system in Britain is failing to protect individual rights, just as it is failing socially and economically. Free, confident and assertive individuals need open, democratic and accountable institutions to grow and flourish. We must create a new culture of rights that will give substance to the inalienable right of citizenship, ending for ever the debilitating culture of hierarchy, deference and class which so holds back our country today.

The Labour party is committed to a major package of constitutional reforms: a Bill of Rights, reform of the royal prerogative, an elected second Chamber, independence for local government, a modernised judiciary, a Scottish Parliament, a Welsh assembly and the introduction of

proportional representation to elect the European Parliament and the second Chamber. As a package, those measures are essential components in the safeguarding of individual rights and in the building of our democracy.

Sadly, the Government have a shameful record as the prime violators of the European convention on human rights. Since 1979, 29 landmark cases have been brought against the United Kingdom, more than against any other country in the European Community. The judgments did not involve marginal or trivial cases; they have invariably involved fundamental issues such as the ending of unfair press curbs in the United Kingdom, the ending of unjust restrictions on prisoners' access to lawyers, the ending of unacceptable restrictions on the husbands and wives of immigrants, the creating of effective judicial protection for mental patients and for prisoners serving life sentences and requirements for new controls on telephone tapping. The Government's record should concern all of us here, whether or not we are members of the Government.

I make a pledge as Labour's spokesman on the constitution: incorporating into British law of the citizen's rights found in the European convention will take place speedily under the next Labour Government and that will be only a beginning. We shall then examine, by means of an all-party commission, a home-grown British Bill of Rights to give effect to the equally important international covenant on civil and political rights.

For the past 14 years, we have watched the Government ride rough-shod over our rights. It is time the balance was redressed. Our constitutional system, with no checks and no balances, cannot now pass the test of a modern democracy. We need to establish the fundamental pillar of all democracies—a separation of powers. We need to consider once again the balance between the powers of the legislature, the Executive and the judiciary. The Labour party's policy to give our citizens written rights, embodied in the Bill that I presented to the House yesterday, is the first small step on that long road.

9.12 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Charles Wardle): I am grateful to the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Allen) for selecting this subject for debate and I welcome it for two reasons. First, the subject that he has chosen—the reform of procedures under the European convention on human rights—is clearly important to the United Kingdom and all its citizens. It is not a subject to which the House has paid much attention in recent years and the debate therefore provides us with a rare opportunity to discuss it. The hon. Gentleman and I can probably agree about that.

Secondly, I welcome the debate because it allows me to set the record straight. The United Kingdom's position on reform of ECHR procedures has, I am afraid, been consistently misrepresented in the press and other media. The hon. Gentleman referred to the growing burden placed on the Commission and the Court, which has been plain for all to see. There are two main reasons for it.

The first is the increasing number of member states of the Council of Europe which are willing to accept the right of individual petition under the convention. Indeed, within the past five years, it has been accepted by all member states. The second reason is the growing awareness of the convention, and the possibility of recourse under its provisions, among the people of Europe.

For some years, the United Kingdom has actively sought to improve the administration of the ECHR institutions to enable it to deal with its increasing workload, to which the hon. Gentleman referred, and to reduce delays. We have, therefore, taken steps to promote changes that might offer some fairly swift and substantial relief. For example, it was the United Kingdom which played a key role in seeking and securing from the Council of Europe an increase in resources for the Commission's secretariat to enable it to keep pace better with the demands placed on it. The United Kingdom has sought to persuade its partners in the Council of Europe that improvements might be achieved by introducing changes to the working practices of the Commission and the Court.

That was not a means of deflecting attention from more fundamental reforms. We agreed that those needed to be tackled, especially in the light of the accession of new member states to the Council of Europe, but we hoped that our colleagues would be prepared to consider more immediate measures, given the time that would inevitably be needed to implement any new protocol reforming the ECHR institutions. We were disappointed that our arguments on that point failed to convince. Nevertheless, we accept that the question of structural change to the ECHR institutions needs to be tackled urgently and we have fully participated in that work.

The declaration that concluded the Council of Europe's summit in Vienna on 9 October confirmed the intention of the Heads of Government to establish a new court of human rights to consider all applications made by individuals under article 25 of the convention. That declaration had the full support of the United Kingdom. There is still a good deal of negotiation to be undertaken on the detailed operation of the new court.

The hon. Gentleman has mentioned that the United Kingdom opposed a single court structure. It is true that we initially favoured a reformed two-tier mechanism because we felt that it would be better able to deliver the standards of jurisprudence and efficiency required of such an international body. But our main aim has been to ensure that, whatever the structure, it includes the elements necessary to achieve those objectives.

In negotiations the United Kingdom has made it clear that any reform of the ECHR procedures should incorporate three important features. The first is an adequate system for filtering cases. Under the present arrangements the Commission and its secretariat have established effective procedures for disposing of cases that are outside the scope of the convention, or otherwise clearly inadmissible, before serious consideration is given as to merits. It will be important for a single body to establish some comparable system if it is not to impose unnecessary and unacceptable burdens on its judges.

The second of our objectives has been to ensure the maintenance of satisfactory friendly settlement procedures. The opportunity for the parties to an action to reach a settlement among themselves is a long-standing and important feature of judicial proceedings of that kind. If such a settlement can be achieved, it will have the advantage of reducing the work of the court. Under the present system the commission has played a valuable role in facilitating friendly settlement, which I know is appreciated by other member states. The arrangement works well. In a single court the parties may be more inhibited about exposing their positions to a body that will also be responsible for making the final judgment. That is

[Mr. Charles Wardle]

not to say that friendly settlement will be rendered impossible, but care will be needed as to how it should be handled.

The third of our objectives has been to secure, within a reformed court, the opportunity for a second hearing of a case. We consider it wholly right that where a decision breaks new ground, or is otherwise of significance, there should be an opportunity for the matter to be tested afresh. We do not think that that is an unreasonable objective; after all, most judicial systems allow some form of appeal. Indeed, the European Court of Justice incorporated such a mechanism a few years ago.

We also believe that the opportunity for cases to be reviewed will provide an important means of maintaining standards of jurisprudence within the reformed court. That is not because we consider that the judges in a new court will be any less competent or diligent than those under the present system, but the pressures on judges operating within a single body will inevitably be greater and an appeals procedure will provide a valuable means of maintaining both the quality and the consistency of the judgments reached.

I have noted the suggestion in the press that an appeals procedure is to be incorporated into the reformed court at the insistence of the United Kingdom. Although it is true that, as I have said, we consider that an important objective, I should make it clear that we are by no means alone in that view. The majority of countries now favour some form of appeals mechanism. Indeed, its inclusion in the revised model for a single court has enabled the proposal to attract general support amongst member states.

Although a draft protocol to reform the ECHR procedures has been prepared, a good deal of detailed work still needs to be done. The European convention on human rights and its machinery have stood the test of time for more than 40 years. The proposals for reform now being discussed in Strasbourg will constitute the most radical change to the operation of the convention in its lifetime.

Mr. Allen: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Wardle: Yes, but swiftly. I know that the hon. Gentleman will understand.

Mr. Allen: I thank the Minister for his usual courtesy and generosity in giving way. He is making a good case for letting the judges in Europe continue the task of judging human rights cases, which they have undertaken for many years. Like us, the Minister clearly trusts those judges in Europe to come to the right decisions. Does he agree that there is a strong argument that the trust that he places in judges in Europe to decide on rights cases might equally well reside in judges in Britain were we to repatriate the European convention on human rights in British law?

Mr. Wardle: The hon. Gentleman raised that issue earlier—it had not eluded me and I hope that I shall have time to address it. That was one reason why I was proceeding at such a gallop—the hon. Gentleman is used to that from our previous debates in Committee and on the Floor of the House.

While we understand the desire for the reform to which I referred earlier to be speedily concluded, it is more important that we should get the systems right. The United Kingdom will continue to play its full part in ensuring that proposals for reforming the ECHR institutions are workable and sensible, and will secure real improvement in the handling of applications made under the convention.

The Government do not accept the hon. Gentleman's arguments for incorporating the European convention on human rights into domestic law. As I made clear in my response to his debate on 27 May in the House, we believe that the incorporation of the convention would undermine the constitutional principle whereby Parliament has the supreme responsibility for enacting and changing our laws. Most laws are specific, but the convention is broadly drawn. Its incorporation would have the undesirable consequence of bringing the judiciary into the political arena, which could threaten their reputation for impartiality.

The hon. Gentleman's suggestion that citizens of this country are disadvantaged by our non-incorporation of the ECHR is, I believe, mistaken. The general principles set out in the convention are contained in the common and statute law of this country. The incorporation of the convention by a number of other member states has not prevented their citizens from submitting large numbers of applications to the Commission, even though they may have had access to domestic constitutional courts.

The hon. Gentleman also referred to the right of individual petition under article 25 of the convention. The proposal has been made in Strasbourg that the right of individual petition under article 25 should be permanent. That is not in our view an integral element of the proposals for reform; indeed, it has only recently been introduced into the debate.

As the hon. Gentleman knows, the convention allows for member states to accept the right of individual petition on either a finite or an indefinite basis. The United Kingdom, along with most other member states, has done so for a limited period—currently five years—and has renewed the right on each occasion. While some may feel that accepting the right of individual petition on a permanent basis demonstrates the commitment of a member state to the ECHR, of much more importance is the extent to which the principles of the convention and the decisions of the court are observed in practice.

We shall obviously wish to discuss that matter further with our colleagues in the Council of Europe. But we see no pressing need for a change of the sort proposed. Indeed, given that we are about to embark on a radical overhaul of the ECHR machinery, consideration of the proposal might best be left until member states have acquired some experience of the new court and its jurisprudence.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-three minutes past Nine o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 21 October 1993

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

CITIBANK INTERNATIONAL BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*
UNIBANK BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*
Orders for Third Reading read.
To be read the Third time on Thursday 28 October.

WOODGRANGE PARK CEMETERY BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*
Read a Second time, and committed.

EAST COAST MAIN LINE (SAFETY) BILL *(By Order)*
Orders for Second Reading read.
To be read a Second time on Thursday 28 October.

Oral Answers to Questions

NORTHERN IRELAND

Health Care, Down

1. **Mr. Olner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he next intends to visit hospitals in the Down district of Northern Ireland to discuss health care in the district.

2. **Mr. Frank Cook:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations he has received from Down community health committee on matters relating to health care in Down district.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Michael Ancram): My noble Friend Lord Arran intends to carry out a visit to health and social care facilities in the Down district including the Downe hospital, in the very near future. In November last year, in response to Eastern health and social services board's acute framework document, the Down community health committee forwarded to the Department of Health and Social Services a document entitled "Save our Hospitals". In July of this year, the committee forwarded a further document called "Our Future Hospitals".

Mr. Olner: The Minister is obviously aware of the profound concern that has been expressed in the Down area of Northern Ireland over the threat to the area's maternity and acute services. Why does the health authority insist on threatening the future of the two hospitals which provide excellent care for the local community? Is the health authority being driven by the needs of centralised finance, and not looking at the benefits provided in the community?

Mr. Ancram: The hon. Member will be aware that the Eastern board is currently finalising its strategy document and it would be wrong at this stage to speculate on what might be in that document. When the document has been completed, it will be forwarded to my noble Friend Lord Arran, who will give it careful consideration. That consideration will be given in the light of representations that are made to him, and also those that I will pass on to him that have been made in the House today.

Hospital Closures

3. **Mrs. Helen Jackson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he last discussed with members of the Eastern health and social services board the question of the closure of and reduction in hospitals in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Ancram: The Secretary of State has had no discussions with members of the Eastern health and social services board about the provision of hospital services. My noble Friend Lord Arran keeps in regular contact with the board about the progress in the development of its strategy for acute hospital services.

Mrs. Jackson: Further to the question he has just answered, does the Minister agree that the effect—HON. MEMBERS: "Reading".] I am not reading.

Does the Minister agree that the closing of the two hospitals in Downpatrick—one of which is a maternity hospital which is only eight years old and which has tip-top facilities—will have a profound effect on people who need to travel to hospital? The closures will mean that there will be a journey time of one hour and a cost of £5·30 to anyone who goes by bus. What sense is there in the area authority taking such action in the face of widespread public hostility?

Mr. Ancram: The hon. Lady is doing exactly the opposite of what I asked her to do, and is speculating on what might be in the report. That speculation negates the process, of which I will remind her.

The Government set out their overall policy and objectives and, once that is done, the health and social services board is expected to respond with its own area strategy. On this occasion, the Eastern and Southern boards have chosen to supplement their area strategies with separate documents for acute hospital services. However, the consultation and approval process remains the same and will be carried out as it always is in such circumstances.

Mr. John D. Taylor: As local people and their representatives in Northern Ireland have no say whatever in the operation of the Eastern health and social services board, will the Minister draw to that body's attention, at his next meeting with it, the fact that the population of Belfast has fallen from 400,000 to 280,000 in the past 10 years? Will he tell the board that there is now an overcapacity in the provision of hospital beds in the city of Belfast, and that we want the board to provide more hospital facilities to serve the people of the Castlereagh, Ards and North Down boroughs, which are increasing in population day by day?

Mr. Ancram: I am sure that the board will have heard the right hon. Gentleman's words in the House today. He will understand, however, that the process will work only if the board is allowed to formulate its strategy, subject to

its own process, and bring it before the Minister. I can assure the right hon. Gentleman that, once that is done, the Minister will consider the strategy fully in the light of all the representations made.

Mr. Hume: Does not the Minister agree that the real purpose of his health policy is nothing to do with improving health, and that the Government are turning hospitals into marketplaces for making a profit? Does he not agree with the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mrs. Jackson) that services such as maternity services should be as close to the people as possible, especially in rural areas? Why does the hon. Gentleman propose to close the maternity services unit in Omagh in County Tyrone?

Mr. Ancram: I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman, of all people, has not watched carefully the improvements that have been made in health service provision in Northern Ireland. Let me give him one or two figures. In the past five years, the number of patients treated in hospitals each year has increased by 41,000, or some 17 per cent. In the past two years, the number of patients waiting more than two years for treatment has decreased by 82 per cent. In the past 10 years, deaths from coronary heart disease among those under the age of 65 have fallen from 230 per 100,000 to 153 per 100,000—a drop of 33 per cent. I wish that the hon. Gentleman would sometimes talk up the health service and show the good work that it does in Northern Ireland.

Mr. William O'Brien: Will the Minister prevail on the noble Lord Arran to visit the hospitals in the Eastern health and social services board area, to talk to those who provide the services and to listen to some of their genuine concerns? We know that there is no democratic accountability in the boards, but, at present, there are local health and social services councils. Under the new arrangements, those councils will be dispensed with and there will be no opportunity for people to bring forward local interests to be acted upon. Will the Minister impress on his colleague Lord Arran that he should discuss such matters with the people who provide the services and listen to what they are saying, as that is most important?

Mr. Ancram: I am sure that my noble Friend Lord Arran will have heard the hon. Gentleman's request. I repeat that consultation plays a full part in the process. I also repeat what I said right at the beginning—that my noble Friend intends to visit health and social care facilities in the Down district, including the Downe hospital, in the near future.

Security

4. **Mr. Cyril D. Townsend:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on security in Northern Ireland.

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Sir John Wheeler): Since my right hon. and learned Friend answered a similar question on 1 July 1993, there have been 13 deaths as a result of the security situation in Northern Ireland, including 12 civilians and one soldier. The Government will continue to pursue a security policy that strives to defend the people of Northern Ireland against those who try to promote their views by violence or threat of violence.

Mr. Townsend: I warmly welcome my right hon. Friend to a post for which he seems singularly well qualified. First, there have been reports during the summer recess of arms finds in Northern Ireland. Can he give the House further details? Secondly, what have the security forces done to try to improve their relationship with local people in Northern Ireland?

Sir John Wheeler: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. The Royal Ulster Constabulary, ably supported by the Army, is succeeding in arresting a large number of terrorist offenders. As at 10 October this year, 283 people had been charged with terrorist-related offences, including 46 with murder or attempted murder. Moreover, large quantities of firearms, ammunition and explosives are being recovered by the operations of the RUC, so ably supported by the Army. I should further say to my hon. Friend that the relationship between the public and the RUC and the Army has never been better and is improving all the time.

Mr. Maginnis: In view of Lady Thatcher's frank admission in her memoirs that the United Kingdom received far better intelligence co-operation from most other European countries than from the Irish republic and her conclusion that the Anglo-Irish Agreement's contribution to security was very limited, is it still the Government's intention to continue, in her words, to refrain from security policies that might alienate the Irish Republic?

Sir John Wheeler: I speak for the Government as it is today and I can assure the hon. Gentleman that the co-operation between the Garda and the Royal Ulster Constabulary has never been greater. I have visited many of the border police stations and seen evidence of that co-operation. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that that co-operation will continue.

Rev. William McCrea: Bearing in mind the bomb at Cookstown courthouse in my constituency which displaced many elderly people and the recent death in our Province of another constituent of mine, the innocent Annie Bogle, because of the IRA bomb in Castlederg thrown near elderly people, what would the Minister say to my constituents are the steps that the Government intend to take to end the reign of terror that the people of Ulster have suffered for more than 20 years?

Sir John Wheeler: I can assure the hon. Gentleman that the policy of the Government is to use the resources of the RUC and the Army to the fullest extent to arrest and detain the terrorist gangs who commit those abominable crimes. In no circumstances will the Government permit any killing or crime to take place without the fullest investigation and the determined support of the forces of the Crown to prevent those outrages from recurring.

Dr. Hendron: While I appreciate that the Provisional IRA have been the main killers in Northern Ireland over the past 20 years, will the Secretary of State make a statement about the murder gangs of the Ulster Defence Association and the Ulster Volunteer Force? Bearing in mind that almost 30 children in west and north Belfast have been left without a parent over the past few months because of those murder gangs, that thousands of Catholic people, mainly in the Belfast area and beyond, are living in fear and terror,

and that, as the House knows, the most recent victims of those murder gangs were Jody Reynolds and Patrick McMahon, will the Secretary of State make a statement?

Sir John Wheeler: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. As he knows from our recent meeting, I take very seriously such wanton killing of individuals. No matter what the motive, it is evil, wrong and should be opposed. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that the Royal Ulster Constabulary will do its utmost to prevent such outrages. Nine people had been charged with serious terrorist offences in the five days from 8 October.

Lady Olga Maitland: May I seek the Minister's assurance that, despite the row over defence budgeting, not one soldier will be withdrawn from Northern Ireland and the Army will remain properly equipped?

Sir John Wheeler: I am glad to repeat the assurances of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, who made it absolutely clear that the Government will continue to devote all resources necessary for security in Northern Ireland. I am glad to confirm that position today.

Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1993

5. **Rev. Martin Smyth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many responses he received to the draft Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1993.

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Sir Patrick Mayhew): Up until 19 October, 15 responses had been received from interested organisations and individuals. My noble Friend Lord Arran has recently extended the consultation period by eight weeks to allow all those who wish to express views on the proposal further time to do so.

Rev. Martin Smyth: I welcome the extension, for which we had asked even before this was published, but may we have a sitting of the Northern Ireland Grand Committee to discuss the order, which is one of the most vital to come before the House because it affects the future of many people in Northern Ireland, particularly our future generations?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I am grateful for what the hon. Gentleman has said. It is for the House authorities and principally the Leader of the House to determine whether the Northern Ireland Committee should take heed of what he has asked. I shall draw my right hon. Friend's attention to the request.

School Curriculum

6. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the curriculum in use in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Ancram: Northern Ireland has its own distinctive curricular framework based on areas of study. Compulsory subjects are broadly the same as in England and Wales. Arrangements are in place for ongoing monitoring and review of the curriculum, but, in response to teachers' concerns about overload, I have asked the Northern Ireland Curriculum Council to complete a detailed review of the primary curriculum by the end of April 1994.

Mr. Greenway: I thank my hon. Friend for that reply. Will he join me in welcoming the admirable interim report of Sir Ron Dearing, and does he agree that Sir Ron Dearing's concept of the need to equip our children to compete in a world of enormous job challenges from the Pacific rim and from other areas means that there will have to be new and original thinking on the curriculum? Not everything can be tackled, but changes will have to be made, and teachers, parents and children must be ready to accept them in the interests of future generations.

Mr. Ancram: I am grateful for what my hon. Friend has said. He will appreciate that Sir Ron Dearing's review does not extend to Northern Ireland, but, because our systems are similar in many respects, his recommendations will be of much interest to us. I shall certainly want to take account of whatever emerges from his review in considering the best way forward in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Beggs: I welcome the announcement that the Minister made earlier this year that there will be no new programmes of study in the primary school this year, that there will be a review of the curriculum and that there will be a further pilot scheme on assessment. The Minister is establishing a reputation already as a listener, but will he assure the House that the curriculum review will be wide ranging and that account will be taken of the views of teachers, managers in education and parents so that those who ultimately have to deliver the policies that are implemented will have an input in creating those policies and will be committed to them?

Mr. Ancram: I am grateful for what the hon. Gentleman has said. The purpose of the review is to investigate problems and concerns that have arisen in schools, especially in relation to overload. The curriculum council has issued a paper for wide circulation seeking comment on the problems encountered by teachers. It investigates the contributory factors and seeks views on solutions. There will be wide consultation. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman agrees that we do not want unnecessarily to prolong uncertainty. I have, therefore, asked for a report by the end of April. I hope to be able to implement some of its findings in time for next September and most of its finding for the year after.

Mr. Rathbone: Under the review, will my hon. Friend ensure that sufficient health education is included in the curriculum?

Mr. Ancram: I will certainly take on board what my hon. Friend says.

Inter-party Talks

7. **Mr. Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the latest position concerning inter-party talks.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: The Government remain determined to promote further political dialogue towards a comprehensive settlement involving the main constitutional parties in Northern Ireland, the Irish Government and ourselves. We are engaged in private bilateral discussions, exploring the basis on which further dialogue can take place.

Mr. Barnes: Would not talks be facilitated by moves in the Republic of Ireland to make its practices more acceptable to Protestants in Northern Ireland, and moves in Northern Ireland to make its practices more acceptable to

its Catholic minority? The Opsahl commission has made a number of proposals that may be of considerable benefit. Its report has been discussed throughout the island of Ireland, but discussed little in Britain. Will the Secretary of State ensure that it forms part of the backcloth to tomorrow's debate on Northern Ireland issues, as it may be relevant to the development of talks?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: The hon. Gentleman will need to be more particular in his complaints about practices both north and south of the border before I can answer that part of his question. If I am lucky enough to catch the Speaker's eye, I will refer to the Opsahl report in a speech. That is how I prefer to answer the hon. Gentleman's question today.

Sir James Kilfedder: In a recent television interview, the president of Sinn Fein, the political wing of the IRA, declared in regard to any possible settlement that the British people and the Government would have to sue for peace, and, moreover, that the Unionist majority in Northern Ireland would not have a decisive say in the future of the Province. Will the Secretary of State comment on that?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I generally do not comment, in the House or elsewhere, on what other people have said. However, I re-emphasise that the Prime Minister made it absolutely clear in his speech at Blackpool that the Government will continue to stand behind the democratic wishes of the people of Northern Ireland. There has been much very understandable and proper talk about self-determination. Whether the present status of Northern Ireland within the United Kingdom is confirmed or changed will depend—and depend alone—on an act of self-determination by the people of Northern Ireland.

Mr. William Ross: Surely the talks that took place betwen the two Governments last year have clarified the parties' position for everyone concerned. Why does the right hon. and learned Gentleman go on talking about further talks when the position is absolutely clear? Is he aware that whenever the word "speculation" appears in denials, the people of Northern Ireland have learnt by bitter experience that usually the speculation is accurate? Is he further aware that the proposals made by the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) and Mr. Adams are nothing less than an IRA demand for total surrender to the violence, and the threat of further violence, from the IRA? Will the Government make it clear that they will not surrender to those demands, no matter how much blarney is wrapped around them?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I have not had the advantage of a copy of the text to which the hon. Gentleman refers. At the end of the talks process on 9 November last year, all parties agreed that there was a need for further dialogue. The hon. Gentleman referred to the talks process, but it is further dialogue that everyone agreed should continue, and it is that formulation which I used in my answer. I believe that the people of the Province as a whole share the view that it is important that politicians should sit down and see whether there is any further progress to be made towards the objectives that they all signed up to as long ago as March 1991.

I need not go further in answering the latter part of the hon. Gentleman's question than to reiterate what I said to the hon. Member for North Down (Sir J. Kilfedder) a moment ago: that the people of Northern Ireland have a basic democratic right to decide their future. The Government will continue to back the democratic wishes of the people of Northern Ireland.

Mr. Peter Robinson: Has the Secretary of State had the opportunity to read, in yesterday's *The Irish Times*, what is purported to be the outcome of the so-called Hume-Adams initiative? Are the proposals outlined acceptable to the Secretary of State, or does he still stand by his often-repeated remark that self-determination by the people of Northern Ireland will decide the political destiny of the Province?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: The latest repetition of my often-repeated remark occurred about 10 seconds ago, just before the hon. Gentleman asked his question, so naturally I stand by it. I think that it is unwise to speculate on a matter that has not been communicated to the British Government. I agree with the four church leaders who said recently, in a joint statement, that they regarded speculation as unhelpful and dangerous.

Mr. Mallon: The Secretary of State is obviously aware of the discussions taking place between my hon. Friend the Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) and the president of Sinn Fein, in a sincere attempt to end violence and bring peace to the north of Ireland. Will he assure the House that if there is even the slightest chance of peace, he will take the opportunity and not let it slip? Will he assure us that he, as Secretary of State, will not allow short-sighted intransigence, feigned self-righteousness or his Government's deal with the Ulster Unionists to stay in power to stand in the way of the peace that the people of the north of Ireland crave and deserve so much?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: One thing is needed to secure the peace desired by everyone in Northern Ireland—and much more widely, I may say. That is a declaration by the Provisional IRA and other terrorists—a declaration that those people mean—that the perpetration of violence is over, and over for good. It is not a question of ceasefires, with the threat of only a temporary relief. I do not agree with the hon. Gentleman's implication that peace in his terms—at any price—should be pursued.

As I have said many times in the House and outside, if that message is given, and if enough time elapses for the fact that it is for real to be established in sceptical minds, we shall be at the beginning of a new phase.

Mr. Garnier: Has my right hon. and learned Friend found the apparent embracing of articles 2 and 3 of the constitution of the Republic by Her Majesty's loyal Opposition, through the agency of the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara), to be of any assistance whatever in the conduct of the inter-party talks?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I believe that it is generally understood that there is much of a constitutional character to be discussed by the two Governments. It is as well understood by the Government of the Republic as it is by us that articles 2 and 3 have a central part to play in those discussions, and also in the discussions on all three strands with which we were concerned last year.

I am bound to say that I thought the tone of the speech made in Cork by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull,

North (Mr. McNamara)—as it was reported—rather more supportive of no change in articles 2 and 3 than I would have expected him to be, if he was being realistic.

Mr. McNamara: I was interested to note that the Secretary of State was able to question the tone only of a report of the speech. At his request and that of his office, a copy was sent to him yesterday. If he had read it, he would have seen it clearly stated that both articles 2 and 3 and the Government of Ireland Act 1920—which have been bones of contention between the two different communities in Northern Ireland—should be on the table for discussion.

Talking of matters being on the table for discussion, does the Secretary of State still believe that, as a basis for the inter-party dialogues, nothing is agreed until everything is agreed?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I think that it is entirely for the participants in the process to decide by what rule they should proceed. For my part, I believe that it is clear that to assemble around the table again immediately would be counter-productive; I believe that the right process now is to explore, in bilateral discussions with the other parties, how we can best take matters forward.

I am glad to note that the hon. Gentleman has retained his position, at least for this afternoon, and I hope that he will still be there tomorrow morning. I hope that he will then be able to tell us whether the recent publication of the views of some of his closest advisers on Northern Ireland represent the policy of Her Majesty's Opposition. They state:

"We also recognise that critics will claim that our model of shared authority is undemocratic because it will initially have to be imposed against the wishes of a majority of Northern Ireland's citizens. We reply first of all that Northern Ireland, at present, is not a legitimate unit of democratic decision-making and rests on coercion."

I hope that the hon. Gentleman will confirm whether that is his view, as a spokesman for the Opposition.

Health Care (Down)

9. **Mr. McGrady:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what assessment he has made of the proposals for the Down group of hospitals in Downpatrick, County Down, put forward by the Eastern health and social services board; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: I am aware that there is much concern about the future of the Down group of hospitals. As the hon. Gentleman knows, the Eastern health and social services board expects to publish its strategy on acute hospital services in the near future. That will be sent to my noble Friend Lord Arran, who will examine it carefully before deciding whether to endorse it.

Mr. McGrady: I thank the Minister for his reply, which was perhaps inadvertently slightly disingenuous, in that the Eastern health board report is already complete and is in the Department of Health and Social Services. The Department and the Minister will make the decision de facto, not de jure. When his ministerial colleague considers that report, will he take notice of all the community concerns and uphold the effective and cost-effective general and maternity provision that is made in the Down district hospital? Will he also bear in mind the enormous economic and social consequences that an adverse decision would engender for Down district and do his utmost to ensure that accessibility, with the group provision that we already have, will be the basis of the eventual decision?

Mr. Ancram: I am very much aware of the importance of the Downe hospital to the people of Downpatrick and district. I am well aware of the concerns that exist there, as is my noble Friend Lord Arran. I have to say, however, that the report to which I refer—I referred to it earlier—was that by which the Eastern and Southern boards have chosen to implement their area strategies with separate documents for acute hospital services. That is not yet before my noble Friend Lord Arran. When it is, he will give it due consideration.

Economy

10. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps he is taking to promote the economy of Northern Ireland.

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Mr. Robert Atkins): The Government are helping to strengthen the Northern Ireland economy through measures intended to make business more competitive. We are helping companies to identify and remove obstacles to growth; encouraging inward investment; building up management and work force skills; developing an enterprise culture; and supporting innovation, research and development.

Mr. Thurnham: Does my hon. Friend agree that it is in the interests of all concerned fully to support the Government's policies in Northern Ireland and that the prosperity of Northern Ireland is of vital imporance, not only to everyone in the British Isles, but to investors overseas?

Mr. Atkins: It is important to support not only Government policies in Northern Ireland, but Government policies generally.

My hon. Friend is right. The inward investment programme of activity has been carried out by the Industrial Development Board, supported by a variety of Members representing Northern Ireland constituencies. I am grateful to them, as they constituents should be, for that effort, which does so much to provide new jobs in the Province.

Mr. Clifford Forsythe: Although I congratulate the Minister on the foreign investment and the extra jobs that have been brought into Northern Ireland recently by him and his Department, may I ask him to set up representatives from his own Department, the IDB and the Local Enterprise Development Unit, to discuss ways of better helping local inventors and entrepreneurs? If those products were properly developed, more local jobs would be created in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Atkins: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for mentioning the subject, which he and his hon. Friend the Member for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross) have already drawn to my attention. It is worth recording that about 90 per cent. of IDB funds are spent on existing companies in Northern Ireland—small ones through LEDU, progressing to IDB, growing into successful companies, which have become extremely important in United Kingdom terms.

However, if there are cases that he would like me to consider, affecting his constituents or anyone else, I should be more than happy to consider them.

Mr. Bellingham: Is the Minister aware that the privatisations of Harland and Wolff, of Short Brothers and, more recently, of Northern Ireland Electricity—which were all bitterly resisted by Opposition Members—have been extremely successful? Surely that shows that what Northern Ireland needs is not less privatisation but more.

Mr. Atkins: The first time that I visited Northern Ireland the cranes of Harland and Wolff were absolutely static and I saw nothing happening, Shorts were struggling to find investment and other companies were in a similar position. Since privatisation, the two companies to which my hon. Friend referred have become enormously successful. Shorts recently celebrated its 85th anniversary with a massive order worth about £70 million and Harland and Wolff is going from strength to strength and is making some fine ships again—so, my hon. Friend is entirely right. The more that we can do to encourage private sector involvement in what were public sector companies, the better it will be for the economy of Northern Ireland.

Homelessness

11. **Mr. Worthington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give the latest figures for the total number of homeless people in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: I am advised by the chief executive of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive that on 1 October 1993, 441 households were living in temporary accommodation secured for them under the homelessness provisions of the Housing (Northern Ireland) Order 1988.

Mr. Worthington: Is it not the case that in Northern Ireland the number of people in urgent need of rehousing is increasing, that the number of people with the most urgent need—those in the A1 category—is also increasing, and that a large number of other people have been defined out of existence as homeless by Housing Executive procedures? Is it not becoming more and more difficult to get a home in Northern Ireland?

Mr. Atkins: The simple answer to almost all those questions is no. In the past 12 years, urgent housing has dropped from something like 19,000 to 10,000. The Housing Executive has a large amount of money to invest in housing of one form or another. It is with no sense of complacency that I recall for the benefit of the House that Northern Ireland does not have as great a problem as other parts of the United Kingdom. That is thanks to the sterling efforts of the Housing Executive at all levels. It is relatively easy to get a house in Northern Ireland, if the need is proved.

Mr. Trimble: Will the Minister review the homelessness legislation, in the light of a series of recent incidents in my constituency? A family, already believed by their neighbours on the estate to be responsible for vandalising and burning down a dozen houses to steal the fittings, last Tuesday set fire to their own house and have been rehoused by the Housing Executive, which even paid their removal expenses because it is so scared of legal actions being taken against it under the homelessness legislation that it will not take a proper stand. Surely something should be done to ensure that the legislation not only caters for the genuinely homeless but does not let criminal elements exploit it in such a way.

Mr. Atkins: I am greatly disturbed by what the hon. Gentleman has said about a specific case, but we cannot deal with the matter on the Floor of the House, as the hon. Gentleman will understand. If he wishes to write to me with details, or to contact my office, I shall be more than happy to ask the chairman of the Housing Executive to look into the matter.

Military and Police Manpower

12. **Mr. Robathan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the proportion of regular troops of the British Army to full-time RUC officers currently serving in Northern Ireland; and how long he expects that proportion to remain.

Sir John Wheeler: On 31 August 1993, there were 11,659 full-time police officers, including full-time reservists, and 14,770 members of the regular Army, including full-time members of the Royal Irish Regiment, serving in Northern Ireland. There are therefore approximately nine policemen for every 11 soldiers. Manpower levels are kept under regular review.

Mr. Robathan: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend. Does he accept that the security situation in Northern Ireland gives little ground for optimism? Does he further accept that the British Army has a justifiably high reputation for counter-terrorist expertise and operations, which members of the RUC, excellent though the men and women of that organisation may be, are neither trained nor recruited for? Does he consider that some of the military resources to which he referred earlier are not being properly used in the Province? Might he not, therefore, consider whether greater military input into tactical operations and strategic planning might lead to a better resolution of the security situation there?

Sir John Wheeler: I know that my hon. Friend comes from a background of military service and therefore his views are to be respected, but it is for the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary to determine the deployment of the police and other security services in Northern Ireland. The Army works in association with the RUC and I can assure my hon. Friend that its present role is extremely effective. I do not accept his contention that the present security situation gives little ground for optimism. Far from it—earlier this afternoon I told the House about the continuing success of the RUC, supported by the Army, in arresting terrorist gangs and seizing arms and explosives.

Mr. Molyneaux: In agreement with the hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Robathan), does the Minister feel that the statements ill-advisedly made by a former Defence Minister are seriously flawed, and that, henceforth, the decisions on troop deployments and manning levels should be decided by the GOC and the Chief Constable, particularly as it has now been confirmed by Baroness Thatcher that the co-operation of the Irish Republic has been extremely disappointing, a view which she was prepared to state while she was head of the Government of which many present on the Front Bench were members?

Sir John Wheeler: I can assure the right hon. Gentleman that the forces in Northern Ireland will be there and available in accordance with the security threat and as decided by the GOC and the Chief Constable.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 21 October.

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is attending the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in Cyprus.

Mr. Hinchliffe: Bearing in mind that deregulation will be the central plank of Government policy in the new Session of Parliament, will the Leader of the House comment on the case of my constituent Mr. Raymond Townend, who was killed while working on a resurfacing project on the M62 when he was knocked over by a lorry earlier this year? Is the Leader of the House as surprised as I was to learn that the lorry which reversed over Mr. Townend was not required by law to have reversing lights, to have a reversing alarm or to have the manoeuvre supervised by a person other than the driver? Can the Leader of the House understand why Mr. Townend's widow and four children are less than impressed by the Government's theme of deregulation and want more regulation to avoid such tragedies in future?

Mr. Newton: I am sure, first of all, that the whole House will recognise the seriousness with which the hon. Gentleman has made that point, and will understand why he felt it right to raise it, in view of what happened to his constituent, and we extend our sympathy. While he is right to say—and I believe that the Government are right—that the Government are to make deregulation a central plank of their policies for the period ahead, there is no question whatever of that policy extending to the removal or reversal of necessary protection for the safety of people.

Mrs. Angela Knight: Does my right hon. Friend agree with me that, if young thugs are old enough to break into homes and punch pensioners, they are old enough to be locked up?

Mr. Newton: I very much agree with my hon. Friend. My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary's proposals in that respect have drawn support from all round the country. As the House will be aware, he has announced plans for secure units for 12 to 14-year-old persistent offenders and to increase the possible maximum sentence for 15-year-old offenders. I repeat, as my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has repeated, that we put the protection of the public first.

Mrs. Beckett: Does the Lord President accept that national insurance contributions are a tax on income—yes or no?

Mr. Newton: National insurance contributions, as the right hon. Lady, who is a former social security spokesman, knows perfectly well, are part of the national insurance scheme which relates to the entitlement of benefits established by the Labour Government in 1948.

Mrs. Beckett: Is the Lord President denying that national insurance contributions are a tax on income, yes or no?

Mr. Newton: National insurance contributions are the means by which people obtain entitlement to certain benefits, including, most notably, retirement pensions. The level of contributions is related to the demands on the fund, and the demands on the fund include the Government's policies to increase pensions in the way that we have over the past few years.

Mrs. Beckett: Is not it a fact that there is no effective difference between a 1p in the pound increase in income tax and a 1p in the pound increase in national insurance contributions when it comes to the effect on the pay packet? Next April, the Government, and all those now making a noise from the Government Back Benches who voted for it, are putting up both taxes on income and spending and do not have the guts to admit it.

Mr. Newton: There is a clear difference, which the right hon. Lady has obviously missed in what I have already said: national insurance contributions are related to the provision of an entitlement at a later stage. I shall say to her—and she knows it very well—that there would have been a whole lot less difference if the policies advocated by the Opposition Front Bench at the last election had been put into force and the upper earnings limit had been scrapped, because then it would have been the same as income tax.

Mr. Shersby: Will my right hon. Friend join me in extending the sympathy of the whole House to the family of police constable Patrick Dunne, who lost his life last night defending the lives of the people of London? Will he discuss with my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary ways in which the Metropolitan police, and indeed every other police force in this country, can be made more secure in carrying out their difficult and dangerous job? Does he agree that every police officer in this country does not have a job for life, but they frequently give their life for the job?

Mr. Newton: The reaction of the whole House will show that everybody heard with deep regret of the death of police constable Dunne in south London last night. Everybody will share my hon. Friend's outrage that a community constable should be shot dead in that fashion while going about his duty in a way that we take for granted. My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary, who, happily, is close to me at this moment, will have heard what my hon. Friend said and will wish to respond appropriately.

As my hon. Friend knows, a large number of measures have already been set out by my right hon. and learned Friend, which have been warmly welcomed by the chairman of the Police Federation as being exactly on the right lines to improve the fight against crime. The House will also be pleased to know that I understand that three arrests have been made in connection with that crime.

Q2. **Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 21 October.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Jones: The Lord President will recall the answer that the Prime Minister gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Warley, West (Mr. Spellar) on Tuesday. Therefore, will he tell the House what particular cheese and wine party it was at which Asil Nadir gave £440,000 to the Tory party, and will he explain how much cheese and wine it will take to account for the £70 million missing from Tory party funds?

Mr. Newton: I do not know that I am expert on all the guest lists for wine and cheese parties. It may be that, at this very moment, in Cyprus, Mr. Nadir is having lunch with Mr. Costa, the benefactor of the previous leader of the Labour party.

Q3. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 21 October.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Evennett: Will my right hon. Friend condemn those who were responsible for the violence in south-east London last Saturday at the anti-British National party march, and express sympathy to those who were injured and those who had property damaged as a result of that violence? Will he join me in congratulating the police on the magnificent job that they did on that occasion, and urge my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary to consider the whole issue of the BNP in Welling and see what can be done about it?

Mr. Newton: Again, the House will understand why my hon. Friend raises a point of such concern in his constituency and I have a great deal of sympathy with what he said. All of us would want to deplore the violence that marred the march last Saturday just as much as we would want to deplore the policies of the British National party.

With regard to the BNP headquarters, I know that my hon. Friend is well aware of the difficulties in relation to planning law. I cannot say much more about that except that I understand that Bexley council is meeting to consider the matter further tonight.

Dr. Wright: Has the Leader of the House seen the statement this week from the heads of all the royal medical colleges in which they say that, because of the Government's market reforms to the health service, urgent cases are being denied treatment and that the patients of fund holders are being given priority over those with clinical need? Does he understand that my constituents are being denied treatment at the Good Hope hospital because all routine admissions have been stopped except for those from GP fund holders? Is not that a disgrace? Is not that a two-tier health service? What will the Government do about it?

Mr. Newton: I do not accept the hon. Gentleman's suggestions. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health, in conjunction with the Joint Consultants Committee, has issued advice about the way in which emergency cases should be given priority, which does not fit with what the hon. Gentleman has said. The NHS reforms are producing a large and substantial increase in activity in the health service and in the number of patients treated, and are reducing the number of those waiting a long time for treatment. They are successful and they will be made more successful.

Q4. **Mr. Jenkin:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 21 October.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Jenkin: Can my right hon. Friend explain why some people seem to see a lurch to the right? Could it be that they keep hearing good news about the economy, such as car production up 15 per cent. in September, retail sales up in September, unemployment down in September, rising confidence in manufacturing industry and, if I may say so, 60 new jobs at Trebor Bassett in my constituency?

Mr. Newton: As my hon. Friend's constituency is next to mine and I live only about half a mile away from it, I welcome his last point. I hope that some of the jobs may spread across the border. I also agree entirely that the House will be pleased at the increasing flow of good economic news, particularly that to which he referred—the rise in car production, the rise in retail sales and the fact that unemployment has once again fallen.

Q5. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 21 October.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Several hon. Members Is it Harry? *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Cohen: Thank you for that warm welcome.

Madam Speaker: Order. I certainly recognise the hon. Gentleman and so does the entire House.

Mr. Cohen: Thank you for those kind words, Madam Speaker.

Are the Government again to cut the money for London Underground? They have already killed the management's 10-year decently modern metro plan. Why are Londoners expected to pay more for a declining third-rate service? Under the Tories, is not the London underground going down the tube?

Mr. Newton: As I think those on both sides of the House know very well, the amount of investment in the public transport infrastructure, rail and other, that has been advanced in recent years under what the hon. Gentleman chooses to call this Tory Government, has been at high, indeed record, levels. I am sure that we shall continue to maintain all possible investment, while taking account, obviously, of other requirements as well.

Q6. **Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 21 October.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Shaw: My right hon. Friend will recall that four years ago the IRA carried out a terrible crime in my constituency, at the Royal Marines school of music in Deal. Eleven people were killed and many more were seriously injured. I met some of them, and saw in my constituency on Saturday someone who is still suffering seriously from his injuries. The people of Deal dearly love the Royal Marines school of music and hope that it will

stay there for many years to come. Can my right hon. Friend assure the House that in any review of marine and military bands, every effort will be made to create a combined military services school of music at Deal, so that we may demonstrate to the world that the IRA will never succeed in its dastardly crimes?

Mr. Newton: I am sure that the House will understand if once again—and this has happened several times this afternoon—I simply acknowledge why my hon. Friend felt it necessary to make that important point on behalf of his constituents and, almost as if I were answering business questions, to undertake to draw his remarks to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister.

Business of the House

3.30 pm

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): Will the Leader of the House state the business for next week?

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): Yes, Madam. The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 25 OCTOBER—Debate on a motion to take note of the outstanding reports of the Public Accounts Committee to which the Government have replied.

TUESDAY 26 OCTOBER—Until 7 o'clock, a motion relating to the Management and Administration of Safety and Health at Mines Regulations, followed by a motion on the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order.

Motion relating to the Education (School Teachers' Pay and Conditions) (No. 2) Order.

WEDNESDAY 27 OCTOBER—Opposition Day (19th allotted day). There will be a debate on coal on an Opposition motion, followed by motions relating to the Assisted Areas Order and the Assisted Areas (Amendment) Order.

THURSDAY 28 OCTOBER—Opposition Day (20th allotted day).

Until about 7 o'clock, there will be a debate entitled "The prevention of crime" in the name of the Liberal Democrats, followed by a debate entitled "The need for a cold climate allowance" in the name of the Scottish National party.

FRIDAY 29 OCTOBER—Motions on the Priests (Ordination of Women) Measure and the Ordination of Women (Financial Provisions) Measure.

MONDAY 1 NOVEMBER—Consideration of Lords amendments that may be received to the Railways Bill.

The House will also want to know that European Standing Committee B will meet on Wednesday 27 October at 10.30 am to consider European Community documents Nos. 8426/92 and 8682/93 relating to packaging and packaging waste.

[Wednesday 27 October:

European Standing Committee B—Relevant European Community documents: 8426/92, 8682/93, packaging and packaging waste.

Relevant European Legislation Committee reports: HC 79-vi (1992-93), HC 79-xv (1992-93); HC 79-xxxvii (1992-93).]

Mr. Brown: I thank the Leader of the House for that statement and for providing a little extra time—although only a little—for the coal debate. However, one and a half hours will be nothing like time enough for all the right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House who will want to take part in the debate on assisted area status. I ask the right hon. Gentleman to reconsider the amount of time allocated to that matter.

I make a broader point. It would be bizarre if, following a long summer break, we were to have a further long gap between the old Session and the new. Our constituents want us to debate value added tax and zero rating, and unemployment. No one but the Government could want Parliament immediately to take a further long holiday.

I ask the Leader of the House to arrange as soon as possible a debate on public expenditure. The House has not discussed the Government's public expenditure plans since 15 May 1991. I should have thought that even the Leader of the House would accept that events have moved on since then.

Mr. Newton: I am not sure how much sympathy there will be for the hon. Gentleman's remarks about reducing the length of time during which people will be able to attend to their duties in their constituencies. At any rate, I take note of the point. As ever, an issue such as the public expenditure debate is best left for discussion through the usual channels—I believe that the usual channels have already adverted to the matter. The hon. Gentleman will be aware that the Procedure Committee has published a report which touches on this matter and at which the Government are looking with appropriate care.

The hon. Gentleman kindly acknowledged that, following discussions through the usual channels, we had sought to provide rather more time than usual for the motion relating to the management and administration of safety and health at mines. However, I am afraid that I am unable to give the same undertaking about the assisted areas order.

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay): Will my right hon. Friend give an assurance to the House that, following the return of the Prime Minister and my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary from Cyprus, they will come to the House and explain the silence of the Foreign Office in regard to the appalling attacks and demonstrations that have occurred in Cyprus relating to Her Majesty the Queen, the head of the Commonwealth? Is not it extraordinary that the Foreign Office should have said nothing in the face of those appalling demonstrations, when the EOKA terrorists, who are the centre of the demonstrations, were responsible for the deaths of Greek Cypriots and were hanged in accordance with British law at that time as well as the law in Cyprus? Will my right hon. Friend ask my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary to come to the House with an explanation?

Mr. Newton: I shall certainly bring my hon. Friend's request to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary. I am sure that my right hon. Friend deplores what happened as much as my hon. Friend does. I understand that there has been an apology from the President for the discourtesy that this country feels has been shown on this occasion. However, it should not detract from the fact that there can be no doubt that Her Majesty the Queen will be warmly received at the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): Given the appalling murder of a police officer last night, I thank the Leader of the House for accepting our request for a Supply day next week in the name of the Liberal Democrats and for allowing us to debate the prevention of crime.

Can the Leader of the House tell us something about the business on the following Monday? If the House sustains the amendments to the Railways Bill that have been passed in the Lords, can he undertake that there need be no further consideration of that Bill in this House and that therefore the Bill, as then amended, will be passed into law and the Government will not seek to reverse it, once again, later next week?

Mr. Newton: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is well aware that the House of Lords has asked the Government

to look again at various matters, and it would not be appropriate for me to comment further until that consideration is complete.

Sir Jim Spicer (Dorset, West): Has my right hon. Friend had an opportunity to read the report of Dr. Jenkinson, who is acknowledged as the world's leading authority on soil science? In that report, which was published yesterday, he says that we are wasting hundreds of millions of pounds through the nitrates directive because the standards that have been set are unnecessarily high. That is just one example of the way in which the European Community has taken no account of cost benefits relating to water. Will it be possible for us to have a debate at some time relating to water and cost benefits, because we are all concerned about the protection of the environment and about the increasing cost of these unnecessary impositions on our constituents?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend, understandably, has made a point which has been expressed to me in a constituency capacity by the Anglian water authority. My hon. Friend is well aware that the Government take the view that it is necessary to look at the balance between the costs and advantages of a particular policy. We are seeking to ensure that that balance is struck in our discussions on European matters.

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): Is the Leader of the House aware that early-day motion 330 calling for the enactment of my Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill, which was tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Kingswood (Dr. Berry) and has all-party support, now has well upwards of 300 signatures?

[That this House believes that anti-discrimination legislation is necessary to ensure equality of opportunity for people with disabilities; and calls for the early introduction of a Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill.]

Is it not disgraceful for it to have been said that we cannot afford the provisions of the Bill? Will the Leader of the House arrange for a ministerial statement to explain to us next week why we can afford civil rights for everyone else but not for Britain's 6·5 million disabled people?

Mr. Newton: It will not surprise you, Madam Speaker, and I doubt that it will surprise the right hon. Gentleman, to learn that I do not for a moment accept the rather tendentious proposition with which he concluded his remarks. As for his earlier remarks, I shall bring them to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People.

Mr. Peter Fry (Wellingborough): Is my right hon. Friend aware that we have not had a debate on civil aviation for some time? Is he also aware that the present bilaterial negotiations between the United States and us seem to have reached an impasse? As failure to reach an agreement could endanger the US Air/British Airways deal, which is vital to the future of British Airways, should not the House have the opportunity to discuss this important issue before too long?

Mr. Newton: I shall certainly bear my hon. Friend's request in mind. It is an important matter, but I cannot encourage him to expect that I can find an early opportunity for precisely the debate he requests. I shall, however, draw his comments to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): As conditions in Bosnia can only deteriorate as winter approaches, when can the House have an opportunity to debate these matters and urge on the Government the need for both humanitarian and military measures to ease the plight of the Bosnian Muslims?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman will be aware that there are two Opposition days next week when it would have been possible, had it been thought right, to explore such matters further. I cannot undertake to find Government time for such a debate in the near future but that is in no way intended to underestimate the importance of the problem. Although the hon. Gentleman may disagree with some of the views expressed from this Dispatch Box and, indeed, from the Opposition Dispatch Box, I think that he will acknowledge that there is universal concern that we should move to a negotiated peace settlement, difficult though that has proved, and that we should maintain the humanitarian effort in which the British Government and people have played a major part.

Mr. David Porter (Waveney): The Government announced the new sea defence coast protection policy during the recess. Will my right hon. Friend arrange time for the House to debate it, certainly before the winter sets in and the whole of the east coast is threatened once again?

Mr. Newton: Coming from the east coast myself, I recognise why my hon. Friend has raised that matter, but, before we have got very far into business questions, we already have a list of requests for debate which would fill all the time that the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) wished to make available.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): Could the Leader of the House arrange for a short statement from the President of the Board of Trade on the 630 job losses at Jetstream Aircraft at Prestwick and especially on what action he will take to eliminate the unfair subsidies to Jetstream's competitors, both through the European Community and the general agreement on tariffs and trade?

Mr. Newton: I cannot undertake to promise an early statement, but I shall ensure that my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade is aware of the hon. Gentleman's concern.

Sir Ivan Lawrence (Burton): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the appalling attacks on the Queen in Cyprus prove that the EOKA tendency is alive and well and that there is reason for the people in north Cyprus to be fearful of the proposals being made in the south? It is many years since we had a debate on Cyprus and, to some extent, the failure to settle the Cyprus problem is a failure of British foreign policy. Might my right hon. Friend speed a debate in the House in which we could fully consider the issues and help to find a solution?

Mr. Newton: I shall certainly bear that request in mind.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): I endorse the request for more time for a debate on the Assisted Areas Order. As the right hon. Gentleman will know, the order covers a wide range of constituencies, and in constituencies such as mine, in Bradford, which has been removed from the assisted areas map, it is a matter of considerable controversy and concern, and will almost certainly mean

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

[Mr. Bob Cryer]

the loss of many jobs. I am sure that many hon. Members' constituencies are similarly affected, so I hope that, rather than the debate being limited to an hour and a half, it will be given three or four hours, or even longer. The best option would be an open-ended debate, so that any hon. Member who wanted to speak could do so.

Mr. Newton: Under the normal arrangements and Standing Orders of the House, significant numbers of orders are discussed in which many hon. Members have an interest, and some of them may be frustrated as a result of our normal practices. I am sorry, but I cannot add to what I said to the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East in our opening exchanges.

Mr. James Hill (Southampton, Test): My right hon. Friend will know that we entered the single market on 1 January. Ten months have now passed, and one of the big problems at our ports and airports is how our customs and excise men are managing to deal with drugs, tobacco, alcohol and the many other substances that seem to go through so easily these days. Is it not time that we conducted a review of their work, supported them where we can and ensured that some of the failures of the European single masrket customs system are outlined at this early stage?

Mr. Newton: I shall certainly ensure that my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer is made aware of my hon. Friend's question. He is the Minister responsible for Customs and Excise and he also has an interest in much, or rather all, of the revenue gathered.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): May I draw the attention of the Leader of the House to the earlier exchange between the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and myself about the possibility of the Northern Ireland Grand Committee meeting to discuss the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1993? That is an important order with a vast range, and it has come to the House 12 years after its conception. It demands greater scrutiny than would be possible during the hour and a half that would ordinarily be spent on it on the Floor of the House. Can we have a commitment that the Northern Ireland Grand Committee will meet to discuss that issue?

Mr. Newton: I did not hear the exchanges between the hon. Gentleman and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, but my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown), the Whip sitting beside me, has just muttered to me that my right hon. and learned Friend said that the hon. Gentleman's request was a matter for me. I shall endeavour to ensure that the request that the hon. Gentleman has delivered to me across the Floor of the House—I make no complaint about that—is given appropriate consideration.

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): Did my right hon. Friend catch sight of the admirably succinct letter in *The Times* yesterday from Judge Stroyan, which said:

"I am paid to administer the law, not to pontificate about it."?

In view of recent and rather rash pronouncements from some of the judiciary, will my right hon. Friend arrange for the Parliamentary Secretary to the Lord Chancellor's Department to make a statement to the House outlining the rules that apply to judges' pronouncements? Many of us remember a better time when judges remained silent expect on the bench.

Mr. Newton: I am afraid that, perhaps because of the letter's admirable succinctness, my eye must have slipped over it, but I hope that all judicial eyes fell on it.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Is the Leader of the House aware that early-day motion 2488 is on the Order Paper today?

[That this House offers its congratulations to the organisers and participants in the Pensioners' Lobby of Parliament against the imposition of VAT on gas and electricity and calls upon Her Majesty's Government to abandon this proposal; is further concerned at the facilities of the House for visitors, the humiliation of queueing outside and the lack of refreshment facilities and toilets for them; and therefore calls for an urgent review of the facilities and entrance for visitors with a view to using Westminster Hall for this.]

It congratulates the people who lobbied Parliament yesterday about the VAT that is to be imposed on fuel next year, but is the right hon. Gentleman also aware that those people suffered the normal indignities of those who try to come to Parliament to see Members—queuing for hours outside and being unable to get in, to get refreshments or to see their Members? Most arrived in and departed from London extremely frustrated.

Will the Leader of the House take it upon himself to consider as a matter of urgency the way in which lobbies are organised, so that the carriage gates entrance can be used, Westminster Hall can be used for security checks and as an assembly area, and refreshments and toilet facilities are properly available, so that people can exercise their democratic right to lobby their Members of Parliament, as they should be able to do at all times?

Mr. Newton: As you will be well aware, Madam Speaker, with your particular responsibilities, this matter is, in substantial part, a matter for the Administration Committee. I will draw the hon. Gentleman's remarks to the attention of the Chairman of that Committee, who is not in his place at the moment. I understand that the Committee intends to consider at an early meeting the rules that govern the organisation and reception of mass lobbies at the House.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): Does my right hon. Friend find it surprising that we shall not have a debate about housing next Wednesday in view of the latest local government ombudsman's report, which shows that maladministration by council housing officers is the biggest single cause of complaint, or is that why the Opposition never choose housing as a subject for debate?

Mr. Newton: It is not for me to say why the Opposition choose particular subjects for debate. However, I shall take that, if I may, as a request directed at Opposition Front-Bench Members, and no doubt they will consider it in due course.

Mr. Eddie Loyden (Liverpool, Garston): Has the Leader of the House read the maritime report given to the House in the recent past? It reveals the appalling number of deaths of seamen because of the loss of ships at sea. Is

it not about time, especially in view of the Government's policy of deregulation, that the House addressed the issues of merchant seamen, merchant ships and safety at sea?

Mr. Newton: I made some comments about safety in regard to deregulation when I was wearing my other hat, half an hour or so ago. I will certainly ensure that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport is aware of the hon. Gentleman's concern.

Lady Olga Maitland (Sutton and Cheam): Will my right hon. Friend consider a debate on early-day motion 2445, which was signed by the hon. Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor), newly elected to the shadow Cabinet? The motion calls for cuts in defence and for the abolition of Trident.

[That this House welcomes the overwhelming vote at the Labour Party conference calling for United Kingdom defence spending to be reduced to the average level of other West European countries, allied to constructive plans for defence diversification, arms conversion and the transfer of the savings made to economic and social priorities by investment in job creation and economic development and the restructuring of Britain's crumbling infrastructure; recognises the importance of the call for making retraining of the defence sector workforce a priority; applauds the conference majority decision calling for the immediate scrapping of the Trident submarine and weapons programme as an essential step towards the elimination of nuclear weapons worldwide; believes that in rejecting Trident the United Kingdom can demonstrate genuine support for strengthening the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and bolster the consolidation of a comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty; further believes that the lifetime costs of Trident deployment kwill be at least £33 billion when re-fit, replacement and decommissioning are included and that it is the hidden extra costs of continuing the United Kingdom nuclear weapons programme that is bound to reduce drastically the possibility of a positive peace dividend; and therefore calls upon Her Majesty's Government to support the cancellation of the Trident programme and to plan the investment of resources saved into job creation and industrial innovation in the civil economy.]

Surely the House should know whether the Labour party is serious about our national security?

Mr. Newton: The thought crossed my mind that it was just possible that the hon. Member for Eccles might not have anticipated yesterday's events when deciding to sign the early-day motion earlier in the week. It seemed to me to leave room for some interesting discussions in the new shadow Cabinet in due course. There must have been quite a lot of people who were surprised—including, perhaps, the Opposition Chief Whip, whom I see here. As one rather ingenious commentator put it on the radio at lunchtime, the purpose of the rules was to bring about the election of fewer Scots and more women. The result was to get more Scots and fewer women.

Mr. Eddie McGrady (South Down): May I draw the attention of the Leader of the House to the announcement this morning by the German nuclear industry that it is withdrawing from its contracts with British Nuclear Fuels? If that is followed by similar acts by other international nuclear industries, the viability of the commissioning of the thermal oxide reprocessing plant must be brought into question. In view of the fact that the Government have consistently refused a public inquiry, surely it is proper that the House has the opportunity to debate the economic, social, environmental and proliferation problems that the THORP commissioning will bring us.

Mr. Newton: If I remember rightly, a little before the summer recess there was a debate on those matters which was initiated by the Liberal Democrats. I cannot add to what was said then, especially because, as the hon. Gentleman well knows, those matters are currently under appropriate consideration by my right hon. Friends.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Can my right hon. Friend arrange a debate next week on early-day motion 2453, signed by hon. Members of all parties, which calls for reconsideration of the decision by the Radio Authority to get rid of the London Broadcasting Company?

[That this House, mindful of the good service to Londoners of the London Broadcasting Corporation, and mindful of public support for it over many years, regrets the decision of the Radio Authority to withdraw its franchise and calls upon that body to reconsider this decision urgently.]

This is a very popular station with 2 million Londoners. Its demise is greatly regretted by many people and should be debated in the House at an early date.

Mr. Newton: Decisions on licences are a matter for the Radio Authority. As I think my hon. Friend will understand, Ministers do not intervene in licensing procedures or seek to influence the decisions.

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): Is it not about time that we had a debate on the advice that was given recently to the Transport Select Committee that the single most important measure that we can take to reduce road traffic casualties would be to introduce daylight saving and that advancing British time by one hour throughout the year would cut the number of serious and fatal accidents by 600 each year? When will the Government screw up the courage to implement that long overdue reform?

Mr. Newton: Obviously, a number of factors must be taken into account when considering those matters, including that to which the hon. Gentleman referred. My right hon. Friends will announce their proposals when they finish their consideration of all the issues involved.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Will the Leader of the House press the Prime Minister when he reports on the Commonwealth Heads of Government conference to take the opportunity to condemn the arrest and imprisonment of Mr. Amanullah Khan, a Commonwealth citizen, in Brussels on Monday? Will he urge the Belgian authorities to release immediately Mr. Khan, the chairman of the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front, and warn all non-EC countries that applications to extradite those visiting the EC quite legally will not be entertained in future?

Mr. Newton: I shall bring that request to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary.

Mr. Andrew Welsh (Angus, East): Following the Government's defeat on livestock premium quotas in another place, will the Government accept that decision or oppose it? When, and in what form, will that matter be debated in this House?

Mr. Newton: I am not able at the moment to respond directly to the hon. Gentleman's question, but I will ensure that it is drawn to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): If time cannot be found next week for a Scottish ministerial statement on the report of the inquiry into the cervical smear programme scandal which took place at the Inverclyde Royal hospital, Greenock, can I assume that the Secretary of State will refer to that very important matter when he addresses the meeting of the Scottish Grand Committee next Thursday?

Mr. Newton: I note that the hon. Gentleman has had the good fortune to secure the Adjournment debate on Monday 1 November when he will have an appropriate opportunity to air those matters, presumably at somewhat greater length.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): On the grounds of fairness and open government, would it be possible for the Leader of the House to arrange for those Cabinet Ministers who have been subjected to such hostile criticism in Lady Thatcher's book to be given the right to come here and put their own point of view? Is it not somewhat unfair that Lady Thatcher has the opportunity to subject those Cabinet Ministers to such criticism, while we want to hear their right of reply?

Mr. Newton: I have no doubt that the hon. Gentleman would regard that as the most enormous fun, but I do not regard it as my function as Leader of the House to satisfy his appetite in that way.

National Health Service (Management)

3.57 pm

The Secretary of State for Health (Mrs. Virginia Bottomley): With permission, I wish to make a statement about the management of the health service in England.

Our health reforms are now firmly in place and here to stay. From next April, 90 per cent. of acute and community health services will be provided by NHS trusts. Patients are already benefitting from the freedom to innovate and improve which we have given to NHS trusts, to GP fundholders and to local health authorities. By passing responsibility down to local level, we have released the innovation and energies of those working nearest to users of the service. The result has been a fundamental shift of power towards the patient.

The priority now is to support better patient care through the continued drive towards decentralisation in the NHS. I have concluded that to do this requires changes to the management structures of the health service—structures which are largely unchanged since before the reforms. By streamlining management, we can also make substantial savings in administrative costs. These changes will maximise the proportion of NHS expenditure devoted to direct patient care.

My proposals for achieving these objectives are set out more fully in a background paper, copies of which are in the Vote Office. They follow the functions and manpower review which I announced to the House in May. I should like to place on record my thanks to Kate Jenkins and Alan Langlands, who led the review, and to their team, for the work they undertook.

A guiding principle of the review was that change should support the development of the all-important purchasing function. This function is now the distinctive role of district health authorities. Their job is to build up an accurate picture of what health services local people need, and to purchase services which best match those needs. Like GP fundholders, they have the power to change and to improve services. They lead the drive towards better quality care and better health in their areas.

A key feature of better purchasing is closer working between district and family health services authorities. It makes it easier to take an all-round view, to strike the right balance between hospital and community-based care and to improve public health. These authorities are already working in close partnership in many areas. We wish actively to encourage this.

I therefore intend, subject to Parliament's consent, to introduce a power to enable district and family health services authorities to merge. Such mergers will also eliminate duplication and produce savings in overhead costs, which can be spent directly on patient care. This will build naturally on progress locally.

It is clear, however, that, as the new system matures, strategic management above that level needs to be better tailored to a decentralised service. We need a lighter approach, geared to developing the potential of purchasing, while respecting local freedoms. It must also uphold and strengthen the national accountability of the health service.

Regional health authorities have served us well for nearly 20 years. I pay tribute to their chairmen, general managers and staff, who have led the health service through challenging times. The old hands-on style of the

regions is, however, no longer appropriate. I therefore propose to abolish them. I will bring forward legislation to this effect as soon as parliamentary time permits.

In a national service accountable through the Secretary of State to Parliament, some strategic overview is required. For this reason, I also propose to reform the NHS Management Executive so that it can more effectively and efficiently discharge those functions which must remain the responsibility of central management.

The NHSME will remain within the Department of Health, but will take on a clearer identity as the headquarters of the national health service. It will be accountable, through its chief executive, to the Secretary of State for delivering against clearly defined targets and priorities. It will have precise responsibilities for strategic management and a straightforward structure to ensure cohesion and clarity of purpose.

Central management will continue to work with professionals to ensure that clinically high-quality and cost-effective practice is identified and systematically implemented, and that new health problems are tackled in a coherent way.

The national health service is the largest organisation in Europe. Its size, complexity and importance demand that central management operate through a regional structure. No institution in the world, private or public, would attempt to run such a scale of operation from a single headquarters.

I will therefore establish, as an integral part of a streamlined management executive, eight small regional offices. Each will be run by a director accountable to the chief executive. A regional structure will enable the NHSME to give more effective support to the development of local policies which provide high-quality health services to the standards set by purchasers, and the health service professions, and which ensure effective co-operation across service, education and research. The regional offices will also replace the existing outposts, and inherit their responsibility for monitoring trusts. We wish to build on the light touch approach which the outposts have successfully developed.

Like the outposts before them, the regional offices must be compact. I intend to set a limit on the total staff budget of each office, commensurate with its functions. A similar limit will be set for the Management Executive as a whole. the NHS needs strong management; but we must bear down on administrative costs to maximise spending on patients.

Health authority and trust chairmen have a key role as local leaders. They will be expected to play a prominent role in the new arrangements. We must also ensure a non-executive link between them and Ministers.

The NHS Policy Board will therefore be restructured to include additional non-executive members, each covering one of the eight new regions. These regional policy board members will provide a channel of communication to and from Ministers. They will be respected local figures, able to make a powerful contribution to ensuring that national priorities are delivered in their areas.

In light of the need for primary legislation, we expect the new arrangements to be fully in place by April 1996. We have plans, however, for making immediate progress towards a slimmer organisation. I propose to reduce the number of regional health authorities from 14 to eight by next April, and to align the boundaries of the remaining regions with those of the management executive's new regional structure. This will facilitate a smooth transition to the new system. Change will be managed to ensure that the effective day-to-day operation of patient services is maintained. Management cost disciplines and targets will be met at each stage.

Ten years ago, this Government introduced general management into the health service. The author of those changes, Sir Roy Griffiths, observed then that it

"cannot be said too often that the National Health Service is about delivering services to people. It is not about organising systems for their own sake".

That principle, above all, has guided the changes that we have announced today.

These changes will slim down NHS management. They will make it simpler and sharper. They will clarify its precise roles and responsibilities, and ensure that it delivers results measured against explicit targets. They will save money on administration to spend on patients, and they will uphold and strengthen accountability. They will continue the process of decentralisation and support the development of high-quality, cost-effective health care.

A better managed health service means better care for patients. These proposals turn the clock forward to more modern and more efficient management, building on the progress of our health reforms. I commend them to the House.

Mr. David Blunkett (Sheffield, Brightside): I thank the Secretary of State and her office for their courtesy in allowing me to have the statement and the attached document earlier today.

Perhaps the Secretary of State will confirm who has been in office for the past 14 years, who is responsible for the growth in bureaucracy in the national health service, and who created the National Health Service Management Executive and spent £55 million on establishing an office in Leeds and an equivalent sum on severance payments and travel costs.

Who set up the NHS trusts which led to an explosion in the number of managers, administrators and accountants? Who created 18,000 non-caring, non-patient-oriented posts at a time when 8,500 nurses were losing their jobs?

How much more money, on top of the £1·2 billion that has already been spent on NHS changes, is to be allocated to these further moves in what the Secretary of State has described as her new system? Whose system has increased waiting lists to a record 1,031,000? Who increased waiting times over the first quarter of the financial year and has created a two-tier system which the royal colleges and the British Medical Association rightly condemn? Who has demoralised staff with change after change and uncertainty after uncertainty, and who has allowed the market and competition to prevail over democracy and accountability? Where in the statement is there anything about local or regional accountability? Can the Secretary of State point to any suggestion that patients will receive a better service or improved treatment, or that they will find more money allocated to care?

Will the Secretary of State spell out a little further the way in which the regional boards which currently operate will be replaced by "respected local figures"? Those respected local figures will have responsibility, as spelled out in the attached document, for the appointment of members of the trusts and health authorities, and will account for themselves only to the new expanded NHS Policy Board. They will be gauleiters on an NHS politburo —that is what it amounts to.

[Mr. David Blunkett]

Why should non-elected, non-accountable, non-democratic individuals picked out by the Secretary of State be responsible for running our service? is that not nepotism and bureaucracy gone rampant, with administrative regions replacing the present appointed regions, and individuals replacing those who sit on executive boards?

Will the Secretary of State spell out in greater detail paragraph 17 of the attached report? As she mentioned in her statement, it says that the headquarters of the health service will be at the Management Executive. What will the relationship be between the Management Executive and the Department of Health, between the outposts which make up the new regions and the Policy Board and the Department of Health? What will be the functions? Where will the responsibilities lie? They are not spelt out in the statement or the attached document. We are told that we must wait until 31 July 1994.

Where is the saving of money? How many jobs will be redeployed locally and regionally? How many jobs are to go? How much will it cost us in redundancy pay? How many savings shall we seek from the new "light touch"? Does the euphemism "light touch" mean the abandonment by the Secretary of State and Ministers of responsibility for running the service? Competition, commercialisation, nepotism and centralism are built large in a statement that purports to look after the interests of the patients.

It has recently been revealed by the chairman of the Audit Commission, appointed by the Government, that in some hospitals it takes six people to change a light bulb. How many civil servants will it take to change the Secretary of State's mind? There is no democracy, no co-ordination. Where in the statement or the attached document can the Secretary of State point to any mention of planning of change, of co-ordination or vision of a strategy for the health service for the next 20 or 25 years? This is a shoddy statement, from a Secretary of State who is a spent force. We shall expose, attack and denigrate the fraud that is inherent in the statement this afternoon.

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): He thinks that the shadow Cabinet elections are still on.

Mrs. Bottomley: My hon. Friend has it right. The appointments to the shadow Cabinet must be motivating the hon. Gentleman.

We always know what the hon. Gentleman is against —we have had another dose of vituperation and abuse—but none of us on this side of the House is any the wiser about what he is in favour of. The long-awaited policy document from the Labour party will be an interesting experience. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman is trying to reopen the battles between Nye Bevan and Herbert Morrison in 1948 about whether local government should have control over hospitals. We wait for that gap to be filled.

Much more important is the fact that I have an opportunity to address some important points. Let us be clear about the achievements of the NHS in recent years, and about the fact that those achievements are largely thanks to NHS managers. For every 100 patients that were treated before the reforms, 116 are now treated. The hon. Gentleman mentioned waiting lists. In the last year alone, the number of people waiting more than one year has fallen by 20 per cent. Before the reforms, about 170,000 people were waiting for more than a year. The figure is now down to below 70,000. The reforms have been a major success, due in large measure to the dedication and commitment of NHS managers.

The hon. Gentleman never fails to take a cheap swipe at NHS managers. He quotes a figure of £1·2 billion but fails to acknowledge that the figure includes funds for the appointment of 100 consultants. The hon. Gentleman may think that those 100 consultants should not have been appointed.

Also contained in that £1·2 billion was a great deal of money for clinical audit and for the development of good practice. About one fifth of the money was concerned with the establishment of the NHS reforms. The benefits in terms of the improved quantity and quality of patient care have more than justified that relatively modest investment.

The hon. Gentleman spoke about accountability. Accountability in the NHS goes not only to the Secretary of State, although that will remain. Paragraph 17 states that it is not in our view appropriate to establish the NHS as a next steps agency. It is a service of great sensitivity and, understandably, hon. Members want the Secretary of State to be able to address issues that affect their constituents.

However, the hon. Gentleman—who is signed up to a command and control model—fails to understand the significance of the decentralisation down to the local health authority. That will now be strengthened by the integration with family health services authorities, allowing primary and secondary care to be dealt with by one authority. That is where accountability lies. The local health authority is the champion of local people.

My hon. Friend the Minister for Health has explained much of the thinking around the development of purchasing and the strategic shift, so that we can think of health and not only of institutions.

There has been a substantial increase in the number of authorities that are reporting to the public and making their accounts available for audit by the Audit Commission. The 400 NHS trusts will have their own boards and their own annual meetings to which the public can go. There has been a revolution in the amount of information that is available about the NHS.

The changes that we have introduced are the natural next step. The NHS reforms have been a great success, and the changes will ensure that management will see the further evolution of the reforms and will release, rightly and properly, more money for patient care.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. That exchange took precisely 19 minutes. I will now expect brisk questions from Back Benchers and brisk responses from the Secretary of State.

Mrs. Marion Roe (Broxbourne): May I congratulate my right hon. Friend on her statement, and particularly on her offer to merge DHAs and FHSAs, which will be widely welcomed? Does she agree that, in the modern NHS, it is vital that an all-round view is taken of patient needs, including which services should be provided in hospitals and which in the community?

Mrs. Bottomley: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend, who has the answer precisely in hand.

Mr. Terry Davis (Birmingham, Hodge Hill): Is the Secretary of State aware that the most visible results of her policies in Birmingham last week were patients lying on

trolleys all night in the accident and emergency unit at Heartlands hospital, because there were no beds for them? That happened not just on one or two nights, but on three nights.

Is she aware that people were being resuscitated in corridors? Is there anything in her announcement that will help to put an end to that scandal at what was the first hospital in Birmingham to become a trust?

Mrs. Bottomley: Every year, the health service treats 46 million patients. The vast majority of those patients are extremely appreciative of the care they receive. There are times when things go wrong, and when they do, it is important that the problem should be understood and urgently addressed. In Birmingham, as in many inner-city areas, there is a great legacy of hospitals from the past. As we see the strategic shift increasingly to primary care and care in the community, identified by my hon. Friend the Member for Broxbourne (Mrs. Roe), we need to take forward those changes and invest in the patient care of today and tomorrow.

Dame Jill Knight (Birmingham, Edgbaston): Have not there been great criticisms to the effect that too much money has been spent on administration and not enough on care? Does not today's statement address that point, as well as representing a further stage on the road towards sensible and wise economies in the health service? Can my right hon. Friend, first, say what money we can save, and, secondly, confirm that every penny of it will go on patient care?

Mrs. Bottomley: Earlier this year, I announced that the regions should bring their numbers down to about 200 from about 570. There has already been a 14 per cent. fall in the regions' budgets this year and the changes that I have announced will take that forward significantly, so that every penny can be spent on patient care, as my hon. Friend rightly asks that it should be. We have a health service that is directed towards meeting the needs of patients to the best of our endeavours.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Is the Secretary of State aware that the Heath Government—the Tory Government—of the early 1970s decided to reorganise the health service, and spent a small fortune of the taxpayers' money? Is she aware that the net result has been that, in the past 14 years, the Tory Government have tampered with the service several times, and that what she has announced today does no more than create bigger and bigger quangos, at a time when quangos already take about 20 per cent. of public expenditure in Britain?

We do not want any lessons in democracy from the right hon. Lady, who holds her position not as a result of election but as a result of patronage, and whose arrogance is shown by the fact that she calls upon Marks and Spencer to open early—something that Thatcher and the Queen have never demanded. If the right hon. Lady wants some democracy, why does she not have the health authorities elected half by the community directly and half by those who work in the health service? That would be accountability, and it would be democratic.

Mrs. Bottomley: The model of management that the hon. Gentleman advocates would be a recipe for disaster for the patients involved. There are difficult decisions to be made in health care. The health service is an organisation consisting of 1 million people. It spends a budget of nearly £30 billion, and that requires good and effective management. The hon. Gentleman was reopening the old debate that took place between Nye Bevan and Herbert Morrison back in 1948.

We are witnessing improvements in patient care. We are also announcing a reduction in the number of authorities because of the way in which the reforms have progressed. Trusts are a very much better model. What we want now is for purchasers to champion the interests of patients and secure progressive improvements in the care that they provide.

Mr. Roger Sims (Chislehurst): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the results of her shopping expeditions are much appreciated on both sides of the House?

Is she also aware that, in Bromley, the family health services authority and the district health authority have for some time worked closely together, with premises and a chief executive in common, and that that has led to greater efficiency and to more money being available for patient care? Will she encourage the integration of DHAs and FHSAs in anticipation of the legislation, so that we do not have to wait the two and a half or three years that it will take for it to be implemented?

Mrs. Bottomley: Indeed. I thank my hon. Friend for his remarks, although only a month or two back I was being castigated for buying my clothes in second-hand clothes shops supported by mental health charities in my constituency. I was grateful to Marks and Sparks for offering to let me come in early, although—on a point of clarification—not opening early.

On my hon. Friend's serious point, I am sure that the merging of DHAs and FSAs will be widely welcomed. I thought it more than a little mean-spirited of the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) not to give that proposal a warm welcome. In searching the documents desperately to ascertain what the Labour party's health policy might be, I discovered a document entitled "Your Good Health" dating from February 1992, which advocated a common health authority for primary and secondary health care, so it is a shame that the hon. Gentleman could not bring himself to give a warm welcome even to that proposal.

Ms Liz Lynne (Rochdale): Does the Secretary of State accept that the plans for regional health authorities will lead to more centralisation rather than less, and will take away any little accountability there may be in the health service? Does she also accept that, with the merging of the district health authorities and the FHSAs, district health authorities ought to be conterminous with local authority boundaries? Instead of appointing people to the boards, will she make a commitment to direct elections, to enable some accountability in the health service?

Mrs. Bottomley: I must make it clear that the whole purpose of the change is precisely to devolve responsibility to district health authorities, who champion the interests of local people, who establish contracts that are available to the public, and who work with general practitioners to secure improvements in the contracts year on year. The regions are a part of the history of the old command and control style. It did a good job for that sort of health service, but, if we want an evolving health service which is responsive to local needs, we must ensure that the district has the authority.

[Mrs. Bottomley]

The advantage of direct elections to health authorities is a myth. I have said time and again that that aspect was rejected when the NHS was first drawn up. I do not think that anybody can seriously believe that the health service would benefit from that party political process. *[Interruption.]* Running the health service is a difficult job. The hon. Lady might wish to listen more than she shouts and speak to the many members of her party who are serving on health authorities and on trusts. I can give her and the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) a great list of names of people in their party who are doing a magnificent job championing the interests of local people. Those people will not be grateful to her for denigrating the seriousness with which they undertake their work.

Mr. David Martin (Portsmouth, South): I welcome my right hon. Friend's decision to abolish regional health authorities, but is she aware that it is still the perception of many members of the public, as well as many people working in the national health service, that there are too many administrators? Will she ensure, as the reforms go through, that we see savings that build up not only those at the sharp end of patient care, but patient services?

Mrs. Bottomley: I thank my hon. Friend for his point. We are to maintain tight budgets on administrative and overhead costs as we go forward with the further development of the reforms. My hon. Friend might like to know, however, that, of the whole budget for staff costs, about 3 per cent. goes on managers—general managers and senior managers—and 65 per cent. on direct care staff.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): The Minister will be aware that waiting lists in the Yorkshire region have increased considerably. Will she tell us how the abolition of the RHAs will help? Are not longer waiting lists evidence that the changes have failed? Will the executives who are to be employed in the new outposts have to include their Conservative party card in the application?

Mrs. Bottomley: That last comment was rather cheap. The hon. Lady might like to know of the great number of people from her political party who are doing a magnificant job—and have for many years—working for various authorities and various trusts.

Clearly, the patients in Yorkshire want the maximum amount spent on patient care and the minimum but necessary amount spent on overhead costs. We believe that we can streamline the services to ensure that we put more into patient care and continue the impressive improvements in the quantity and quality of patient care, in the falling waiting times and in the further developments that we have seen since the reforms were put in hand.

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): My right hon. Friend will find no apologists on the Conservative Benches for the overblown bureaucracy of the present regions. She will know that South East Thames regional health authority has made its highest priority the capital investment of some £50 million in the Medway hospital in my constituency. Will she assure me and my constituents that the capital decisions that it has taken will not be thrown back into the melting pot as a result of her announcement today?

Mrs. Bottomley: I see no reason why the decision that I have announced today should jeopardise my hon. Friend's project. The statutory regional health authorities will remain until the anticipated legislation is completed, which will take a further two and a half years. We expect to merge the regions on those anticipated patterns in the next six months or so.

Ms Hilary Armstrong (Durham, North-West): Is the Secretary of State aware that patients in north-west Durham will greet with incredulity her statement that her reforms are meant to be in their interests?

Mr. Keith Mans (Wyre): How do you know?

Ms Armstrong: I know because I live and work with them. Under previous reforms, their services have diminished and disappeared, and accessibility to them is diminishing daily.

Will the right hon. Lady assure me and them that the accident and emergency unit at Shotley Bridge hospital will be kept open, and that they will have access to that hospital and its services, which have served them well over the years?

Mrs. Bottomley: The hon. Lady will know that every part of the health service must face change. Tomorrow's service configurations will not be what they were yesterday. There used to be 200,000 TB beds in this country. If we want to invest money in mentally ill people in the community, to develop services for HIV-positive patients and to develop and pioneer new innovations, we must have regard not only for the traditional ways of providing services but for the royal colleges' studies into the most effective and safest ways of providing a service.

The hon. Lady should tell her constituents that, before the reforms, the average length of wait across the country was nine months. That has now been reduced to five months. The immunisation programme has saved hundreds of thousands of children, and the cancer screening programme has been developed and extended. Since the reforms were set in hand, an extra £9 billion has been made available for the health service.

Mr. Jerry Hayes (Harlow): I warmly welcome my right hon. Friend's radical and common-sense proposals. Does she find it remarkable that not one Labour Member is capable—they are probably medically incapable—of welcoming good news for patients? Will she spell it out to them that, if they oppose these proposals, they will be supporting bureaucracy, which is no surprise, but not supporting decentralisation and more money for patient care? That is a tragedy.

Mrs. Bottomley: Yes, I suggest that Labour Members read *Hansard* tomorrow to study my hon. Friend's comments.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): But does not the Secretary of State realise that this is not a reforming statement but a deformation of the health service? Is she not substituting a public service that is locally accountable with a maelstrom of contractors? There will be little choice for patients; all the choice will be for purchasers. Apart from the Secretary of State, who appoints those purchasers, and to whom are they accountable?

Mrs. Bottomley: The hon. Gentleman seems to fail to appreciate that, whereas in the past the chairman of a health

authority was primarily concerned with running the institutions within that authority—that dominated the agenda—his task now is to assess the health needs of the population, to establish a strategy to ensure cost and quality-effective services across the range. He is no longer preoccupied with the institution; his task is now dominated by the interests of patients.

That is a very important strategic shift in the delivery of health care, which has been recognised time and again. The health authority is the champion of local people. Its job is to participate and to take note of the views of local people, so that it can take forward those changes. The hon. Gentleman should not underestimate the significance of that strategic shift, which champions the interests of patients. As with the hon. Member for Rochdale (Ms Lynne), if the hon. Gentleman would like a list of the many distinguished members of his party who have seen the opportunities and have a vision of how the improvements can be taken forward, I shall be more than happy to give it to him.

Mr. John Whittingdale (Colchester, South and Maldon): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on her statement, which will be welcomed by all districts, particularly north Essex. Will she confirm that she will continue to move towards funding of districts on the basis of weighted capitation, and that this will be determined by a single national formula, without additional factors built into it by the regions?

Mrs. Bottomley: I am well aware of the strength of feeling among the districts and trusts about the burden of overhead costs. We are moving towards weighted capitation, which will continue to be the policy, subject to the framework set by Ministers.

Mr. Hugh Bayley (York): How can it possibly be decentralisation to concentrate power in fewer regions which are directly accountable to the management executive and do not meet in public? I asked the Secretary of State a question last year about the future of the regional health authorities, and she said:

"The role of the regions will remain as it is".—[*Official Report*, 12 May 1992; Vol. 207, c. 486.]

Was the Secretary of State misleading the House? Why has the situation changed? Does she realise that the regions are responsible for commissioning regional specialty services such as cardio-thoracic surgery and neonatal intensive care?

The Government have spent not a small but a large fortune dividing the health service between purchasers and providers, and now, at regional level, they are bringing together in one body the purchasing agency, the regional health authority, and the provider agency, the regional arm of the Management Executive. Is that not an admission of the failure of the purchaser-provider split?

Mrs. Bottomley: The hon. Gentleman should study the document, when many of his points will be clarified. The role of the region is not command and control, or to dabble in the day-to-day affairs of the districts and the trusts. The new regional offices of the Management Executive will have the strength to bring together intermediate-level interests—which will address the hon. Gentleman's points—but the power goes to the districts, which are the champions of the local people and set the purchasing strategy. Intermediaries should only intervene by exception, or to set a strategic framework, or to arbitrate in disputes. It will be a question of exception, not the command-and-control structure of the past that fossilises health care.

Sir Dudley Smith (Warwick and Leamington): I warmly welcome my right hon. Friend's proposals. In view of the near-criminal financial irresponsibility of the old West Midlands regional health authority, and the allegations in the past few days of severe financial incompetence on the part of the old South Warwickshire health authority, will my right hon. Friend give an undertaking that the new bodies set up to replace them will be subject not only to auditing but to close monitoring where public money is concerned?

Mrs. Bottomley: My hon. Friend is right. Those charged with spending public money on a service as important as the national health service should operate the highest standards of public service. My hon. Friend will know that we have set up a task force on probity, accountability and openness. The Government's corporate principles are set out in the Cadbury report, and a report will shortly be produced for use throughout the health service.

I share my hon. Friend's concern. The vast majority of people in the health service are deeply committed to providing improved patient care, but when anything goes wrong, it is right that we should leave no stone unturned in setting it right and learning lessons.

Mrs. Bridget Prentice (Lewisham, East): Who are the local worthies who can now make the difficult decisions in the national health service that cannot be made by people who would be accountable by being elected? Can the "shop alone" Secretary of State also tell us why, given the chaos that she has created in London's health services, she has not created a regional health authority for London?

Mrs. Bottomley: We have been round this issue fairly often, and perhaps one Opposition Member might be able to think of a different question to ask. Members of the Labour party, like members of all parties, are welcome to submit names for health authority appointments; they come from many different regions. I have to give the same answer that I gave before—that, if any Opposition Members wish, I can put them in touch with many of their party associates who are involved in the improvements. [HON. MEMBERS: "We have heard the answer before."] I have heard the question before, and I am afraid that Opposition Members have to hear the answer again.

I am more than happy to discuss the important subject of London. London has special needs, and its 45 hospitals, which include many teaching hospitals, have special circumstances, but the problems are best tackled by maintaining South Thames and North Thames regions, so that the people involved in those health authorities are aware of the pressure of the outlying districts of the home counties, which are supporting health care in London to the tune of £100 million this year. It is important to keep that process in place.

Mr. James Clappison (Hertsmere): Is my right hon. Friend aware that all those who wish for strong local purchasing will welcome the announcement that she made today about the powers of DHAs and FHSAs? Those people include patients in south-west Hertfordshire, who already enjoy the benefits of a strong local purchaser. Does she agree that the reforms that she announced today will

[Mr. James Clappison]

help managers and professionals to work together with purchasers to promote high-quality care and the best clinical practice?

Mrs. Bottomley: Yes.

Mr. Derek Fatchett (Leeds, Central): Will the Secretary of State clarify a subject that was unclear from her statement? Will she give some sign as to the future employment prospects at Quarry house in Leeds for the National Health Service Management Executive? Will she dispel the rumours in Leeds that hundreds of jobs are to be lost at Quarry house? Having spent £55 million on a new building, any Government that can plan their business so badly that they create those jobs, relocate the staff and then lose jobs within a matter of six months are wholly incompetent and do not deserve to be in office.

Mrs. Bottomley: People who work in Quarry house are very concerned that the hon. Gentleman—of all people—should have been the first to undermine their arrival in Leeds. Any organisation of the size and complexity of the national health service needs a headquarters office, and any Conservative Member would have welcomed all those people coming to Leeds, rather than, from the word go, making them feel unwelcome and undervalued.

As to costings, the relocations to Quarry house will bring about substantial savings. There were 25 sites all told in London, and the move has substantially reduced the number of sites, which will lead to savings of about £10 million a year once the immediate costs have been met. The people in Leeds, like the people in regions, will have discussions about how those changes effect them. They are having discussions at this moment. It is not possible to give precise figures, but we need a health service with appropriate management. We have moved on from the reforms. There are new challenges and new needs.

I urge the hon. Gentleman to take pride in Leeds as the headquarters of the national health service and not to seek every opportunity to denigrate and undermine it.

Mr. James Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): The reforms that were announced by my right hon. Friend this afternoon were extensive. Will she elaborate on what she intends to do to improve accountability to the community, to Ministers and, through Ministers, to the House? It may help my right hon. Friend to know that I am thinking especially of proposals that might be put forward by health authorities to regrade or close hospitals.

Mrs. Bottomley: My hon. Friend is a champion of the services in his constituency. It is important that district health authorities, especially when they merge with FHSAs, work hard to secure the involvement and participation of local people. Many Opposition Members mentioned elected representatives on health authorities. I do not believe that that is the right way forward, any more than Nye Bevan did; I believe that the right way forward is proper communication and understanding with local authorities, and especially with the Member of Parliament. The community health council has an important role to play. If a proposal does not meet with the agreement of the community health council, it comes to Ministers for decision.

Mr. John Gunnell (Morley and Leeds, South): It is precisely because I was appointed to a health authority that I would express concern about one aspect of the strucyture that the right hon. Lady put forward., Will she explain how the eight people who will liaise with her will be responsible for the appointment of 540 boards? In those circumstances, how can those eight people be other than people who are acceptable to Conservative central office? Will not the changes centralise political control but fragment the strategy for health care?

Mrs. Bottomley: As I understand it, there has been little change for many years in the way in which chairmen are appointed, whatever political party has been in control. I pay a warm tribute to those people who, selflessly and with tremendous energy, have been so successful as chairmen either of NHS trusts or of DHAs or FHSAs.

The answer lies in hon. Members' hands. If they know of people who have the dedication, energy and commitment to serve in that way on health authorities, they must submit their names.

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the abolition of regional health authorities will be warmly welcomed in my constituency? There the Government health reforms have led to both hospitals adopting trust status, 80 per cent. of the population are now treated by GP fundholders and there is a better standard of services in acute and primary medicine than ever before.

Can she assure the House that there will be no transfer of staff, automatic or otherwise, from regional health authorities to the regional offices of the health service executive? In that way, administration in the national health service will be reduced and patient services will be improved.

Mrs. Bottomley: The new regional offices will be on the model of the zonal outposts which have been monitoring the trusts. That light approach is the one that we wish to pursue. I am delighted to hear of the successes in my hon. Friend's constituency, as he knows that, from next April, 90 per cent. of our provider units will be NHS trusts, leading to better care for patients.

Ms Tessa Jowell (Dulwich): Does the Secretary of State accept that the market created by her health reforms in London is creating chaos with the well-being and serenity of hundreds of thousands of patients who depend on London hospitals for their treatment? Will she give an assurance today to the 500 patients at the kidney unit at King's that they have nothing to fear, that their treatment at King's will continue unimpeded, and that a threat no longer hangs over the unit, which is their lifeline?

Mrs. Bottomley: I cannot give that assurance to the hon. Lady, and she knows why as well as anyone. In the past 80 years, 20 reports have said that there had to be change in London. No change is no option.

One of the great problems in London is that local people were deprived of routine district general hospital services because of the tremendous multiplication and fragmentation of specialty services. I am deeply concerned about the uncertainty that inevitably has to continue a little longer in some of the hospitals.

We have had independent reviews from research and from clinical experts, and we shall take decisions in the near future as to how we can take forward health care in

London. In order to release resources for routine care for the men, women and children of London, we have to tackle that problem. The hon. Lady knows that as well as anyone in my Department.

Mr. Richard Alexander (Newark): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the first part of her statement will be widely welcomed by those working in the health service at grassroots level, but that the second part might be less welcome? In view of the fact that district health authorities are responsible for their budgets and for ensuring health care, is there really any need for continuing the layer of bureaucracy over their activities? Could we not grasp the nettle and scrap the lot now?

Mrs. Bottomley: My hon. Friend is asking me to go further, faster, than anyone else in the House. He has rightly identified the resentment at the unnecessary layer of bureaucracy above the local health authority and provider units, which must have the greatest significance. Frankly, there is a role for a strategic body—an intermediate tier—to intervene in the market where appropriate; for example, to ensure that specialty services are properly identified or to intervene in disputes. However, it must mean intervening by exception rather than the command-and-control, rather stultifying approach of the past. We are determined that greater resources for direct patient care will come out of it.

Ms Dawn Primarolo (Bristol, South): Will the Secretary of State explain why she praises managers in the national health service but then announces that she is going to sack them? Does she agree that her definition of decentralisation means the break-up of the national planning structure for the NHS? Will she explain what will happen to strategic planning and public health policy when she abolishes her new regions?

Finally, how many doctors' posts will be created as a result of her changes? The right hon. Lady surely must be aware that we have the lowest ratio of doctors—1·4—per thousand of population in Europe. Is her hidden agenda to privatise the health service by the end of the century by using a next steps agency?

Mrs. Bottomley: I have made it clear that we are not establishing a next steps agency. In characteristic style, the hon. Lady seems to think that no one in any organisation should ever have their job reviewed. That is only what I would expect from her, as she has totally sold out to the health unions and is blinkered from the needs of patients.

I respect, and have a great debt of gratitude towards, many extremely able health service managers, but one has to have the structure and management lines appropriate for the organisation—it is not a job creation scheme which never changes for fear of anyone being put in any short-term difficulty. Of course it is our intention to invest extra money in patient care, whether through nurses or doctors.

Finally, clear priorities and planning guidance are sent out. They are approved by me, as the Secretary of State, and sent out by the national health service. We have made it clear, as the hon. Lady will see when she studies the documents, that we want more explicit targets and better measurements of outcome, rather than merely measurements of inputs. All the Opposition think about is jobs for the boys and girls, and the union interest. We think about patient care and output from the service, and that is what we want to hold the health service to account for.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. A month ago, as the chair of the London group of Labour Members of Parliament, I wrote to the Secretary of State for Health asking for an urgent meeting of London Members with her, to discuss the health service in London and the 150,000 people on the waiting list. One month later, I received a reply from the Minister of Health referring me to the health authorities in London as the only bodies competent to answer our queries. Is that accountability to this House, or is it fudging the issue?

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman is attempting to ask a question which he had hoped to put directly to the Secretary of State for Health. It is certainly not a point of order.

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. While I entirely accept your right and duty to select questions from whatever source you think fit—you have not been helped by the long-windedness of the two Front Benches—you will appreciate that no one from the East Anglian region has been called during our discussions of the health service. As you will appreciate, two world-famous hospitals—Papworth and Addenbrooke's—are in that region. Perhaps, when the subject comes up again, that will be borne in mind.

Madam Speaker: I shall certainly keep that in mind, but I must tell the hon. Gentleman—this is a good opportunity for me to place it on record—that I am always anxious for hon. Members who seek to question a statement to be here at the beginning of it. That is a courtesy to the Minister. Some hon. Members, whose names I have listed, were not in the Chamber at the beginning of the statement. Therefore, when I have a choice to make, I shall obviously select those who were in at the beginning.

BILL PRESENTED

TAXATION OF DOMESTIC FUEL AND POWER (AMENDMENT)

Mr. Nigel Spearing, supported by Mr. Ron Leighton and Mr. Tony Banks, presented a Bill to repeal section 42 of the Finance Act 1993; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon 29 October, and to be printed. [Bill 255.]

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

VALUE ADDED TAX

That a further sum, not exceeding £1,807,298,000, be granted to Her Majesty out of the Consolidated Fund to defray the charges that will come in the course of payment during the year ending on 31st March 1994 for expenditure by the Home Office on compensation for criminal injuries, probation, police and superannuation payments for police and fire services.—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

Question agreed to.

SCOTTISH GRAND COMMITTEE

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 97(1) (Matter relating exclusively to Scotland).

WOMEN'S ISSUES

That the Matter of Women's Issues in Scotland, being a Matter relating exclusively to Scotland, be referred to the Scottish Grand Committee for its consideration.—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

Question agreed to.

Royal Assent

Madam Speaker: I have to notify the House, in accordance with the Royal Assent Act 1967, that the Queen has signified her Royal Assent to the following Acts:

Welsh Language Act 1993

National Lottery, etc. Act 1993

Orders of the Day

European Economic Area Bill *[Lords]*

Order for Second Reading read

4.56 pm

The Minister for Industry (Mr. Tim Sainsbury): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

The Bill implements the European Economic Area agreement, which will create the world's largest single market, consisting of 12 Community member states and six of the states in the European Free Trade Association. Perhaps I should remind the House that those states are Austria, Finland, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Sweden. The seventh EFTA state, Switzerland, chose last December not to participate. For the sake of brevity, I shall use the term EFTA to refer to those states that will be part of the EEA.

May I remind the House at the beginning of this debate that the agreement was considered in a scrutiny debate on the Floor of the House in February 1992. The motion in favour of the agreement was approved without a Division.

The Government have tabled amendments to take account of a protocol signed in March by the participating states, which enables the agreement to enter into force without Switzerland. The Bill as introduced, taken together with the Government amendments, will implement the agreement as amended by the protocol.

We should not underestimate the trade benefits that the agreement will bring. It will create an area of 18 countries throughout which the four freedoms—for the movement of goods, capital, services and people—will apply. Most of the provisions of the Community single market will be extended to apply to the whole of that area.

EFTA countries will have to adapt their legislation to make it consistent with the single market rules. Community member states will have to amend their legislation, where required, to cover the whole of the EEA.

The agreement will create a market with equal conditions of competition and the same trading rules, stretching from the Arctic to the Mediterranean. As the House will recall, the agreement was originally due to enter into force on 1 January 1993. Switzerland's decision meant that that date could not be met. It will now enter into force once all EEA and EFTA states have ratified. We expect the last states to do so this autumn, allowing the agreement to become effective by the beginning of 1994.

Liechtenstein will probably come on board some time later, after issues relating to its close ties with Switzerland have been resolved. The protocol allows for that, as does one of the Government amendments to the Bill.

When the agreement enters into force, the principal means by which it will extend the four freedoms is through the inclusion in the agreement of articles based on key articles from the European Economic Community treaty. It will include in its annexes some 1,500 single market measures.

Sir Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): The Minister referred to the extension of rights and entitlements from the Arctic to the Mediterranean. Does he accept that, as part of the EC, some of the alleged advantages do not extend to Gibraltar.

Mr. Sainsbury: I know my hon. Friend's concern about Gibraltar, but the arrangements there have been in position since the United Kingdom's accession in 1972. For some matters, such as Gibraltar-based banks, we hope to make the necessary provisions in due course, but if there are other aspects relating to Gibraltar, perhaps, my hon. Friend would like to enlarge upon those in his own remarks.

As I was saying, the agreement will include in its annexe some 1,500 single market measures, but in addition the EFTA countries will be subject to competition and state aid rules based on those of the Community. The agreement will also establish increased co-operation between the Community and EFTA in Community programmes in areas such as research and development, information services, education, training and youth, small and medium-sized enterprises and tourism.

The EEA is a dynamic agreement, so EFTA will take on new measures related to the four freedoms as they are adopted by the Community. That will ensure that the agreement continues to reflect business reality.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): The Minister is extolling the virtues of the arrangements and the legislation, so why is it that a country such as Japan seems to have a buoyant economy by and large, without the need for all the countries linking together in a single market? We were told in 1973 that our entry into the Common Market would give us entry into that wonderful market. We are now being told that it is to be made a bigger market, yet it all comes to nothing. We have a high level of unemployment, as do all the EC countries. Could he not make clear the reasons for the distinction between our failure and Japan's success?

Mr. Sainsbury: The hon. Gentleman invites me to depart rather a long way from the measure that we are debating. I hope that he will recognise that one has to look at the economic and geographical circumstances and the historic background of any individual country.

The most interesting point relevant to his scepticism is that not only do the EFTA countries wish to join the EEA of their own free choice—they see the benefits it will bring to their economies—but four of those countries have chosen to become full members of the Community, seeking as we do the advantages it brings to our economies and to our people.

To ensue that EFTA states comply with the rules in the agreement, EFTA will create a surveillance body with powers similar to those of the Commission plus a court with a role similar to that of the European Court and the operation of the agreement will be overseen by a council consisting of Ministers and EC Commissioners on a joint committee. The joint committee will be responsible for the day-to-day running of the agreement, resolving disputes and agreeing amendments to annexes to the agreement in order to take on new Community measures.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): I am grateful to the Minister because I wish to refer to the point that he has just made and it might be better to get a response from him now rather than later. He said that there will be a joint organisation between the EFTA Governments and Ministers and the Commission. It may be one commissioner, it may be more. Is it not something of an anomaly that representatives of elected bodies and Governments are meeting perhaps as an EFTA or EEA council—six of them meeting one or perhaps two or three commissioners who are, after all, officials? Will they not be meeting the political Ministers to whom the Commission proposes legislation?

Mr. Sainsbury: I can assure the hon. Gentleman that these arrangements were discussed at great length by the Ministers representing the EFTA countries and the Council of Ministers of the European Community. Of course, there will continue to be very close contact and meetings between all the Ministers of the EEA.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): I think I am right in saying that the European Court of Justice objected to certain powers being given to the new EEA court. What is the relationsships between the two courts? If a decision were to be taken by the EEA court, could that be appealed to the court in Luxembourg?

Mr. Sainsbury: There were some rather lengthy and complex, and speaking as a non-lawyer, legalistic negotiations on these matters. As a non-lawyer, it might be better if I wrote in response to the point the hon. Gentleman raises to make sure that we that get the legal reply quite correct.

Mr. Bernard Jenkin (Colchester, North): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Sainsbury: I want to make progress in due course, but I shall give way to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Jenkin: I am extremely grateful to my hon. Friend and I may be able to throw some light on this discussion. Was there not a disagreement within the European Community concerning the European Court of Justice and its jurisdiction, in that it was insisting that it would be the supreme body in the overall organisation of the EC and EFTA? Is it not significant that, having established that superiority over the activities in the EEA states, there is a risk that the measure could be more centralising than we would wish, given that the European Court of Justice has tended to be one of the architects of European centralisation?

Mr. Sainsbury: Again, I would say to hon. Friend that the negotiations on this point were lengthy, complex and dominated by the lawyers, of whom I am not one.

There is provision for that committee to consider the implications of divergent jurisprudence and to take measures to deal with any problems that arise with it. That suggests that the superiority to which my hon. Friend refers was not clear cut and that arrangements were entered into to deal with that complication. Perhaps I could write to hon. Friend as well as to the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman).

Mr. John Biffen (Shropshire, North): My hon. Friend promises to write, but I think that there might be some virtue in having matters of such moment on the record in *Hansard.*

Mr. Sainsbury: I take note of what my right hon. Friend says. Perhaps we can put the letter in the Library or arrange for its information to be conveyed.

I do not want to get too far into the complex legal arrangements for the interplay between the two courts, but I would say to my right hon. Friend, as I said to my hon.

[Mr. Sainsbury]

Friend the Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin), that there are arrangements for the resolution of any problems arising from what is called a divergent jurisprudence.

I was just about to draw to the attention of the House the fact that Community member states will have to amend their legislation to cover the entire area. That is the purpose of the Bill that we are now considering. It will implement the United Kingdom's obligations under the agreement and allow the United Kingdom to ratify the agreement.

he Bill contains three main provisions. Clause 1 makes the agreement a Community treaty in the United Kingdom law, clause 2(1) is a general rule that affords EFTA nationals and companies treatment equivalent to that already given under United Kingdom law to Community nationals and companies. Clause 3(1) is a general rule that implements the United Kingdom's obligations under the agreement where the first two provisions do not apply.

I will describe the provisions briefly in turn. Clause 1 of the Bill amends section 1(2) of the European Communities Act 1972 by adding the agreement to the list of Community treaties in that section, so obligations arising from the agreement will be treated as Community obligations under United Kingdom law and section 2 of the 1972 Act will apply to them.

EEA provisions that are directly applicable—for example, the competition articles of the agreement and EEA measures corresponding to EC regulations—will take effect in the United Kingdom without the need for further domestic legislation.

Where further domestic legislation is required to implement provisions of the agreement, powers need to be provided for that purpose. An example of that is the provisions in the annex to the agreement corresponding to directives. It is there that the two general rules contained in clauses 2(1) and 3(1) will operate.

Clause 2(1) contains the first general rule. The principle behind the rule is straightforward. Where existing legislation covered by the agreement contains reference to the communities, or some connection with the communities, such as member states, those references will be substituted by corresponding references to the European Economic Area—or some connection with the area—or to both the communities and the area. That substitution will apply where the legislation is limited in its operation by reference to the communities. In that way, EFTA nationals and companies will be treated under the legislation in question in the same way as Community nationals and companies.

The second general rule, in clause 3(1), will operate only where the first does not apply. Clause 3(1) modifies provisions in United Kingdom legislation and certain other instruments where equivalent treatment will not be conferred by clause 2(1). It modifies those provisions only in so far as it is necessary to implement the United Kingdom's obligations under the agreement. It is intended to cater for legislation on which clause 2(1) will not bite, but which has to be amended to implement the agreement.

The agreement is the most ambitious and wide-ranging to be entered into by the Community with third countries. It will create the world's largest single market with 370 million consumers, responsible for more than 40 per cent. of the world's trade. It will lead to benefits for both consumers and companies throughout the 18 countries. It will provide for closer co-operation between the Community and its closest European neighbours.

I should add that we are not ignoring the importance of our trade relations with Switzerland. If the Swiss decide in future to join the EEA, we shall welcome that decision. In the meantime, the Community and Switzerland are working to develop relations by improving on existing EC/Switzerland free trade agreement.

The United Kingdom is particularly well placed to benefit from the agreement. We have well established trade lines with all EFTA countries, partly because of geography and partly because of our previous membership of EFTA. In 1992, we made £5·7 billion of visible exports to the six EFTA states that will participate in the EEA. That business has been won by a wide range of industries and the agreement will bring further opportunities for exports from Britain through opening up services and public purchasing, shared research and development programmes and the extension of common technical standards and regulations.

There is a substantial potential benefit for the services sector. Financial services will be able to "passport" into EFTA countries. The aviation market will be opened up through the extension of EC aviation measures such as those on competition and passenger capacity. United Kingdom professionals will be able to offer their services across all 18 member states of the EEA. I can assure the House that my Department will play a full part in helping our companies take advantage of these new opportunities.

Earlier this year, we set up the Business in Europe service to help firms succeed in the new Europe, created by both the single market and the EEA. We shall give companies help on the practical aspects of selling in Europe, information on the new trade rules and assistance if they face unfair barriers to trade. We are in addition recruiting four export promoters specifically for the EFTA countries, including Switzerland.

The creation of the EEA is entirely in line with the Government's commitment to develop a Community that is open, market-oriented and outward-looking. It will ensure that trade within the larger part of Europe is based on the principles of open market and open economy that we hope will extend one day throughout the whole of Europe.

Sir Teddy Taylor: My right hon. Friend is kind to give way so much. Will there be a further advantage in contributions from the EFTA states of the EC? It seems, from reading this complex treaty, that on page 215, in protocol 32, provision is made for contributions by the EFTA states to the EC. Will that involve a lot of money, and will we benefit a great deal in consequence?

Mr. Sainsbury: There is a cohesion fund—an expression with which I suspect that my hon. Friend is familiar—which will enable the EEA countries to make a contribution to the poorest parts, or poorer parts, of the Community. Among the beneficiaries will be Northern Ireland.

A further and substantial advantage of the agreement is that it is greatly facilitating the negotiations that are currently under way with four of the EFTA states—Austria, Finland, Norway and Sweden—for them to join the Community as full members. The Government strongly support their applications.

Although enlargement of the Community is an important goal, the agreement remains significant in its own right. It creates a market that represents almost half of the world's trade. Its benefits will be enjoyed by consumers and businesses alike. It will ensure that trade within western Europe is based on the principles of an open market economy. British exporters want to win the new business that is available to them from the new opportunities that the agreement creates, and want to do so without delay. I therefore commend the Bill to the House.

5.16 pm

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): I thank the Minister for his concision on a Bill that is important to the House, as we saw yesterday in the procedural motion that we debated and are now taking through all its stages today.

Her Majesty's Opposition welcome the Bill. We welcome the underlying principle, which is to extend the single market from the European Community to the EFTA countries. As the Minister said, through the agreement that we are debating and the subsequent modification of Community law, we are seeing the creation of a single market of 18 countries, with 380 million consumers.

Notwithstanding the high levels of unemployment throughout the European Community—alluded to yesterday by my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), whom I am glad to see in his place, beside my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) —the fact remains that the European economic area will become the largest and richest single marketplace in the world.

The prospect has been opened up that as nation states in central and eastern European countries break away from their communist past, with their centralised economies, they may also join the European economic area, perhaps by the end of the decade.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): We have heard all these stories about this Common Market claptrap for 22 years: if we can make the market bigger, it will be better for Britain. I remember that, when West Germany annexed East Germany, people said that it was going to widen the market and that everybody would be better off as a result. We all know now that the British taxpayer is footing the bill for the annexation of East Germany, and to some tune.

I remember—those golden days in retrospect—when Britain used to build ships. We used to put manufactured goods in them, send them to the four corners of the earth. They used to come back. Some of them had Commonwealth preference. We used to put food in the ships. It was a nice little earner. We used to sell our manufactured goods. We had a balance of trade surplus. We do not now have a shipbuilding industry; the Government have ruined that. We have a deficit with every Common Market country on trade. The whole thing has been an unmitigated disaster from beginning to end. Now my hon. Friend is saying, "If only we can make it a bit bigger, we can have even more of this claptrap."

Mr. Bell: I am glad that my hon. Friend managed in his intervention to mention Mr. Arthur Daley and his nice little earner.

Yesterday, my hon. Friend talked with his usual eloquence of socialism in one country. He will be happy to note from the response given by the Minister to the hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) that, under the cohesion agreement, a fund will be set up to assist poorer regions of the Community. It will consist of 500 million ecu in grants over five years plus an interest rate subsidy of 3 per cent. on 1·5 billion ecu of loans. As the Minister said, that covers Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, Greece, Portugal and most of Spain. As socialists, we are all keen on the transfer of wealth from those who have to those who have not and on a proper distribution of that wealth to the poorer regions.

Mr. Christopher Gill (Ludlow): Given the Government's new stand that a single currency and economic and monetary union are no longer an immediate prospect, is it realistic to think that such importance will be placed on the cohesion funds in future? As I understand it, the purpose of the cohesion funds was to encourage the convergence that made a single currency possible.

Mr. Bell: The hon. Gentleman, who followed the Maastricht debates with great interest and enthusiasm, has touched on a point of great embarrassment to the Government. The Heads of Government will shortly meet again. The Prime Minister and the Government say one thing in the House, but they will have to say something else to the Heads of Government, who propose to continue along the route to a single currency, because they tell the House that we do not. When that debate takes place, it will be interesting to see where we are going.

To return to my earlier train of thought, as the Minister said, we are debating the most ambitious and wide-ranging agreement to be entered into by the Community in relation to third countries.

Sir Teddy Taylor *rose*——

Mr. Bell: I just want to make one point to my hon. Friends the Members for Bolsover and for Bradford, South, who are following the debate with interest, as are my hon. Friends the Members for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) and for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing).

We shall hear opposition to the Bill on the Floor of the House, but one should consider the difficulties of the Uruguay round of the general agreement on tariffs and trade, the difficulties of the new American free trade area between the United States, Canada and Mexico, and the long haul of Maastricht not only in Britain but throughout the EC. Here we have European neighbours coming together in an area where there is to be free movement of goods, capital, services and people, under an agreement which includes consumer protection, environmental protection—which is important to the Labour party, the Government and those who consider such issues with care —statistics and company law; an agreement which will lead to the enlargement of the European Community.

Mr. Cryer: My hon. Friend sought to make the case that there was some sort of redistribution of wealth in this arrangement. Would he care to comment on the idea that the common agricultural policy, sustained by Common Market expenditure, on which 70 per cent. of EC funds are spent, destroys the agriculture of the developing nations, results in large quantities of food being dumped on world markets and is harmful to the very poorest of the poor? Year after year, we are told by proponents of the Common Market that that will be changed, but it gets worse. More

[Mr. Cryer]

money is being spent and there are more food surpluses and mountains. Yet now EFTA wants to help to prop up that discredited and disgraceful regime.

Mr. Bell: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making that point. The common agricultural policy is not part of the agreement and it does not extend to the new economic area. When the matter was raised in the other place, Lord Peston, on behalf of the Opposition, said of those in the EFTA countries, "Lucky them." My hon. Friend's point goes to the heart of the GATT round at this moment and the discussions and debates there.

In the Community that we are seeking to create and enlarge, we want basic freedoms to be enlarged in relation to political identity and harmonisation, with common institutions that will bind us together. I confirm what the Minister said earlier, that the Opposition look on the European economic area as a stage on the way to enable countries in the EFTA area to make their entry into the EC.

Dr. Godman: Part III of the treaty, which relates to the free movement of persons and so on, is of more than passing interest to numerous constituents of mine who work in the offshore oil and gas industries. Is my hon. Friend aware that very few United Kingdom registered vessels operate in the Norwegian sector, whereas in the United Kingdom sector the picture is entirely different? Is my hon. Friend confident that there will be a more even distribution of work in the two oil and gas sectors following the establishment of the treaty?

Mr. Bell: The provisions on the free movement of persons will create a right for Community and EFTA nationals to work anywhere in that area. That is a coherent part of the agreement on the European economic area with the final Act and declarations. Community and EFTA nationals will be able to operate as self-employed persons throughout the area and to set up and manage undertakings under the same conditions as local nationals. Therefore, my hon. Friend's point is covered by the agreement. It is agreed in the text and words, and we hope that it will be shown in deeds.

Sir Teddy Taylor: I do not want to be too hard on the Minister in view of his dramatic announcement a few moments ago that Northern Ireland will now be eligible for grants from the cohesion fund. Will not that be great news for the port of Larne, which was told before that Northern Ireland was not eligible?

Mr. Bell: I hope that it is good news for the people of Northern Ireland. That was clearly stated by Baroness Denton in the other place when she took the Bill through the House last November.

We note that the European economic area agreement does not extend to VAT or to other areas of taxation. That was touched on yesterday in the procedural debate. The EFTA countries will not be obliged to apply VAT in their countries, but as and when they join the Community as full members they will do so. The same applies to customs union. There are no plans for the European economic area to become a customs union. EFTA is not a customs union. The seven EFTA states have different external tariffs. However, on becoming full members of the Community, EFTA states will have to join the union. Community fishermen will have increased access to Norwegian and Icelandic grounds and reduced tariffs for trade in fish between Community and EFTA countries.

Dr. Godman: Will Spanish fishing vessels have the same rights as those few United Kingdom vessels that now fish in Norwegian waters, despite the fact that the former have no history of fishing in those waters yet the latter have fished in northern Norwegian waters for many generations?

Mr. Bell: I seem to be taking over the Minister's role in interpreting the agreement and various documents, such as those on the European economic area and business in Europe. I am sure that the Minister, with his vast staff, can answer those questions better than I can. However, the European economic area is what it says it is, so I think that I can confirm what my hon. Friend says.

Again, I am not the Minister. I suppose that the only good thing is that while I am on the Floor of the House, I cannot be sued for slander, defamation of character or negligence if I get anything wrong. However, the point was made.

Dr. Godman: It was a good point.

Mr. Bell: It was, and an important one for fishermen.

Britain accounts for a large part of protected salmon, herring and mackerel interests, but the Bill does not amount to an extension of the Community's common fisheries policy to EFTA. During yesterday's short debate on a procedural motion, a plea was made for a two-day debate, and my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover said that the Opposition had asked for two days. That was the wish of the shadow trade and industry team, but the decision to have a one-day debate was made through the usual channels. My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South said that the usual channels went back to 1992; but the decision had nothing to do with the shadow trade and industry team.

One irony of yesterday's debate occurred when the hon. Member for Southend, East looked across at my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover and asked whether he had heard a Conservative Minister speaking at the Tory party conference. Some of us have a vivid imagination and can visualise my hon. Friend attending the Tory party conference as a delegate and speaking at a fringe meeting about socialism in one country and in our time. That would be a great wonder to behold.

In fact, the Tory party conference was attended by the Swedish Prime Minister, who addressed a fringe meeting on the merits of the agreement that is before the House. I hope that the Swedish Prime Minister said—although this was not reported in the press—that Sweden supported the social chapter of the Maastricht treaty and that if Sweden ever signed up to it, it would also sign up to the social chapter.

At another Tory party conference fringe meeting, the Secretary of State for Social Security unveiled himself like Superman and declared that there would be two sets of measures to clamp down on benefits paid to foreigners. The first was that foreigners allowed into the United Kingdom on condition that they would not claim benefits would be prevented from doing so. That was at best an illogical statement. How can someone who has entered the country promising that he will not claim benefits

subsequently be prevented from doing so? Nevertheless, the Secretary of State received a standing ovation for making such a statement.

The right hon. Gentleman also proposed preventing benefit tourism by introducing a requirement that one must live in the United Kingdom before being allowed to claim. He said that many foreign claimants are allowed into the United Kingdom on the express condition that they would be no burden on the public purse. I hope that those remarks were not made at the fringe meeting attended by the Swedish Prime Minister, because he would have been saddened to hear that he was considered a foreigner and that his subjects should not be allowed to become benefit tourists.

Let our imaginations run wild——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will not allow his imagination to range so wide that his remarks bear no relation to the Bill.

Mr. Bell: I assure you, Madam Deputy Speaker, and the House that my remarks will relate to the Bill. According to the Secretary of State for Social Security, benefit tourists will be guided away from those beaches that do not meet European directives on bathing waters—a point to which the Minister for the Environment and Countryside referred yesterday.

Mr. Cryer: Does my hon. Friend believe that the comments of the Secretary of State for Social Security at the Tory party conference were a coded indication of opposition to part of the Bill? That part of the explanatory memorandum dealing with its financial effects states:

"There may be a small amount of additional expenditure as a result of the application of the Income Support Regulations 1987 (S.I. 1967) to EFTA nationals. However, it is not possible to predict how many EFTA nationals will claim income support, so precise expenditure is not possible to estimate."

Does my hon. Friend agree that the Government should provide such an estimate, particularly when income support is under savage attack by the Government?

Mr. Bell: My hon. Friend is perfectly right to draw attention to the coded messages that are sent from one Secretary of State or Minister to another. Yesterday, we heard a sad comment from the hon. Member for Southend, East that statements made by Ministers at party conferences do not always turn out exactly as one would imagine. We believe that the statements to which I have referred reflect the thoughts of Ministers, and that the Secretary of State hoped that we would not notice them —or the fact that he was speaking contrary to the wishes of members of the Treasury Bench, in dealing with the Bill.

Dr. Godman: My hon. Friend seems to have detailed knowledge of all aspects of the agreement, so I will refer to one of concern to many working in Scottish salmon farming. Is my hon. Friend confident that the agreement will protect the interests of those employed in that industry from unfair practices by Norwegian salmon farmers? Before the agreement was signed, the Community, by means of the imposition of tariffs, protected the interests of Scottish salmon farmers against the dumping of Norwegian salmon in Community markets. Is there any protection against that kind of behaviour in the agreement?

Mr. Bell: I am always glad to stand in for the Minister and answer such questions. I repeat my earlier remark that a large part of the protected herring, salmon and mackerel interests will remain protected in accordance with the agreement, and that the Bill will not extend the Community's common fisheries policy to EFTA. My hon. Friend was right to raise that important issue and to demand an answer from the Minister. We will help the Minister by putting our questions formally, so that they will appear on the Order Paper.

We contrast the remarks made by the Secretary of State for Social Security with those made by the Foreign Secretary at the Cornwall European constituency council lunch on 15 October. I do not know whether my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover was invited to that function, but there he would have heard the Foreign Secretary say that we must reconquer the high ground of Europe.

That is a remarkable statement by the Foreign Secretary of a Government who found themselves in a minority of one during consideration of the Maastricht agreement. They had to get themselves two opt-outs; they struggled in the House of Commons for six to nine months before they were able to pass the Maastricht agreement; and, at the end of the day, they required a vote of confidence. If that is reconquering the high ground, it astonishes me to think that the Foreign Secretary ever knows where the high ground is.

We have seen the Government fritter away the opportunities of having a European central bank in London. They tell the nation how the City of London will be protected and enhanced by their action, yet we have lost all hope of having a European central bank. *[Interruption.]* The universal applause from Conservative Back Benchers will please the City of London, which for many years has bankrolled the Conservative party and provided votes at general elections. It is astonishing——

Mr. Sainsbury: Perhaps what was most revealing about the lengthy procedures on the Maastricht Bill was the Opposition's approach. Some Opposition Members, although not those below the Gangway, claimed to be in favour of the European Community but consistently voted against it.

Mr. Bell: We found ourselves in the uncomfortable position of agreeing with a Conservative Swedish Prime Minister on the terms of the social chapter and on the fact that it should be part of the Maastricht treaty. Had the Minister supported the social chapter, we would not have had six months of long and lengthy debate. The social chapter is agreed by the other nation states and would be agreed by Sweden and the EFTA countries.

It was astonishing to see the Government scuttled on so-called black Wednesday, when the pound came out of the exchange rate mechanism. We saw how the Government took refuge in a straightforward devaluation of the pound to become the party of devaluation. *[Interruption.]* We will remember that applause. We will remember for the nation how the Tory party became the party of devaluation. The Government were unable to hold a common line on monetary policy with our European partners. So they had better find out where to begin the conquest of the high ground of Europe and be sure that they carry enough oxygen to get them there.

The Foreign Secretary said at the Cornwall constituency council meeting that "ours" is a positive message. They are so positive about this Bill that, as the hon. Members for Southend, East and for Stafford (Mr. Cash) said yesterday,

[Mr. Bell]

it has lain in the Vote Office for a year. That shows how limp the Government are when it comes to getting measures through the House of Commons.

How will the Bill help our business community? The Opposition believe that small firms will be able to benefit from cross-research and development and cross-trading opportunities. We know that United Kingdom business has welcomed the agreement. Our exports to the EFTA countries, referred to by the Minister, are about £7·5 billion —equivalent to two thirds of our exports to the United States.

I referred earlier to the prospect of failure of the Uruguay round of the general agreement on tariffs and trade. There is also the prospect of failure of the American free trade area agreements with Canada and Mexico. The world is drifting towards protectionism, a beggar-thy-neighbour attitude and policies that would lead to more stagnation and recession. We should contrast that picture with the situation in Europe, where a market is developing. It is not a rigged market—examples of which are well known to my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover—but a single market. We support a developing market which brings closer together the people of Europe and which brings the Community together as a living and expanding entity.

I shall end where I began by saying that the Labour party is committed to the enlargement of the Community, not just in nominal terms but in real terms. The Scandinavian countries want to be part of the Community, notwithstanding the remarks about Norway made yesterday by the hon. Member for Southend, East. The hon. Gentleman commented earlier on the cohesion fund. When the Scandinavian countries join the Community of ours, they will be net contributors. They will make a real contribution to both the political and social context. That was shown by the speech made by the Swedish Prime Minister at the Tory party conference.

The Minister let slip a phrase which is more significant than even he realises. He talked about a new Europe. The Labour party has argued in this House throughout the Maastricht debate and in our entire approach to Europe for a new Europe. The new European economic area—the merging of Community interests with those of the EFTA states and bringing in the eastern European states—is looking towards that new Europe. That is why I commend the Bill to the House and why we will support the Government.

5.45 pm

Mr. John Biffen (Shropshire, North): I enjoyed the speech of the hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell). Most of it was devoted to an almost Jenkinsite view of the Community and the virtues of its centralising destiny. Towards the end, to show that he was not wholly left behind by events, he talked about the virtues of enlargement. The hon. Gentleman will have an exciting learning curve, aided by his hon. Friends in the Chamber, if he holds these responsibilities when the Labour party has chosen its Front-Bench team. I wish him well. I prefer to oppose a communautaire Labour Front Bench than a revisionist Labour Front Bench.

I hope that my right hon. Friend the Minister will convey to my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade our regret that he could not be with us to move the Second Reading. This is a tremendously important Bill, and it would have given him the chance to put to the House his views on the Community, which perforce he has not been able to do over recent months, for reasons that we all understand. Each and every one of us will be most anxious to see him back at the heart of this debate.

Mr. Skinner: Not closing pits.

Mr. Biffen: It will be a diversion from other activities.

I welcome the Bill, in the sense that it seeks a closer association of this country with the EFTA members that are designated as prospective members of this arrangement. I welcome it because, broadly speaking, those countries are at the edge rather than the heart of Europe. Because they are on the edge of Europe, they will have certain cultural, geographical and economic interests that are more closely aligned to ours than those of many existing members.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon) *indicated assent.*

Mr. Biffen: That is a casual observation, but I am glad to have the confirmation of the Liberal Democrats. That is the type of common sense which occasionally escapes during debates such as this. We invent for ourselves wonderful trade prospects. As the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) said, on the whole, the track record of those who have been forecasting economic joy at every stage of our European relationship is not entirely compelling. Therefore, I am basing my case upon other considerations.

There is one point that the House must consider very carefully. There is, as it were, a seamless robe about European Community developments. Just as the original Rome membership led to the Single European Act, and that in turn led to all the arguments about a single currency, what we are seeing here is a staging operation whereby a number of countries, formerly within EFTA, are expected to be incorporated into the European Community.

That development is welcomed by the Government, because it is central to their policy, and it is also welcomed by those on the Opposition Front Bench, and especially by me. I cheerfully endorse the prospect of a wider Europe, because I believe, among other things, that within that widening there will have to be a recognition of the great diversity of Europe and an acceptance that one cannot have the centralisation which has been fashionable in recent years.

What interests me about the proposals is that, at this stage in the development of the European economic area, which is in fact to do with the consequences of the Single European Act, no significant attempt is being made to loosen the relationships under the Single European Act. The full rigours of the Act will be applied. Is this to be the Community of the future?

As I see it, there is a conflict between the desire to go beyond mere free trade to something more positive contained in the Single European Act—I respect that, and it has, I think, been widely accepted throughout the European Community—but one consequence was not foreseen: the enormous strengthening of the Commission's powers as it sought uniformity on the most massive scale. The reaction against that can be seen in the importance that the Government now attribute to subsidiarity.

I believe that subsidiarity is a means of trying to check and reverse the Commission's growing power under the Single European Act. It is a great challenge, which I welcome—*[Interruption.]* My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) will have the opportunity to make his own speech, which I am sure will be less generous than mine. I am seeking the greatest possible agreement with the members of the Front Bench.

If our objective is to loosen the arrangements under the Single European Act, let it be an explicit objective. If no attempt has been made to loosen the circumstances in which the Single European Act will be applied in the European economic area, let us understand why. Let us understand that it was purely a temporary measure required of us by the exigencies of the negotiations, but that the objective of the wider Europe, including the EFTA members, is to ensure a loosening of arrangements under the Single European Act, and especially to use the powers of subsidiarity to limit the authority of the Commission.

This point is not a passing debating point: it is crucial to our relations with our prospective partners in the north, and will also be valid when considering our relationships with the Czech lands, Hungary, Poland and possibly Slovakia. There will not be the homogeneity that exists between the economies of the EFTA countries. The situation is more complex and varied, so the changes for which I plead will be absolutely crucial in the relationships to be developed with prospective partners in the east.

This issue is at the heart of the expansion of Community membership, which is crucial to Government and Opposition policy. It cannot be left as a good-natured avowal or rhetoric to buy off the House, at Question Time or at any other time. It must be clearly spelt out as an integral part of Government policy, to be pursued in the renegotiation of Maastricht and the deals that are expected to be done in 1996.

That is the only point I want to make; it is a headline point and not a detailed point about the legislation, but my experience of EC legislation is that one must take each stage very carefully and ensure that the Government make it clear where they expect the next development to take place. That was not the case with the Single European Act, which was never sold on the basis that it would lead to economic and monetary union. However, I travelled, as ever, hopefully.

Recently, under the rubric "Raise your eyes, there is a land beyond", my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister contributed to *The Economist,* volume 328, serial No. 7830, pages 23-27. That is a rather prosaic introduction, so I shall summarise the article. It was the "Brixton Manifesto" on the great issues of the European Community. It makes encouraging reading for me. I shall not detain the House much longer but, in the context of tonight's debate, I shall read out three quick quotations.

My right hon. Friend wrote:

"I believe it is time to look afresh at the community and consider the way ahead. Time to put away the old slogans, dreams and prejudices. All over Europe, what are people worying about? Not to reduce the number of currencies, but to increase the number of jobs."

The following quotation could be specific to this debate. He wrote:

"I believe it is that centralising vision that alarms so many voters in the applicant countries of Norway, Sweden, Finland and Austria."

He went on:

"Community leaders should recognise that danger"

of centralism

" and work to avoid it; not imply—as they sometimes do—that these EFTA (European Free Trade Area) countries are lucky to be able to apply. The Community is not Europe. A true European Community needs the EFTA countries and others."

That is almost illegitimacy made an art form.

I am delighted to believe that, after the passage of this legislation, the prosecution of policy will be predicated on the overwhelming requirement to ensure that the implications of the Single European Act are not carried to such an extreme that they sustain the present unacceptable authority of the Commission.

5.56 pm

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): Before I comment on the distinguished contribution of the right hon. Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen), whom I think of as the right hon. Member for Ludlow, may I say that you, Madam Deputy Speaker, and colleagues will know that it is my habit to attend these debates as often as I can to listen to the speeches. If I have to depart because of a long-standing and vital engagement, I hope to return as soon as possible, but if I do not do so before the following speaker has concluded, I hope that the hon. Member, whoever it is, the House and those who wind up will understand.

I refer to the speech of polity that we have just heard. The right hon. Gentleman does not favour the treaty, but he is like those people who favour it while hoping for a change of direction. The Brixton manifesto, which is well named, is also of that persuasion, as are many of my Front Bench colleagues. The right hon. Gentleman put his finger on the central issue—the Commission's power, the demands of the single market and the modification of subsidiarity.

My hon. Friend the Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) is a little optimistic: not only does the Commission remain the sole fount of legislation in its raw state, but the single market commands and determines almost all commercial, quantitative, monetary or legal obligations. Of course, the famed and over-publicised principle of subsidiarity does not apply where the Community's competence has vires, as it has over the single market. Therefore, all the hopes and flourishes of the Brixton manifesto and of my hon. Friend the Member for Middlesbrough and his Front-Bench colleagues are, alas, bound to end in disappointment.

The demands of a market—I shall return to that theme later in connection with Scandinavia and the other EFTA countries—involve more than simply freedom. There may be freedom for some; we have heard the Minister talking about the four freedoms, about movement of capital and so on. But rules and legislation are required, and the more a level playing field is demanded, and the more we say that there should be no interference with competition by state or Community subsidy or law, the more authority becomes necessary, and the more complex it becomes. Over the wider area that the market covers, with its different geographical conditions—in this case, in the northern parts of Europe—more and more authority is required; more courts and more interpretation are needed.

A great deal more is being required of the EFTA countries, especially Finland, Sweden and Norway, than has been popularly understood in this country. The "treaty of Oporto"—that is what it ought to be called—has not been mentioned so far. It was signed on 2 May 1992, and

[Mr. Nigel Spearing]

requires the single market, in all its authoritarianism, to be imposed lock, stock and Commission on all the members of the EEA.

The applicant or semi-applicant states have had to take almost all the legislation on board. I want to find out about the exceptions later, because we should know what they are. The applicants have had to take on, holus bolus, the whole of the famed single market that came into operation on 1 January. Moreover, they are to have only a consultative role concerning any amendments thereto.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: That is up to them.

Mr. Spearing: It may be up to them to a certain extent, but—I shall now put the argument that I intended to put later—is not what is happening virtually force majeure? If you, Madam Deputy Speaker, were sitting in the Riksdag in Sweden or in Norway in the——

Mr. Bruce: Storting.

Mr. Spearing: Yes, the Storting. The Danes, too, were involved in something similar recently. The economic and social pressures, and the talk of the risks if those countries do not join, do not necessarily lead to willing acceptance. Countries can accept adherence for all sorts of reasons other than absolute willingness. The relative position of those states, and the relative size of their economies and populations, form at least an element. In the Storting, there was a relatively small majority in favour of entry.

Will the Minister who winds up the debate tell us about the exceptions to the authoritarian structural market, about which we are learning more and more? The northern parts of Europe, especially the three states that I have mentioned, are distinctive in climate, in peoples and in social development. Their landscape is one of fjords, fields, forests and farms, and their communities depend greatly on that base.

Norway also depends greatly on the life of the North sea —the marine life, as my hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) has illustrated so well by his questions. Of course, we all know that the European policies on agriculture and fisheries have been such an outstanding success that we want other people to join in. The communities that live nearest to the earth, the forests and the sea are the most vulnerable.

State aids are prohibited in principle in any part of the single market. They can exist only with permission, and that will be given only if the Commission does not think that they will distort the market. But the Commissioners' job is to protect the treaties, and the treaties require the single market; it is the golden calf of the whole outfit.

A description of the EEA agreement issued by the European Free Trade Association in February 1992 says the following about state aid:

"The EFTA countries will have to provide information about existing and proposed aid schemes to the EFTA Surveillance Authority, which may order them to be altered or abolished. New aid schemes may not be implemented without the approval of the Surveillance Authority."

Anyone who has travelled in those countries will know how important a part state aids—that is an ugly phrase; my hon. Friends and I might use the expression "community support"—play in the life of their communities. Indeed, many Scandinavian countries have the advantage of not having experienced a medieval period dominated by great landowners, as we did in this country.

In harsh conditions, the whole of life is based on presumptions of co-operation and commonality, and on a close relationship with the environment of field and fjord. That attitude is shared by many of the Scots communities. No wonder they, too, feel the problems that arise. The landscapes and the way of life in many parts of Scotland are not dissimilar from those in Scandinavia, which is not surprising, because the people come from common Viking ancestors.

Will most of those communal and state aids now be under threat? I suggest that, in principle, they will. I hope that the Minister he will tell us of any derogations, either permanent or transitional, written into the treaty of Oporto that modify the otherwise harsh requirements of the single authoritarian market as they affect the fundamental ways of life of our neighbours, especially in Scandinavia.

No mention has yet been made of Iceland, but I believe that that is one of the six territories. I bracket Iceland with Scandinavia and, of course, with landlocked Austria. Switzerland, another landlocked country, will not be involved. What country could be more central in financial and geographical terms to the continent of western Europe than Switzerland? Yet the Swiss have examined the matter closely and said, "No, we can do better on our own."

What about VAT? There is to be harmonisation, as we all know, because it is already causing problems. The countries in question, rightly and for their own reasons, have relatively high VAT, but they also have high standards of social support. We all, especially the Opposition, know that their people—perhaps not gladly, but assuredly—put up with high turnover taxes, but that in return they receive a high social wage. That fact is built into the community life of those countries, as I have explained. What will happen if there is freedom of movement of labour?

I suspect that even now some of the people of the north-east, perhaps from the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell), our Front-Bench spokesman, and some of the people from Scotland, possibly even from the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow, work in the Norwegian offshore oil industry.

Dr. Godman: That is the problem; they do not.

Mr. Spearing: But some people from the north-east do.

Dr. Godman: I must point out to my hon. Friend that the Norwegian authorities make every effort to ensure that it is extremely difficult for a United Kingdom national to obtain employment in the Norwegian oil and gas industry.

Mr. Spearing: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, because he gives an example that illustrates my point well. I can well understand why the Norwegians act in that way, just as I would understand, if there was an independent Scotland, that the Scots would not be too keen on Norwegians coming in and doing the same thing.

There is some social coherence in Bergen, in Stavanger, in Trondheim or wherever. As my hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) has said, there is a feeling that it should be Norwegians first. Once the treaty is in force, will what my hon. Friend has told me no longer apply? I suspect that that may be the case.

That may be to the advantage of his constituents, of mine or of those of my hon. Friend the Member for Middlesbrough, but what will people say in a coherent Norwegian society which is predicated on the status quo? What will happen? I put that as a question. What would happen the other way round? What about the different social support systems in that part of the world and here?

Mr. Oliver Heald (Hertfordshire, North): Is the hon. Gentleman saying that Norway and the other EFTA countries should be allowed to enter the European economic area while maintaining state aid and trade barriers? They would then be able to retain jobs in their countries at the expense of Britain and other member countries by hiding behind trade barriers, which we do not have. Would that not be bad for jobs?

Mr. Spearing: I was expressing a point of view. I was trying to point out some of the problems that may arise. There may be problems and dilemmas that have not yet been sufficiently addressed. Conservative Members, and especially the Minister, have assumed that, the bigger and wider the market, the fewer barriers—which some people might call protection—there would be. Harold Wilson spoke of one man's protection being another man's freedom. It is assumed that taking down all the protections and having a giant economic machine will give everybody more universal benefits. That is the macro-assumption behind the whole of the single market.

Mr. Bell *indicated assent.*

Mr. Spearing: My hon. Friend nods.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: That is the idea.

Mr. Spearing: Of course. However, there may be unexpected or predictable side effects as I have just explained, especially when centuries of tradition and centuries of assumption have been built up by communities which have been in place for a long time.

Another question is the relationship between the Baltic states—Sweden and Finland—with the mainland Baltic states on the other side of that sea. My understanding of history and of trade is that there was a great deal of commonality among the Baltic states, including those in eastern Europe, in trade, in culture and in contact. There are trade arrangements and movement arrangements. How will that mesh with the demands of the treaty of Oporto? Those questions should be asked at this stage and should be answered.

I now come to the all-important question about the political and legal relationships between the EEA and the EC in its central market function. I intervened in the Minister's speech a little earlier on that. Three new institutions will act as couplings between the six EEA countries jointly and the rest of the EC. There will be a Council of Ministers of the EEA, which I suspect will act in a double capacity. It will meet the Community by means of meeting some people from the Commission.

Oh yes, I have no doubt that, as the Minister said, there will be other connections as well. However, it will be the Commission with which the Council of Ministers will tie in primarily, and I believe that that is written into the treaty.

My hon. Friend the Member for Middlesbrough has already addressed the question of decision-making. Who will decide what the treaty means? I presume that it will not be the International Court of Justice under the Vienna convention, although the treaty is probably registered as an international treaty, because the treaty says that we shall have to set up special machinery. The rules of the single market are made by the European Court in Luxembourg. The court will be the interpreter of the rules of the single market when it is enlarged.

Of course, the EFTA countries do not have political control because they have not signed any of the EC treaties, either the treaty of Rome or its successors. They do not intend to sign those yet, although they may consider doing so later. So we have to set up the surveillance body, which has pretty big powers. I quoted the details of one of its powers in respect of state aid. The surveillance body will give opinions, it will police the treaty and it will see how the treaty works out.

There will then be another court between the two groups of countries. The EEA treaty court will, in the end, have to accept what the court in Luxembourg says are the terms of the single market. The connections will be tenuous at a political level, but very strong at a legal level.

Dr. Godman: Is my hon. Friend suggesting that the European Court of Justice will become a supreme court over the whole membership of the EEA, and that the EEA court will seek opinions from the European Court of Justice?

Mr. Spearing: I think that we need confirmation of that point from the Minister. I have expressed my understanding of what will happen, either de jure or de facto. Bearing in mind the economic strength of the partnerships concerned, if it is not de jure, it may well be de facto.

The whole of the single market and its institutions form, by definition, an authoritarian organisation, as they must do if they are to fulfil the purposes of the treaties. The provisions will be extended into a geographical and social area where they are least applicable. Those who will be subject to them will find all the disadvantages that we have found in this country. I include even those who welcomed membership; I am not talking about those who may not have done.

We can learn something about the real nature of the European Economic Community and about union by having a look at the effects of the treaties on our northern neighbours in western Europe.

6.17 pm

Mr. Bernard Jenkin (Colchester, North): One feels nostalgic about having another of these debates and it is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing). If there is one criticism to be levelled at the Euro-realists, who opposed the Maastricht treaty, which I take seriously, it is that we must not live too much in despair. There is too much lamenting the Community as it is and not enough travelling in hope for the future.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) showed an attitude that I shall attempt to emulate. I have great admiration for my right hon. Friend, who has given me much advice since I entered the House. I may have been referred to as a man without a father, but my right hon. Friend has been to me a father figure.

The agreement is an important step towards the objective enunciated by my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary, which he described as variable geometry. We

[Mr. Bernard Jenkin]

have created in the Maastricht treaty, if the opt-outs actually work, a Community of at least two tiers. By this agreement to create the European economic area, the treaty of Oporto, we are creating a three-tier, three-speed Community, which is surely a step in the direction of the Government's stated policy.

However, we must ensure that the agreement respects the individual sovereignty of the EFTA states. I share the endorsement of my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North of the article in *The Economist* by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister in which he said that the nation state is here to stay. That is an immutable fact which the architects of the European Community have tended to ignore. The Government must be the champion of the nascent members of the EEA. We must stand by their individuality and their limited exemptions from the acquis communautaire of the Community because therein lies the danger.

I want to analyse the relationship between the legal entity of the EFTA states and the Community and to shed light on the comments of the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing). Protocol 35, the "Sole Article" states:

"For cases of possible conflicts between implemented EEA rules and other statutory provisions, the EFTA States undertake to introduce, if necessary, a statutory provision to the effect that EEA rules prevail in these cases."

Analogous to the treaty of Rome in respect of the EC member states, here is the supremacy of the Oporto treaty over the law of the EFTA member states.

Articles 105 and 106 deal with the homogeneity of interpretations in respect of the relationship between the EEA Court and the European Court of Justice. The EEA Joint Committee is assigned the task of constant review of the case law of the ECJ and the EFTA court to keep interpretation of the EEA consistent. When the interpretations differ the Joint Committee may settle the question or, where the question is one of interpretation of an EC provision, the Joint Committee may ask the ECJ for a definitive ruling.

In other words, the ECJ is the final arbiter of interpretation of EC provisions and may overrule the EFTA Court interpretations of EC rules. However, it would appear that if the disagreement is not over an EC rule, but over the interpretation of an EEA agreement, the EEA Joint Committee must make the decision about interpretation. Any such decisions made by the EEA Joint Committee will apply throughout the EEA, but will not affect the case law of the ECJ in relation to protocol 48.

The importance of that is that it appears that by acceding to the EEA agreement the EFTA countries are acceding to the entire acquis communautaire of the treaty of Rome as amended by the Single European Act. Their only exemptions are those specifically granted to them and it is instructive to glance at the treaty of Oporto because its prose and structure have a deadly ring of familiarity, as they are the same as those in the treaty of Rome.

We must not forget that it is the acquis communautaire, the structure of the Community, which in the words of my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary has been

"invading the nooks and crannies of our daily lives".

Unless we succeed in making the EEA agreement change the nature of the European Community as we know and love it today, the enlargement of the Community that we are seeking will not achieve our hoped for objective of decentralising the Community.

I want to refer briefly to free movement. While I understand that this issue is not covered by the portfolio of my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Technology who is currently on the Front Bench, perhaps he can tell me what effect the free movement provisions in the EEA agreement will have on our potential dispute with the European Court in respect of the free movement of people within the Community at the moment. Do the Government still stand by our right to check the passport of every person entering and leaving the United Kingdom to check that non-EC nationals are not entering the country illegally?

I want now to refer briefly to the expense of the cohesion fund. If the new cohesion fund which is to be set up under the EEA is to be part of our policy of enlarging the Community, there is here surely another element of subsidy and intervention which will not help our cause in Europe.

There are no opt-outs for the EFTA countries from the social provisions of the Single European Act. Therefore, in respect of our disputes with the Community on social affairs, we might find ourselves not just one against 11, but one against 13, 15 or however many EFTA countries join.

The only opt-outs relate to fisheries and agricultural policies. In that respect, instead of an improvement in many EEA countries, they will be more heavily subsidised and more protected in agriculture than currently in the European Community. Again, that is hardly progress towards reforming agricultural policy in the direction that we want.

Nevertheless, it is a step towards enlargement. We must hope that the EFTA countries do not become so appalled by the intrusive nature and expense of the regulation and imposition of the acquis communautaire that they are driven away from membership of the European Community and so cannot join to help us decentralise.

As the Bill is clearly a step in the direction of enlargement and as, by the very nature of nation states, there is a wish to retain sovereignty in the long term, and because I have faith in the overall sense of the European people, I welcome the Bill. I believe that it will help us to move towards our cause of decentralisation, if only because the friction created between member states by the misplaced ambitions of the bureaucrats who attempt to impose their uniformity over the continent is bound to fail. I therefore strongly support the Bill.

6.26 pm

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): I welcome the Bill. It is interesting to put down a marker by stating that, before we joined the European Community, we were a member of EFTA. It is appropriate to recognise that the gulf which was created by the exit of three members is now being substantially, if not totally, bridged by the creation of the European economic area. Indeed, it may be substantially further bridged if the applications of the four EFTA members go forward for full membership. This is the right way to proceed.

The right hon. Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) might be surprised to learn that I agree that one of the welcome points is that the proposal strengthens the

northern contribution of the European Community in European thinking and it introduces different strands of thought with which we should be glad to join forces.

Speaking as a Member who represents a Scottish constituency, I have to say that we have established links with Scandinavian countries. However, there are also barriers which the Bill will begin to erode. In that context, the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) identified an area which is potentially of very important and practical benefit to my constituents who work in the Norwegian sector of the North sea, and others who would like to but who have found themselves excluded. I am sorry that the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), who has left the Chamber, seems to be more concerned about the interests of the Norwegians than about the interests of the Scots and the British. That is taking nobility and altruism just a little far.

In terms of direct contributions to the budget, the EFTA countries will be net contributors to the tune of 145 million ecu per annum. While some may believe that those countries will add to our burden by joining, in reality they will help to lower our burden. However, we must then consider what motivates those countries.

One motivation is that membership provides access to, or an opportunity to bid for, common research funding. The main reason why those countries wish to join is that membership is likely to lead to an enlargement of their trade potential and an increase in their gross national product. That will help to fund their large social programmes—it is the net benefit that they hope to achieve.

This is a two-way process, of course. It gives us access to these countries' markets, and them access to ours. According to an independent analysis, published and placed in the Library, the net effect on the European Community is minimal. But the benefit likely to accrue to the EFTA countries could be considerable. It is estimated that their output in tradeable goods could increase by 2·9 per cent. I accept that these forecasts are just estimates, and such benefits do not always materialise, but in the long term there is no doubt that the European Community has led to a net increase of economic output which it is unlikely would have been achieved if the member states had remained independent, dealing without the benefits of co-operation.

Sir Teddy Taylor: As the hon. Gentleman seems so knowledgable about all these things, will he help Members who do not know as much as he does by giving us some broad examples of what the EFTA countries, which freely trade now, will get from the agreement? Will a huge new area of trade be opened up to them?

Mr. Bruce: It is not a matter of tariff barriers, which do not exist even now. It is the non-tariff barriers that should be removed. One should not underestimate the extent to which they can be a restraint on trade—I am talking about technical specifications and internal agreements. This will not happen overnight; it will happen because of the collision of two market systems. I am in no better position to make predictions than any other independent assessor, but there is plenty of evidence for what I say. I am surprised that the hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor), representing a party that claims to believe in free markets, does not accept that benefits will flow from free trade and from exposure to best practice in other markets.

Mr. Iain Duncan Smith (Chingford): Is not the whole purpose of these countries joining the very opposite of what the hon. Gentleman is saying? It is not that they are going to gain any trade—that trade already takes place. Their fear is that if they do not join they will thereafter be excluded from markets with which they have already been trading. That is one of the great problems. After all, some of these nations have much higher social costs than some of the EC nations.

Mr. Bruce: I reject that argument. I do not believe it, any more than I ever believed that this country joined the EC for fear of being excluded. That was certainly not why I campaigned to stay in the Community when others wanted us to stay out of it. I did so because I firmly believed that our economic and political destiny lay in open frontiers and markets, and in the greater freedom to be had from political, economic and cultural association. I firmly believe in the positive aspirations of most of the EFTA countries. They want to be part of such an association, to ensure that the Community builds on it and develops the sort of political and economic framework of which they want to be a part—not because they fear exclusion, but because they positively want to participate.

I readily concede that the equilibrium is not satisfactory, however. This arrangement can only be transitional—a halfway house. These countries are contributing to a budget for assistance which will not benefit their own populations. They are excluding themselves from the common agricultural and common fisheries policies. They are not full members of the Community.

More to the point, although the countries in question will have the right to negotiate and influence decision making in the EC as it affects the EEA, they will not have voting rights. That is likely to lead in time to the recognition that being full members is better than being associate members, so that they can play their full part in the process.

I wholly accept the argument that we need to reform the structures of the Community to make it less bureaucratic, more open and more democratic. The countries of EFTA have a great contribution to make to improving the democratic structures of the EC.

Dr. Godman: Is the hon. Gentleman of the view that Norway will proceed smoothly from what he calls a halfway house to full membership of the EC? If he is, may I point out to him that many people living in northern Norwegian fishing communities feel growing concern about the implications of full membership, and especially about adopting the common fisheries policy?

Mr. Bruce: My honest answer is—the hon. Gentleman will not be surprised to hear it—that it will not be a smooth, easy transition. Indeed, Norway's last attempt to join the Community did not end in success. I used to work for a Norwegian company. I have visited the country and I have many friends there, and I am well aware of the tensions in Norway and of its desire to preserve its distinctive way of life. Norway has the advantage of large oil and gas reserves and a small population. That gives it a degree of freedom

[Mr. Bruce]

that it might not otherwise have. I suspect that the Norwegians' attitude might have been slightly different had they not discovered those reserves.

The referendum in Switzerland went dead against the wishes of the Government there. I agree with some of the comments made by Tory Eurosceptics about that. We cannot simply proceed at breakneck speed with these changes without carrying the people with us. Doing so in the past has been a mistake. A referendum is only a contribution, not a definitive answer. There still have to be leadership, vision and decisions, not all of which can be determined by referendums. I do not deny that they can play a part, but they do not always solve the problems.

The referendum in Switzerland created a vacuum and no one knows the way forward now. The Swiss Government have said, "The people have decided on something with which we do not agree and which we do not think is in their national interests—and for which we have no alternative policy." The people have rejected their Government's policy, but no one has any idea what to do next. That is democracy, but it does not solve the problems. Indeed, it can add to them, and then politicians have to deal with them.

Whether the economic benefits materialise or not, this is not merely an economic enterprise. There are economic benefits, and co-operation certainly helps to improve the quality of life, the scale of innovation and the degree of human advance. But this is also a political venture. Although it may move in lurches and require reassessment from time to time, the process should not be derailed just because we face the difficulties of recession, of German reunification—we are all paying the price for that—and of enlarging the Community.

My party and I do not see the Community just as a club for the rich which should exclude the aspiring democratic nations of eastern Europe. Nor are we in favour of those who want to use the disparity in Europe as an excuse for making no progress or trying to turn the clock back. We must strive to find ways of narrowing the gaps and of creating diversity in the Community so that it can accommodate these new democratic nations.

Mr. Jenkin: Is that why the hon. Gentleman's party dropped the word "federal" at its conference last month?

Mr. Bruce: We did not. I have campaigned for a federal United Kingdom, never mind a federal Europe, for a long time. Extraordinarily enough, some Members seem to think that Britain is a paragon of democracy, sensitivity and political consultation—unlike those wicked European bureaucratic, dictatorial and dogmatic countries—but I travel widely in those countries, so I know that there is a great deal more democracy in some member states than there is in this country, especially in terms of how the practical decisions that affect people's daily lives are made. We have a lot to learn. Such practical decision making is a feature of the Scandinavian countries, which are the Bill's prime concern. That is one reason why I welcome their closer involvement in the Community.

The right hon. Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) spoke about what he called the Brixton manifesto. His extract from the Prime Minister's statement did not amount to a vision. The Prime Minister seems to have severe astigmatism in this area because, while he seems anxious to move towards greater European cohesion, he is trying to ensure that there is sufficient diversity and resistance to change to enable him to reassure the sceptics in his party that it will not make too much difference.

There must be a full and honest recognition that moving forward and enlarging the Community creates difficulties and challenges. We must accept that there is a need to reduce bureaucracy and improve consultation and democracy, and that the objective is to try to ensure that the Community can accommodate a greater diversity of ideas, peoples and countries at different stages of development. That is good and desirable.

The difference between my party and some of the sceptics is that we genuinely want to move in that direction, whereas they want to use that as an excuse to reverse the process. We support the Bill because it is a move in the right direction and because we hope that it will lead to enlargement of the Community.

6.40 pm

Sir Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): I agree with the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) that it would be a mistake to regard the EC as a rich man's club. Most of the EC states are bankrupt and covered in unemployment, and Europe's share of world trade is going down and down. Those basic factors should be considered by the Government and the Euro-enthusiasts.

In this EC debate, the House is virtually empty: no one wants to hear and no one wants to listen. No one wants to face the fact that the EC is in an appalling economic mess and that unemployment is getting out of control. Those who still live in daydream land should wake up to the brutal facts about what is happening in western Europe and what has happened as a result of decisions made by the House.

Although we should be trying to make friends in the debate, I am afraid that I disagree with the fundamental principle advanced by my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen). He said that we should be thinking about how to get these nice countries from northern Europe to join so that we can somehow make the Community better. My right hon. Friend gives such wonderful speeches that I usually applaud, but this one seemed to display a kind of selfishness. It was like saying, "We have joined a rotten club which is full of fraudsters and drunks. The way to improve it is to ask four nice people to join, so that somehow this rotten club, which is sponsored by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, will become better."

We should hope that the poor, wonderful people of Sweden, Norway, Iceland and Finland will not have to subject themselves to the loss of freedom, misery and all the horrendous economic consequences of EC membership. It would be dreadful to say to those countries, "Please come in to try to make things better for us." We should tell them that in their own interests they should stay out. People should wake up to what is happening.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Technology (Mr. Patrick McLoughlin): Perhaps we should not be telling those countries anything. They applied to join the Community under their own terms. Austria applied in 1989, and Finland and many other EFTA countries have applied to join the Community.

Sir Teddy Taylor: The Minister is right, but unfortunately he is taking advice from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, which is usually two years out of date. I accept that some countries were enthusiastic to join, but what has happened in the interim? Switzerland has said, "Go and jump." Norway has just had an election, and I wish that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office would tell the Minister what happened. There was a massive victory for the parties that said that they wanted nothing to do with the EC. A recent opinion poll in Norway showed that 58 per cent. of its people were totally opposed to getting involved in any way with the EC and that 32 per cent. were in favour. That shows the problem with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

The Prime Minister has appealed to us to work together and to be unified, but today the Foreign Office published a document listing what it called Euro-myths and Euro-lunacies. One of the lunacies that it listed was about the average family spending £1,000 a year more on food. The Chief Secretary to the Treasury, a wonderful man who knows how to add figures, published a document last week which stated that the average family had to spend £24 a week extra on food. However, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office says that it is lunacy to say that the figure is £20 a week. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office must start to work with the rest of the Government to achieve the Prime Minister's objective of getting us all working together. That is the context in which we should be examining the Bill.

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): My intervention relates to the hon. Gentleman's preceding point. Does he not realise that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office has been more cunning than he gives it credit for? In getting such an appalling deal for British fishing, and in its usual sycophantic deference to other fishing nations in negotiating the treaty, it has given a marvellous weapon to those people, especially in Norway, who want to keep their country out. It has agreed to give Spanish fishermen in that predatory Spanish fishing fleet a quota of about 30,000 tonnes, which is three times our catch in Norwegian waters. That Spanish fleet has no historic record in that area, but it is getting the quota in return for catches made in our waters and fish marketed in our markets. Can the hon. Gentleman think of anything better calculated to turn the Norwegians against the whole treaty than that piece of Foreign Office incompetence?

Sir Teddy Taylor: I agree. If the Norwegians have any doubts, they should talk to our fishermen. They should ask them, "Where is all this opportunity, and where is the glorious triumph that access to European waters will give us?" They should ask what has happened to the percentage of the fish that are caught by British fishermen, and about their freedom when the European courts decide that Spanish fishermen are somehow British. They should not go to the Foreign Office but should talk to the fishermen and to other people. I believe that that is what they are doing because they are waking up.

The Bill would probably make sense if we expected all the EFTA countries to join the EC next year. We are asking them to abide by about 65 per cent. of the acquis communautaire laws, and to pay piles of cash into the EC. If they were about to join, that would make sense, because it would be a kind of stepping stone to full membership. But, of course, the people in EFTA have woken up. They have looked at Europe and seen the economic misery from which we are suffering, the bureaucracy, the loss of freedom and the fraud, and they do not want to join at all.

I do not think that any EFTA Government will be able to persuade their Parliament to join. If that is true, is it fair and reasonable for us to go ahead with the treaty? The treaty will impose on those unfortunate countries piles of measures that they will have no part in deciding. For example, the social policy on page 212 has piles of measures attached. Those countries will have to apply them, and they should ask themselves why they should have to do that to have free trade when they have that now. Why should they have to adopt all the education, training and vocation policies on page 211 and all the environment policies on page 210? But they will have to do that. Is it fair and reasonable to say to those countries that they will have to do that to ensure free trade?

What about the cash? The Minister of State gave what I thought was wonderful news when he said that Northern Ireland would get cohesion fund money, but I have been told that it will not get any such money. Now we hear that a second cohesion fund is being set up with EFTA money and that Northern Ireland will get some of it. What advantages will membership confer on the EFTA countries? They will get no more than what they have now, but because we have gone ahead with our single market and all its bureaucracy, we are saying to them. "If you want to keep that, mates, you will have to go ahead." There will be some transitional advantages, such as a little bit on banking and, I am told, something on insurance.

I shall describe to the Minister a test case. As well as being a Member of Parliament I am a major business man and tycoon—the House is probably not aware of that. I happen to be the director of a Swedish company called Ansvar (Temperance) Insurance. It is one of the greatest companies in the world. It is an international company which sells insurance only to total abstainers from alcohol.

How will Ansvar be helped by the Bill? We trade freely in the Republic of Ireland. It is a wonderful country for abstainers from alcohol. We make lots of money. The only country where we have had to close is a place called Germany, which has things called Lander. The Lander make business impossible. They said that our brass plate was the wrong size. They have all sorts of silly rules. We have transferred to a local agency which is working quite well.

Ansvar is a test case. How will that great Swedish company benefit from the Bill? It will be subject to new rules and regulations. We are saying to EFTA countries, "If you want to carry on as you are doing now, you must give us cash and accept masses of laws and rules." It is not a good bargain for them.

My next point is about Euro-scroungers. I am doubtful about going ahead with the Bill following the dramatic speech made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security at the party conference. I know that few members of the Conservative party appeared to attend the conference. I came to my office during the conference. There seemed to be more Conservative Members in the Norman Shaw building than at the conference. I can understand why. However, if Conservative Members had attended the conference, they would have heard a fantastic speech from my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security. He said that the Euro-scrounging would stop.

[Sir Teddy Taylor]

I have seen a wonderful pamphlet around Florence university entitled "Mrs. Thatcher is like a mother to me." It explains how people can come over here and have their holiday paid for by the Government. I do not know how the Secretary of State intends to stop it. As I understand it from the Commission, the only people who can be stopped are those who have been found guilty of murder or manslaughter. The alternative is to change the law so that no one can receive social security payments until he or she has been around for five weeks. That would mean that our own people would starve in consequence.

If the Bill is passed, we shall have more Euro-scrounging. It is not just my talk. It is in black and white. The money resolution and the guidance on money suggest that there will be far more Euro-scrounging. Exactly how much there will be cannot be estimated. A figure of £1 million is suggested for insurance, and social security is only mentioned. I should like to know what the Government will do if there is more Euro-scrounging. I support the Government's position on Euro-scrounging, but they should tell us how they intend to stop it. It would help a great deal if we had some idea how holiday scrounging will be stopped before EFTA-scrounging is added to it.

The next point is a difficult one. Gibraltar is not mentioned in the treaty so one might wonder how we can refer to it. However, sadly the Bill will have a pretty nasty effect on Gibraltar. Gibraltar is a great place. Its people have stood firm by this country. They have tried hard to be part of the European Community. The treaty says on pages 465 and 469 that the banks of Liechtenstein will have access to the United Kingdom market. The sad fact is that Gibraltar's banks will not have such access. The reason is complicated.

The Minister sent me a lovely fax today when he heard that I intended to mention Gibraltar. The Minister recognised that the problem was serious. He said that it should be possible to table an amendment to deal with the problem. I tried hard to do so, but sadly the Clerks told me to get lost and that it could not be done. Gibraltar has suffered a great deal. It is the only part of the EC that cannot send people to the European Parliament. It would not do Gibraltar much good if it could because no one would notice. If the European Parliament closed down tomorrow, only the taxi drivers of Strasbourg would notice.

Gibraltarians do not have free movement in Spain. They are subject to bureaucratic restrictions. Gibraltar is a lovely place. I have been there twice on holiday. It could not be a nicer place. Aeroplanes have to fly miles out of the way to land at Gibraltar airport because the Spaniards will not allow them to fly through Spanish air space. It is the only airport in Europe which is not protected by some organisation. The Spanish Government compromised by saying that if the airport put up a Spanish as well as a British flag, everything would be well. However, the poor old Gibraltarians, understandably, did not want to do that.

In a recent referendum the Gibraltarians decided by more than 12,000 votes to 45 that they wanted to remain linked to Britain. The Government simply must do something about banking before the Bill is passed. The Bill will make matters an awful lot worse. In his fax, the Minister set out how the Gibraltarians had done everything that the Government had asked them to do. They changed their laws exactly in accordance with Euro-rules. They went out of their way. However, sadly, it seems that because of the silly Spaniards, everything that the Government tried to do was blocked. At one point, the Government said that the problem could be solved; then they said that it could not.

The Bill will damage EFTA countries and add to their expense and bureaucracy. Everyone seems to want to do it. But please can we do something for Gibraltar? Gibraltarians are United Kingdom nationals for EC purposes. The provisions of article 227(4) of the treaty make it clear that they should have the same rights as everyone else. They do not.

Is it sensible that we should pass a Bill that imposes extra bureaucratic controls and expenses on free countries without achieving a great deal for them? Could the Government clarify what they intend to do about Euro-scroungers before we create more of them? Could we do something for Gibraltar? We sometimes laugh at these matters. The Gibraltarians are good, decent, respectable people. They wave the Union Jack. They feel British. They are saying, "Who will speak for us?" They cannot speak for themselves. They do not have a representative on the Council of Ministers. Only the British Government can speak for them and protect them.

It is easy for the Foreign Office to forget Gibraltar when it is doing dirty deals in the EC and wants Spanish votes. We have an obligation to protect Gibraltar. No one else can do it. The Government must go out of their way to sort out the problems of the airport and of banking. Gibraltar does not want privileges. It does not want stupid grants and loans. It merely wants the same freedom as other parts of the EC. It wants its banks to have the freedom to operate in the same way as the banks of Liechtenstein. That seems fair and reasonable.

I know that the Minister is a decent fellow. He is a fair, reasonable and patriotic person. It is a joy to have him here instead of some of the funny people from the Foreign Office team who are now happily no longer part of the Government. It is also a joy to have a nice Whip on the Bench instead of the fat thugs who use obscenities. So we have a nice Minister, a nice Whip, a nice Parliamentary Private Secretary and a happy atmosphere. Therefore, let us try to do a good job for Gibraltar, for freedom and for Britain. Let us hope that the good people of the EFTA countries will know that it is in their interest not to get involved in the nonsense of the EC, even though my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North has tried to tempt them in. They should look at what we have suffered and what the French have suffered. They should keep their liberty and they should not let themselves down.

6.58 pm

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): It is always a pleasure to listen to the nice Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) make a characteristically nice speech.

I begin by asking the Minister what appears to be a parochial question. Is he aware that at present the Norwegian state shipbuilding subsidy is about 14 per cent.? Is it likely to be reduced to the level of the subsidy given by the European Community seventh directive on the shipbuilding intervention fund? The gap between the

two subsidies places the few British shipyards that are still in existence at a distinct disadvantage when pursuing orders from Norwegian shipowners.

I would like to hear the Minister's response to that question. Will the Norwegian shipbuilding intervention subsidy be reduced to the European subsidies of 9 per cent. and 4 per cent. respectively, depending on the size of the contract?

I would like to respond to a couple of points made by the right hon. Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen). First, I echo his welcome to the countries which may well obtain membership of the EC, and especially the Scandinavian countries. I shall respond to what the right hon. Gentleman said about the concept of subsidiarity in a moment or two.

I have a great deal of respect and affection for the Scandinavian people. I first came across the people of Norway when I was an 11-year-old schoolboy, and was foolish enough to stow away on board a trawler that fished off northern Norway for three weeks. At the time, I bitterly regretted the youthful decision, but it brought me into contact for the first time with the fishing communities of northern Norway. I can well understand why they have such deep reservations concerning Norway's membership of the European Community. The hon. Member for Southend, East and my hon. Friend the Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) referred to those concerns earlier. The fishing communities are deeply worried about what will happen to the stocks upon which they are so dependent once the Spanish and others get in among them. I can well understand those concerns.

I bitterly regret the decision by the Norwegian Government to encourage the resumption of whaling, and that explains my reasoned amendment, which was not accepted, about the abolition of whaling. I would say to the fine people of Norway that, if their country becomes a member of the EC, they will have to accept the abolition of whaling.

That point was made recently by the Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, who was commenting on the EC convention on international trade in endangered species. He said:

"the cumulative effect of the agreements is a whaling ban in Community waters. There is no other way to interpret them. When Norway comes into the Community, it seems to me inconceivable that the Community would wish to relax that ban. Therefore, Norway has just applied to join an organisation that bans whaling."

Mr. Austin Mitchell: Does my hon. Friend agree that if the predatory activities of the massive Spanish fleet, which must be now the biggest fishing fleet in the EC and which operates in a largely uncontrolled fashion, are transferred to Norwegian waters, it will be to the discredit of all European fishing nations? The consequences would fall on British fishermen. Humberside fishermen, for instance, historically have always fished in Norwegian waters. Does my hon. Friend also agree that the reactions, exclusions and difficulties will fall on us rather than on the Spanish fishermen, and that that will create a state of friction between our fishermen and the Norwegians?

Dr. Godman: I have every sympathy for what my hon. Friend says. We tend to forget that fishing, in addition to being a hunting activity, is in every sense an economic activity. Communities such as the one represented so ably by my hon. Friend can suffer because of such agreements.

I do not wish to sound chauvinistic, but the Spanish fishing interests can behave appallingly badly with regard to the regulation and surveillance of fishing activities. In Vigo, for example, there is a type of insurance club which takes contributions from the owners and the skippers of vessels. The club assists with the payment of fines when, as is inevitable, one of the skippers is caught fishing illegally. No matter what the Minister may say about the evening-out of differences between nations, there are groups which will continue to work fiddles.

My hon. Friend is also correct when he talks about our historic tradition of fishing in Norwegian waters, while the Spanish have little or no history of fishing those waters. They, not British fishermen, are the beneficiaries of protocol 9 in the agreement.

I will respond in passing to a comment by the right hon. Member for Shropshire, North concerning subsidiarity. I would love to see a democratic interpretation of article 3(b) of the Maastricht treaty after November 1, which would devolve power, not only away from Brussels, but from London to Edinburgh and down to regional and local government. I believe that I am right in saying that after November 1, article 3(b) will become, in every sense of the word, justiciable. The European Court of Justice will, sooner or later, offer its opinion or a series of opinions on the application of that article among member states.

I would like to suggest to the Minister that the Bill be referred to a Special Standing Committee under Standing Order No. 91. So many implications for our constituents are contained in the Bill that it would be worth while to allow a Special Standing Committee to take evidence over four sittings from Foreign Office and other Ministers. They could deal with some of the concerns that have been voiced in tonight's debate.

It is fair to say that the House has not scrutinised the agreement in a formal or rigorous way. The Select Committee on European Community Legislation was prevented from carrying out that task by its terms of reference. The Select Committee on Foreign Affairs has not reported to the House on the agreement, so this is literally the first examination of the agreement that has taken place.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): The hon. Gentleman makes an important point in view of what the Prime Minister said on the importance of scrutiny in an article in *The Economist* on 25 September. The article, I was glad to note, effectively paid tribute to the Maastricht debate.

The Select Committee on Trade and Industry should be studying the agreement. I made some suggestions that the Committee might try to have a full look at the agreement in relation to the single market. Suddenly, however, we had the embarrassment of the pit closure fiasco, a result of which was that the Committee was not able to give the time that the subject required.

Let us hope that the Committee can have another look at the implications of the single market in the light of the Oporto agreement. I am certain that there are matters in the agreement which no hon. Member will have had an opportunity to look at in the depth that is required. The Select Committee should have a good look at the agreement. I hope that the hon. Gentleman agrees.

Dr. Godman: I do indeed. I think that it would be very useful if that Select Committee examined the agreement in some detail. I am not for one moment suggesting that the

[Dr. Godman]

proceedings of a Special Standing Committee would be an adequate substitute for the kind of rigorous analysis that could be brought to bear on such a document by a Select Committee and its specialist advisers, not least because —I think that I am right in saying, Mr. Deputy Speaker —a Special Standing Committee can have only four morning sittings. The members of such a Committee—I hasten to point out to the Whip on the Opposition Front Bench that I am not volunteering my services—could cross-examine the Law Officers on the relationship between the European Economic Area Court and the European Court of Justice.

The hon. Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin) quoted articles 108 and 109 of the agreement, which to some extent refer to that relationship between the two courts. I should have thought that, if a person or a company is deeply unhappy about a judgment reached by the European Economic Area Court, he or it should have the right to appeal that decision and seek an opinion from the European Court of Justice as a supreme court. The Special Standing Committee procedure would allow for questions of that nature to be answered by Law Officers.

I can envisage a potentially turbulent relationship developing between the two courts. I think that I am also right in saying that, after 1 November, an individual will have the right under the Maastricht treaty to take his or her Government to court if he or she believes that they have failed to protect his or her interests vis-a-vis EC legislation. An individual may be able to argue such a case in terms of the failure of the EEA court to protect such interests.

The hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) was absolutely right about the need to iron out some of the existing discrepancies in the offshore oil and gas industries. The hon. Gentleman may well have a few constituents working in the Norwegian sector, but it will be only a few, because it is exceedingly difficult for United Kingdom nationals to find work in that sector. I hope that the Minister will be able to tell us that, under the agreement, such discrimination will be illegal.

As regards protocol 9, what protection is afforded to the Scottish salmon industry in respect of the subsidies given to the Norwegian industry? Not so very long ago, we had the terrible experience of the Norwegians dumping farmed salmon on the market in European Community countries. The European Commission took defensive measures to protect those working in the Scottish salmon industry. Presumably, under protocol 9, the Norwegians will not have to face such defensive mechanisms. These are important matters to the people working in that industry, many of whom live in remote communities where there are no alternative employment opportunities. I ask the Minister to assure me that, in matters of employment and the use of vessels, no discrimination will be exercised against United Kingdom nationals.

Following what I said in response to the speech by the right hon. Member for Shropshire, North, I am fairly relaxed about our bringing the Scandinavian countries into the relationship. I think that the European Community will benefit from their involvement. As the House of Commons research paper suggests, the agreement is very much in the Scandinavian countries' interests, being a staging post on the road to full membership of the Community. It may well be, however, that for the foreseeable future, the Norwegian people will chose to stay outwith the European Community. That would be a matter of deep regret for all of us as the Norwegians and the other Scandinavian countries would strengthen the EC in numerous ways.

As I said, my view is that the Bill should be committed to a Special Standing Committee.

7.16 pm

Mr. William Cash (Stratford): I have found the Bill and the agreement extremely difficult, for a number of reasons. I have the gravest reservations about what is effectively the stepson of Maastricht. The agreement sets out to provide for free trading arrangements but, if we dig a little deeper—underneath the mass of verbiage that the Oporto agreement contains and the density of the Bill—we find that two things are happening at the same time: the EFTA states are, almost without exception, applying to join the European Community, yet on the other hand popular opinion in those other countries is moving against the proposals.

We have already had the Swiss example. In France, 58 per cent. of people are now against Maastricht. If the referendum had been held a year later, Maastricht would be dead and buried. In Germany, the figure is probably running at 70 to 75 per cent. against, and in the United Kingdom it is approximately the same. In Spain, the Partido Popular has the gravest reservations. In Bavaria, Mr. Stoiber is strongly against the whole process of further economic and monetary union and will have a huge tussle with Mr. Theo Weigal, who is also a member of CSU. Meanwhile, all levels of government in Germany are up for election next year. The whole process is in the balance, and the Maastricht debate has moved substantially in the direction of the Euro-realists, for which we can all be thankful.

Notwithstanding all that, I am a single market enthusiast. I believe, as I did when I voted for the Single European Act in 1986, much to the surprise of my hon. Friends, including my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor), that it is essential to try to reduce barriers and at the same time create more reasonable and fair competition between member states. One of my greatest worries about the operation of the single market is that it has become increasingly evident that greater opportunities for trade have not materialised, just as the common agricultural policy has not given the British farmer a better deal.

A kind of schizophrenia runs through the debate. On the one hand, we hear promises such as that given by the Prime Minister at the party conference and in the article in *The Economist*, which provide us with a degree of optimism —which I should be happy to endorse. On the other hand, there is evidence that people—whether in the EFTA countries or in the EC—do not want the arrangements that are being proposed. At the same time, we have to consider the performance of the Community, with its fraud and corruption, and the increasing desire of the federalists to move forward—I suppose at the 29 October summit.

Chancellor Kohl has said that the only way to avoid war in Europe is by deeper political union. That is a significant statement, made by the Chancellor of Germany at the same time as it was agreed to move the capital of Germany to Berlin by the year 2000. We need a dose of reality, but it is not right to prevent an opportunity for greater competition from being realised. I certainly have

reservations about the way in which the single market is operating. I am deeply worried about the 13th state—the new bureaucracy which I see weaving its way through the Oporto agreement. All the Commission directives, the Council directives——

Sir Teddy Taylor: And the quangos.

Mr. Cash: As my hon. Friend says, quangos and directives are increasing, with greater power going to the centre.

I also have grave reservations about the hope—if I may call it that—expressed in the most interesting speech of my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) that the Bill would provide more diversity and a more loose, enlarged European Community working in our direction. I would like that to be the objective of the Bill and I genuinely believe that the Government think that the enlargement process under the Oporto agreement would provide more diversity and greater flexibility in the European Community.

However, I do not think that the Bill will have that effect. We must remember that, irrespective of the views of people in the member states, their Governments have applied to join the full European Community. The acquis communautaire would be further endorsed by a further step under the Maastricht treaty, creating a consolidated legal framework that many of us believe will destroy the European Community and may have a serious adverse effect on the EFTA countries.

Conflict between the European Court of Justice and proposals for an EFTA court was resolved in favour of the European Court simply because the acquis communautaire includes the assumption that the treaty of Rome, the single market and all the attendant rights, liabilities and obligations will be resolved by the superior Court of Justice. A single market in, for example, competition law cannot operate on the basis of a "pick and choose" legal system. If there is to be one consistent body of law, it will have to be the European Court of Justice.

If all the Council directives covered by the Bill were stacked together in volumes, they would stretch from where I am to the Box at the end of the Chamber. It is a fantastic operation. In a rather curmudgeonly way, I must congratulate the genius of the bureaucrats on being able to produce anything as complex and obscure as this. Another reason for my reservations is that I have not had the opportunity to read the Bill to the extent that I was able to read the Maastricht treaty, yet the Bill is much bigger. I do not believe that the EFTA countries have the faintest idea what it will mean.

If we are optimistic and all the promises are fulfilled —we shall be watching with great care over the next few months—we may be about to create a huge opportunity for a more diversified European Community. That is the hope of the growing number of Euro-realists on the Conservative Benches. However, the Bill represents an underlying political agenda—a stepping stone to a cohesive European union, which is seen by some of our Ministers as a means of preventing the unitary state that the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath) and some of his fellow travellers would like to achieve.

The temperate and carefully worded speech of my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North seemed a serious attempt to bridge some of those gaps, in the hope that we would not lose too much by agreeing to the Bill. Serious practical problems may affect us. For example, increased environmental standards and the manner in which they are applied to, for example, the manufacture of cars, may cost our manufacturing industry dearly.

It is rather like when we were invited to agree to the exchange rate mechanism. We were told that it would help to bring down inflation and many promises were made, but some of us had grave reservations. When it became apparent that it was a pig in a poke, some of us grew more determined to try to stop it in its tracks. Alas, it went on until the Government were forced out of the mechanism. I hope that the Bill will not lead us into a more bureaucratic, legalistic European Community. I also hope that the political agenda underpinning the Bill, which does not have the support of people in the EFTA countries, will not leave us regretting passing the Bill, if and when we do.

7.28 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): Everyone was interested in the speech of the right hon. Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) because he has been a consistent critic of the Common Market—except during his period as a Minister, when all things that are difficult happen to people. He made the point that legislation which authorises a treaty to bring in European free trade area countries will make the Common Market a less centralised organisation and more of a trading organisation. If that were all that the Common Market is and was aimed to be, more people could stomach it, but the Common Market has always had the aim of being more than a free trade area.

It would be nice if the view advanced by the right hon. Member for Shropshire, North were credible, but I do not think it is. It is a perfectly valid opinion to express, but on the basis of our experience it is unlikely to happen. It is true that the enlargement of the trade area is much bigger than anything that has been proposed before, but exactly the same arguments were advanced when Portugal and Spain entered the Common Market: that it would inhibit centralisation and that it would become such a large area that it would not be feasible to have the same degree of centralised control.

On the face of it, that is perfectly plain common sense, but the reality is that centralisation has continued apace because the driving mechanism of the Common Market is not common sense but unification and the determination to turn the Common Market into Europe. Indeed, it is a phrase that it uses. The Common Market has appropriated the name of a continent for a trading area, which has now become common parlance. When people talk about Europe, they talk about the Common Market and the European Community. A friend of mine said that he was going to Europe. I said, "Do you mean the Common Market or Europe?" He said, "Switzerland." I said, "Thank God he used the word in its proper context."

Europe has been hijacked as part of the propaganda exercise by the Common Market. We are all part of the continent of Europe. We are all Europeans, but not every European is part of the inward-looking group of nations that calls itself the Eurpean Community.

I recall Spain and Portugal joining the so-called European Parliament. The European Parliament—this is an example of the extraordinary decisions that are taken under the unification process—wanted 250 officials to make way for 250 officials from Spain and Portugal. It simply sent

[Mr. Bob Cryer]

home 250 officials from the existing group of nations—on full pay—where they remain to this day because accountability for expenditure is not part of the Common Market. There is no scrutiny, check or counter-balance, as there is in each nation state, because people are too far from the point of expenditure to exercise it. The European Parliament cannot take such action because it does not work like that.

The arrangement proposed in the Bill is parallel to that in the Common Market. A surveillance body will ensure that all legislation affecting trading is identical, and there will be a court to which appeals against decisions of the surveillance body will be taken. The Minister failed to answer the crucial question about whether the European Court or the new court of the European economic area will decide such cases. The Minister did not know the answer and he said that he would write to my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), who asked the question.

The right hon. Member for Shropshire, North said that it would be nice to have the answer on the record. That is what *Hansard* is for—to provide information to people about the legislation that will affect them. It will not be put on the record if the Minister writes to my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South. Similarly, it will not be on the record if the answer appears in the Library. It must be uttered here in the Chamber: that is very important.

I mention that to show that the Government are not prepared. They have not done their homework well enough to be able to provide the House with the information that it seeks. I find that fact surprising, given all the resources available to them. They are asking the House to pass legislation the consequences of which are not clear to elected representatives.

The hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) spoke of his dilemma. He is in favour of free and open competition and a single market—the bigger the better—but in reality the single market does not work and the old cliché that the United Kingdom obeys the rules and the rest break them is, by and large, true.

As I come from Bradford and represent a Bradford constituency, I am heavily involved in the defence of the textile industry. Eleven thousand people, many of whom live in my constituency, work directly in the textile industry, and between 11,000 and 20,000 depend on it. The BBC made a series of programmes on the Common Market. It investigated the Lana Rossi scandal, in which the Italian Government made grants to an enterprise called Lana Rossi. The Italian Government promised to repay money, but the BBC found that the enterprise had been privatised and the money lost.

Another example concerned the Prato region in Italy, where companies do not have to pay national insurance contributions. That gives them a 10 per cent. advantage in wage payments immediately. The Commission investigated firms in the Prato region, which would not allow it to see the books; so it retired defeated and said, "We cannot tell." The inequality continues.

Those are just two of the hundreds of examples that go on all the time. The notion of a single market working in perfect competition with everybody obeying rules absolutely and with only delivery and quality being the competitive element is an illusion. Business man after business man will tell us that it is an illusion because they encounter such difficulties, which are called non-tariff barriers.

We know from fairly recent experience that, if the French want to stop imports of television receivers, they say, "We know we cannot do this but we will send all the receivers to one point of entry for scrutiny where they will spend days, weeks and months," because that is how the French civil service works. Our civil service is subject to rules. It must have authority to undertake import surveillance, but the French say to their civil servants, "Do your best to stop things," and they do.

Mr. Bell: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way, and I hope that I have not interrupted the eloquence of his speech. The scheme to which he referred covered the importation of Sony television sets from Japan. It was a hopeless failure. It was quickly abandoned and the French are no longer following the route that he has just described.

Mr. Cryer: My hon. Friend is quite right, but the fact is that they did it, whereas we have never done anything like that. I can tell my hon. Friend, who has never been a Minister, that, when I was a Minister for two years, we had the greatest difficulty ensuring import surveillance. Sections of British industry that simply did not know the extent of the competition that they were up against repeatedly asked the Department to intervene. We had delegations from, for example, the Sheffield cutlery industry about import surveillance.

The problem was that we found ourselves up against the Department of Trade and Industry, which was penetrated from top to bottom by uncritical Euro-converts, who said, "We cannot do this, because it will upset the Common Market." Unfortunately, that situation happened all too often. The right hon. Member for Shropshire, North, who held a rather more exalted position at the Department of Trade and Industry than I, nods in agreement. It was a battle. At one meeting, some civil servants wanted to exclude all civil servants who had a critical word for the Common Market.

Mr. Biffen: There is nothing more exalted than the Back Benches.

Mr. Cryer: I was being ironic, but I should not do so because it does not record well in *Hansard.*

The proof of our position is in our trade deficit with the Common Market.

Mr. Skinner: It was £1·09 billion last month.

Mr. Cryer: That is right. If we continue to run at last month's figures, the deficit will be more than £12 billion a year. I do not suppose it will reach that incredible figure, but the deficit will be at least £4 billion or £5 billion a year. That last time we had a trade surplus with the Common Market was before we became a member in 1972. Plainly, something is not working well.

The Government suggest that the legislation will improve matters—that it is an opportunity for our traders and manufacturers to benefit—but the evidence is all against that happening. It is contrary to our experience that extending the Common Market will improve our position. Our experience is that entering the Common Market was disastrous for our balance of trade, and as the Common Market has expanded it has become steadily worse.

The Government's argument is that we have to have access to this huge market in order to succeed, but Japan —one of the most successful manufacturing countries that the world has known—does not have a Common Market. Why? Are the Government looking to see if there is somewhere, somehow, information that they have overlooked in their blind search to extend the Common Market?

Dr. Godman: Non-tariff barriers are to be found throughout the European Community. For example, the Government of the Irish Republic will not grant exploration licences to offshore oil and gas companies unless those companies agree to employ Irish nationals. Because of that, there are occasions when rigs and vessels moving from United Kingdom territorial waters have to shed crew members when entering Irish waters to drill for gas and oil.

Mr. Cryer: My hon. Friend gives a good example, which demonstrates that the realities of Common Market membership are far different from its professed nature.

I remember that, when Ireland entered the Common Market, it negotiated tax holidays for investment in manufacturing, which gave it an advantage that continued for many years. If Germany had not reunited, west Germany would have had a trading advantage because of its treaty with east Germany. That has not happened, because the two countries have amalgamated, to our considerable cost.

My hon. Friend the Member for Middlesbrough (Mr. Bell) said that there was to be a convergence fund contained in the new treaty. The EFTA countries will make a contribution to those that are less well-off, and he hinted that that was some sort of socialist measure. There are two serious objections to the view that the Common Market is a socialist organisation. The Minister has quite rightly said that this treaty does not cover the common agricultural policy. We are dealing with a Government who say that the Common Market is a wonderful organisation. Unfortunately, the Labour Front Bench say it is a wonderful organisation but, given time and experience, it will change things. I hope that it will.

The Government and the Opposition agree that the CAP needs changing. The Government say that the legislation will lead to a very lengthy and complicated sequence of events which will improve the Common Market. All I can say is that the promises made over the years have never been fulfilled. Why should we believe the Government now? Why should we accept the view—which I doubt—that a little bit of redistribution around the edges via this new treaty will offset the massive amount of public expenditure that the CAP represents?

The CAP is totally unfair to the poorest nations of the world. When I was an MEP I asked the Common Market Commissioners why they did not have some of the food moved to the countries facing starvation in central Africa and have it stored in warehouses there. Not a chance. They want the money to go to the Common Market farmers. It is the selfishness of the wealthiest countries that causes mountains of food to go rotten. They would rather store the food here for six years, at great expense, than help other countries that are in difficulty. I do not accept the view that the Common Market has anything to do with socialism.

A consequence of this legislation will be the free movement of capital. I am a member of the Labour party because I have always thought that labour should be at least equal to capital—in fact, it should be superior because we are talking about human beings as opposed to the accrued wealth obtained by exploiting other human beings. If there is free movement of capital, the elected Government of the day will not be able to intervene and say that the priority is people rather than profit. The wealth creators should have the benefits rather than the profiteers. The free movement of capital allows unhindered benefits for the capitalists.

Baroness Thatcher has made many protestations about her criticism of the Common Market. What utter nonsense! She took the country deeper than ever before into the Common Market as soon as she got into government. She did not remove the Exchange Control Act 1948, thank goodness, but she did remove what we call in Euro-speak the derogation—the derogation which gave us some control over capital movements—and thus gave free rein to the capitalists. That took us in deeper because we were denied the advantage that we had negotiated.

The cost of our membership of the Common Market is running at £2·5 billion a year. Will the legislation cost us more, or will we get a net inflow as a result of the influx of capital from the contributions of the EFTA countries? We should be told, as the hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) said.

There was a distasteful speech by the Secretary of State for Social Security. He makes them at every Conservative party conference. He targets single women and says that they get pregnant in order to jump the housing queue when there is no evidence to support that. I mention that only in passing. He also talked about foreign scroungers. I think that that is distasteful. At the same time, it is legitimate to ask the Minister what the clause on the financial effects of the Bill means. It says:

> "There may be a small amount of additional expenditure as a result of the application of the Income Support Regulations 1987 . . . to EFTA nationals."

I am not being nationalistic or chauvinistic; I am seeking information.

I am not a little Englander in my attitude to the Common Market, but I seek wider relationships outside the Common Market. I think we should trade and establish relationships with the rest of the world rather than have a big barrier built around 12 nations called the Common Market. It is a legitimate question to ask the Minister. If he does not answer me now, there will be money motions and ways and means motions when he will have to produce some answers. Anyone who thinks that I do not raise questions on money motions should look at my past performances in the House, when hon. Members have been mortified because Parliament has continued for an extra 45 minutes.

In introducing the legislation, the Minister claimed that our manufacturing industry would benefit. During the period in which we have been a member of the Common Market, our manufacturing industry has been decimated everywhere. In Bradford there are deserted sites where mills once stood. Coventry Climax was a famous name for engines and forklift trucks. I have been to Coventry, where all that I saw was two pairs of gates with "Coventry Climax" on them, behind which was a desert the size of four football pitches where workers used to produce machinery. Gone. Those were just a couple of examples. As we know, thousands of jobs have been lost in

[Mr. Cryer]

manufacturing industry because of the Government's economic policies and the relevant part of this legislation is our membership of the Common Market.

The right hon. Member for Shropshire, North argues that this measure, by bringing in other countries, will dilute the centralised power. I hope that it will, in view of what has happened. For example, when Bob Clay was a Member of Parliament, he used to argue ferociously in the Chamber for a shipyard in Sunderland—the most modern shipyard in the country, renovated relatively recently with a high capital investment—but the Government had done a deal that there should be an enterprise zone in Sunderland, so the relevant Commissioner told them that the shipyard must not be allowed to open.

It is all on the record. Our economic policy is being dictated in general and in detail by Commissioners who owe allegiance not to any electorate, or to any ruling class, middle class or working class, but to a group of people who have the power of patronage to appoint them; and they make decisions over our lives, and the lives of the people of our country. If the legislation did dilute that power, I would agree with it, but judging from experience I do not believe that it will.

I have no doubt that the Government will have a majority tonight, but there will be a Division and some hon. Members will say no to this constant stream of legislation which has no basis in thought or experience because of the adverse conditions that it entails for the people of our country. It is time that it was brought to a stop, and sooner or later the people of this country will wake up and it will be brought to a stop.

7.51 pm

Mr. Bell: It is always interesting to speak after my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) because he speaks with knowledge and experience; he was a Minister for two years, he speaks with passion and eloquence and he speaks with knowledge, as he comes from Bradford and has seen the decimation of the mills there. He also brings to the debate the passion of the debate and his dealings with the European Community.

Other hon. Members have followed that today and a host of hon. Members have made contributions, from the Minister of State, who opened, to the right hon. Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen), who referred to the "seamless robe". He made a fascinating speech, which began with the European Communities Act 1972 and took us to the Single European Act and to the treaty of Oporto. He said, "The Prime Minister travels hopefully," but he travels alone.

The speeches made in the House and the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South express arguments that are not made by others in the European Community. The European Community countries hold different views and have a different version of where the future lies from that put forward by the Prime Minister in articles in *The Economist*—the so-called Brixton manifesto. The right hon. Gentleman can say that in *The Economist* and he can say that for Conservative spokesmen. When he gets to Heads of Government conferences, whether he makes the same points or not, his voice is not heard. That was the great difficulty which Lady Thatcher, the former Prime Minister, had. When she met the Heads of Government, she wanted to talk about the general agreement on tariffs and trade and the Uruguay round; she was ignored and instead we got the Maastricht treaty.

The Government have suffered in the country and the House by speaking with two voices—the one that says, "We will stand up for British interests here," and the one at Brussels that surrenders those interests and gives the power to the Commission in Brussels to which my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South referred.

Mr. Duncan Smith: I must correct the hon. Gentleman on one subject. He said that the Prime Minister travels alone on those aspects about which he wrote in *The Economist*. Obviously, the hon. Gentleman did not bother to check public opinion across Europe in all the different nation states. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister does not travel alone. More and more members of the public who voted for their various leaders across Europe have turned against the centralising and the bureaucracy and want less of it. I cannot understand why the hon. Gentleman and his colleagues on the Opposition Front Bench do not sign up to that as well.

Mr. Bell: I am grateful for the intervention. It was the right hon. Member for Shropshire, North who mentioned that the Prime Minister travelled hopefully and I who argued that he travelled alone. The hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Duncan Smith) should not misinterpret or confuse the European debate throughout the EC, which is a legitimate democratic debate on those important matters, with the overwhelming view or even the majority view of other nation states. When a referendum was held in France, the result was in favour of the Maastricht treaty and the second referendum in Copenhagen came out in favour of it. We must not confuse the debate within a democracy with the eventual decision of the people.

Many speeches have been made. My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) made an important speech about free trade, which was also mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South. There is a difficulty. We talk of free trade, when it affects us. We want to have free trade that allows us to sell our goods to Europe, America, New Zealand and Australia. When it comes to other countries selling their goods to us, we want all kinds of hedges and protectionism. That is our dilemma. We want a free market, but only when we can sell. When it turns out that other countries have to sell to us, the idea of the free market is diminished. That dilemma is never resolved. Our difficulties about that are the starting point of our debate.

Of course we support the idea of a single market. I alluded earlier to the rigged market, which my hon. Friends below the Gangway know so well, in our energy decisions. My hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South argued that the Adam Smith view of the market, the hidden hand, was based on the premise that investment would be made in the market by those who had the money to invest. The day that we abolished exchange controls in this country in 1979 and allowed capital to go to other markets and not our market formed the basis of our decline, and helped to push this nation state into two recessions and the loss of 1 million jobs.

Mr. Jenkin *rose*——

Mr. McLoughlin *rose*——

Mr. Bell: I give way to the hon. Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin).

Mr. Jenkin: I apologise to my hon. Friend, but he has got it completely wrong. By maintaining open markets and allowing imports into the country—unlike the example of the videotape recorders going through Poitiers—we allowed the British consumer to buy videotape recorders much more cheaply here than almost anywhere else in Europe. The result was that the Japanese Sony investment came into the country and now we are becoming net exporters of videotape recorders to the rest of Europe. One can still buy them more cheaply in this country than one can in France.

Mr. Bell: I am trying to explain why our nation state went through two recessions and lost 1 million jobs from 1979 to 1981 and from 1987 onward. It happened because of the link between the treatment of the movement of capital and the market. The hon. Gentleman mentioned the subject of the European Community as a whole and explained why there was investment in this country. Of course there was investment in our country in relation to those products.

Ministers standing at the Dispatch Box seem to give us the impression that all the European investment from Japan comes into this country. Is the hon. Gentleman aware that as much investment goes into France and more investment now goes into the Scandinavian countries because it is movement in EFTA? To say, therefore, that we get investment in this country because we are part of a single market, when other nation states are part of the same single market is a narrow view to take. But we are widening the debate. I was seeking to respond to some of the arguments which had been made by my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South.

I missed the speech of the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce), but I will read it with great interest. We heard the intervention by the hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor), the speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman), who spoke on behalf of his constituency, the statement by the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) and the speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South.

People who read our proceedings must wonder where all the supporters of the Bill happen to be tonight. We have not heard many of them speaking and we have had a rather unbalanced debate as a consequence. The only two Members of the House who have supported it have turned out to be the Minister of State and the shadow spokesman, who has not, as the Minister said, yet had the experience of government that he has had—but if the Prime Minister travels in hope, so do I.

7.59 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Technology (Mr. Patrick McLoughlin): I must admit that I seem to have been listening to a different debate from the hon. Member for Middlesborough (Mr. Bell), because I thought that a number of my hon. Friends broadly welcomed the Bill.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen), a former Secretary of State for Trade, gave the Bill a very warm welcome. It has been one of the few occasions when there has been a divergence of opinion between my right hon. Friend and my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor).

In a concise speech lasting some 10 minutes, my right hon. Friend explained the background to his views far better than the hon. Member for Middlesborough, who spoke for 30 minutes, during which we were given a tour of the Conservative party conference. As we had such a successful conference, I was not surprised that we were given a tour of it. I well understand why the hon. Gentleman did not want to dwell too long on his own party conference. He made a number of points which deserve a response.

One of the questions asked by the hon. Gentleman and by my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East concerned social security payments. The position is quite simple; it is the same as for EC nationals. Those who are not exercising rights under the agreement and are a burden to social security will not enjoy the right of residence here. The rules are reciprocal. United Kingdom nationals in EFTA states will also benefit. That puts it quite simply and the Bill puts into context the points which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security made at Blackpool.

My hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin) also welcomed the Bill, and I was grateful for his support. He highlighted some important points about the jurisdiction of the Bill and the way in which the implementation of the agreement will be taken through the courts.

The hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) also welcomed the Bill and set out what he saw as its advantages, such as extending the borders for trade, which I think is particularly welcome.

My hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East asked me a specific question about Gibraltar. One of the reasons why the reasoned amendment he tabled was not selected is that it falls outside the criteria of the Bill.

We hope to be able to make the necessary provisions, which will require primary legislation, to allow Gibraltar banks to passport into the United Kingdom, but it would be completely inappropriate to do this in a Bill to implement the EEA, and the Governor of Gibraltar has explained the position to the Chief Minister. However, I take my hon. Friend's point. I know that it is something that we want to put right and we will attempt to do so, but this Bill is not the place to do it.

The hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) asked me a few questions, one relating to shipbuilding. The hon. Gentleman will find his answer on page 276 of the document that he has in front of him. He also asked about the anti-dumping case against Norwegian salmon. There is justification for a Commission investigation to establish the facts and the Department will consider the results of such an investigation on its merits. The Government are pressing the Commission to take it forward, so I hope to have given him some of the reassurance he requires.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash), made what was a slightly unusual speech for him as he said that he had not had time to study the document in great detail. I know that my hon. Friend has been rather busy over the past year, however the document was published in October 1992. Therefore, I cannot take too seriously his criticism that he was not able to study it in full detail. Something else which was rather strange for my hon.

[Mr. Patrick McLoughlin]

Friend was his over-reliance on opinion polls. He said that we should judge our remarks and everything we do by opinion polls. He should not dwell too much on those arguments in future for justification of what should and should not be done.

Dr. Godman: The Minister referred to the declaration concerning shipbuilding on page 276. What is stated there is incorrect. It states:

"The 7th directive expires at the end of 1993."

The directive is to continue until the end of 1994. I asked whether the Norwegian shipbuilding subsidy will be brought into line with the level of subsidy awarded under the 7th directive.

Mr. McLoughlin: The point I was making to the hon. Gentleman concerned how it was dealt with in the document. Obviously it will be discussed, but it would not necessarily fall into that category straight away.

I was referring to the comments made by my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford and I was grateful, although slightly wary of some of the arguments he pursued.

Every time I hear the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer), or the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) I think of the Jurassic Park of the Labour party. The dinosaurs live on as far as their views are concerned. Although the hon. Member for Bradford, South criticised the Community, that did not stop him joining the European Parliament.

Mr. Cryer: I did not join it; I was elected.

Mr. McLoughlin: The hon. Gentleman was elected to the European Parliament and then elected to the House of Commons. He was taking a dual mandate and doing two jobs, for which he often criticises many people.

I was also slightly surprised at some of the remarks made by the hon. Member for Middlesbrough. He almost gave us a Labour party pledge, but bearing in mind that the Labour party made a pledge not to make pledges until it could decide what its policies were, I can forgive him for that. I half got the impression that he was arguing that the Labour party was in favour of the reintroduction of exchange controls.

Mr. Bell: The Labour party is sufficiently sophisticated to realise how difficult that would be and we have no intention of going down that road. I simply wished to point out to the House and the Minister that it was by freeing capital that we destroyed the principle of Adam Smith and that the hidden hand works in a free market, but the investment comes from the investors in that market. It was when that link was broken in 1979 that we encountered so many difficulties.

Mr. McLoughlin: When one is in a hole, one usually stops digging, but the hon. Gentleman continues to try and dig. He is supposed to be one of the more enlightened hon. Members on the Opposition Front Bench, but he has shown a yearning for control, so the Labour party seems to have learnt nothing in the past 14 years.

Mr. Cryer: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. McLoughlin: I am coming to the end of my speech, but I realise that the hon. Gentleman will have many opportunities to make the points that he wishes to raise so I might as well give way to him.

Mr. Cryer: Is the Minister saying that the Government will never at any time take action to introduce exchange control as Spain and Portugal have recently done in view of movements against their currencies?

Mr. McLoughlin: I was asking the hon. Gentleman whether it was official Labour party policy to reintroduce exchange controls, and he boxed cleverly round that point. The hon. Gentleman also overlooks the fact that we have attracted considerable investment into the country.

The hon. Member for Bolsover represents a constituency in the county of Derbyshire, which I too have the privilege of representing in the House and which has seen sizeable inward investment.

Mr. Skinner: Where?

Mr. McLoughlin: I am sorry if the hon. Gentleman does not travel into the south of the county. Derbyshire has seen considerable investment into the county.

Mr. Skinner: I have seen that almost every pit in my constituency has been closed during the past 14 years of Tory Government. When the Tories came in, there were nine pits; they have all been shut. If the Minister is referring to Toyota, it provided jobs for car workers that had been held by people who had jobs in British factories producing other cars. It has just produced another range of cars with jobs for people already doing that, without proper trade union recognition into the bargain.

Mr. McLoughlin: I think that we might be straying slightly wide. My hon. Friend the Member for Erewash (Mrs. Knight) welcomed the investment that we have seen in the county and the jobs and wealth that it has brought —£770 million of inward investment as a result of that investment. If the hon. Member for Bolsover is saying that the county council neglected to try to get regeneration in his area, he might want to take that up with his party, who run that authority.

We have seen tremendous Japanese investment in the United Kingdom. The hon. Gentleman was unfair when he said that it is going to other countries: 40 per cent. of total Japanese investment is invested in the United Kingdom.

I believe that, as my right hon. Friend said in opening the debate, the Bill will extend our market place quite substantially and bring the advantage of those markets more easily to British manufacturers and British industry.

Question put, That the Bill be now read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 152, Noes 9.

Division No. 367] **[8.11 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*	Blackburn, Dr John G.
Alexander, Richard	Booth, Hartley
Ancram, Michael	Boswell, Tim
Arbuthnot, James	Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*	Bowis, John
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*	Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*	Brandreth, Gyles
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*	Brazier, Julian
Baldry, Tony	Bright, Graham
Bates, Michael	Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Beresford, Sir Paul	Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Biffen, Rt Hon John	Browning, Mrs. Angela

Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliffe)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Hague, William
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hawksley, Warren
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jenkin, Bernard
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Lynne, Ms Liz
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
McLoughlin, Patrick
Marlow, Tony
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Merchant, Piers
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Moss, Malcolm
Nelson, Anthony
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Oppenheim, Phillip
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spink, Dr Robert
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Willetts, David
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Nicholas Baker and
Mr. Timothy Wood.

NOES

Barnes, Harry
Beggs, Roy
Flynn, Paul
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Trimble, David

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Bob Cryer and
Mr. Dennis Skinner.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill read a Second time.

Bill committed to a Committee of the whole House. *—[Mr. Robert G. Hughes.]*

Further proceedings stood postponed, pursuant to Order [20 October].

EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AREA BILL *[Lords]*
[Money]

Ordered,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the European Economic Area Bill *[Lords]*, it is expedient to authorise any increase attributable to the Act in the sums charged by any other Act upon the public revenue.—*[Mr. Robert G. Hughes.]*

European Economic Area Bill *[Lords]*

[Ways and Means]

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the European Economic Area Bill *[Lords]*, it is expedient to authorise any increase attributable to the Act in the sums charged by any other Act upon the people.—*[Mr. Robert G. Hughes.]*

8.21 pm

Mr. Cryer: As I requested in my speech, will the Minister give an outline of the amount of money that is needed? He probably has a note in front of him for this occasion. As several hon. Members have referred to the financial effects of the Bill as set out in the explanatory and financial memorandum, it would help if the Minister were to explain the cost and financial effects of the Bill and the ways and means that will therefore be required in order to finance the Bill. I am not the only hon. Member to raise this matter. At least one Conservative Member did so too. As the Minister has no doubt been provided with the information, by courtesy of the civil servants, it would be helpful to be given it.

For example, during the debate the Minister said that, with regard to further financial support of the further financial expenditure on the income support regulations, it is a reciprocal relationship with the other EFTA countries——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is usually more astute. We have dealt with the money resolution which affects income support. We are now on the next motion where matters of income support are not appropriate.

Mr. Cryer: The Ways and Means resolution provides for ways and means of meeting expenditure and the total ways and means should be outlined by the Minister. I should be grateful if he would do that. This question has been raised by several hon. Members, myself included. No doubt the Minister will refer to the first resolution by way of explanation in passing, as he is entitled to do.

8.23 pm

Mr. McLoughlin: The Ways and Means resolution is necessary due to the potential for taxation as a result of the effect of clause 2(1) on the existing Acts of Parliament. Clause 2(1) modifies United Kingdom legislation to ensure its consistent application to the whole of the Community and EFTA. It applies to legislation that relates to the subject matter of the EEA agreement. Where the operation of such legislation is limited by reference to the Communities, the reference will, in effect, be substituted by one to the European economic area. So the clause will affect the operation of certain existing Acts of Parliament. Where those Acts imposed taxation, requiring a Ways and Means resolution, the amendment to them by clause 2(1) clearly has a potential to increase taxation. It is for that reason that the House rules require a money resolution.

The financial memorandum to the Bill describes three specific areas where there is likely to be increased expenditure—£1·1 million per year in 1996-97 as a result of the application of the EC social security regulations to EFTA nationals; a small amount as the result of the application of the income support regulations 1987 to EFTA nationals; an increase in United Kingdom and other member states' fourth resource contributions to the EC budget as a result of the reduction of agricultural levies that contribute to the EC's own resources. Those all arise from directly applicable Community obligations.

Question put and agreed to.

European Economic Area Bill [Lords]

Bill immediately considered in Committee, pursuant to Order [20 October].

[MR. MICHAEL MORRIS *in the Chair*]

Clause 1

AGREEMENT ON EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AREA

Amendment made: No. 1, in page 1, line 5, after 'Act,', insert 'in the list'.—*[Mr. McLoughlin.]*

8.25 pm

Sir Teddy Taylor: I beg to move amendment No. 3, in page 1, line 9, at end add

'save that Protocol 3 of the Agreement shall not come into effect until 1st January 2000.'.

This is a probing amendment. Protocol 3 refers to the changes in the agricultural arrangements of the basic contracts between the EC and EFTA. My sole question is whether that will add to the agriculture expenditure of the Community in any respect.

It is rather a serious matter which I raise because I have just received a letter from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food pointing out how, unfortunately, expenditure on agriculture within the common agricultural policy is wholly out of control. It seems that we are exceeding the guidelines, the mountains are at an all-time high and we have had the frightening news from the Chief Secretary to the Treasury that the price of food for the average family is now being forced up by £24 a week. My sole question is whether protocol 3, if operating, will add in any way to the expenditure of the EC on food or food disposal.

Mr. McLoughlin: It is not clear to what extent EC exporters will wish to take advantage of the provisions in protocol 3. But the general point is that both expenditure from the CAP budget to EC exporters and payments into its levies from EFTA goods are likely to be reduced. It is wrong, therefore, to draw the conclusion that protocol 3 would lead to an increase in the CAP budget. Protocol 3 aims to improve the trade between the EC and EFTA by reducing tariffs on certain processed agricultural products. I hope that that is an objective that my hon. Friend will support.

It is impossible to estimate the precise financial effects of protocol 3. We do not know the extent to which the EC or EFTA exporters will take advantage of the provisions or whether they will choose to continue to use protocol 2 of the 1973 EC/EFTA free trade agreement. Moreover, any reduction in import levies on EFTA goods paid into the budget may be offset by a reduction in export funds paid out of it from EC exporters.

Sir Teddy Taylor: I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Mr. McLoughlin: I beg to move amendment No. 4, in page 1, line 9, at end add

'together with the Protocol adjusting that Agreement signed at Brussels on 17th March 1993'.

The Chairman of Ways and Means (Mr. Michael Morris): With this it will be convenient to take amendments Nos. 7, 8 and 10.

Mr. McLoughlin: The amendments take account of the protocol that excludes Switzerland from the EEA agreement.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr. Cryer: I beg to move amendment No. 5, in page 1, line 24, at end insert

'and approved by Resolution of each House of Parliament.'.

The Chairman: With this it will be convenient to take amendment No. 6, in clause 5, page 3, line 37, leave out from 'instrument' to end of line 40 and insert

'but this power shall not be exercisable unless a draft of the regulations has been laid before and approved by each House of Parliament.'.

Mr. Cryer: Amendments Nos. 5 and 6 relate to the delegated powers contained in the primary legislation. Because of the important nature of the legislation, the two amendments would have the effect of converting the discretion to use either an affirmative procedure instrument or a negative procedure instrument at the discretion of the Minister to requiring an affirmative procedure instrument.

8.30 pm

The Government make massive use of delegated powers. In 1992, they produced 3,500 statutory instruments—most of which were subject to the negative procedure. In theory, that procedure—for which the Bill makes provision—is fine if, as is required, the instrument is deposited in the House and lies on the Table for 40 days. During those 40 days, a prayer can be tabled—and even after the expiry of those 40 days a revocation motion can be tabled. The Government lay many instruments during a recess, which is not exactly the way to open government and full accountability. During any recess, praying days can be lost. If the Law Lords or the other place sits—and even if this House does not—they also count as praying days. Therefore, the days on which a prayer can be tabled can tick away.

That is bad enough, but there is still the possibility of a revocation motion. The question then arises of the time allocated to debate a prayer. In reality, few opportunities are available to the House to debate a prayer on a negative procedure instrument. In 1992, about 125 prayers were laid but only a couple of dozen were given time to be debated on the Floor of the House or upstairs in the merits Committee. The time available to debate prayers is limited.

Also, there are moves by some hon. Members—and I hope that they are defeated—to curtail the number of hours that the House sits. I believe that they are mistaken. One cannot have a legislature that finishes at 5, 6 or 7 o'clock. If we did so, that would further curtail the time available for negative procedure instruments—and we cannot be sure that the Jopling proposals will not be adopted. I do not like those proposals because one of our responsibilities is to take a closer and better look at delegated legislation.

The amendments provide that, with this legislation, the only instruments will be affirmative procedure instruments—which means that time would have to be provided. That would not be done at the discretion of the Minister but would be a requirement of the primary legislation, which is important.

I acknowledge that negative procedure instruments are acceptable in some cases. In a modern, sophisticated society, Ministers must produce legislation—and I am not saying that delegated powers should be removed. They are important and necessary. One must, however, make a

judgment as to whether the powers granted to a Minister are of a degree of importance that means that Parliament must scrutinise the delegated powers. The Minister should not try to slip them through.

As the Secretary of State knows, Ministers do try to slip things through. Next week, we shall debate mine safety regulations that were tabled on 6 August, not long after Parliament had risen for the summer recess, and came into effect shortly afterwards. They had become law before Parliament had any opportunity to consider them. While it is true that we shall have such an opportunity next week, we shall debate regulations that are already in operation —and that is often the case.

The Bill is linked to a large, detailed and comprehensive treaty—a copy of which can be seen on the Opposition Dispatch Box. The Bill, which is fairly brief, gives important powers to the Minister and the amendments will ensure that that legislation—which has been the subject of some criticism—will automatically be subject to scrutiny when it is put into operation by the delegated powers. That would not be a bad thing, as I have argued in respect of other legislation. We should opt more for the affirmative rather than negative procedure.

I speak from a prejudiced position as Chairman of the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments and of the Select Committee on Statutory Instruments. Such measures pass before my eyes in their hundreds every month at this time of the year. Both Committees know full well the volume of delegated powers that the Government are producing, because they have a huge backlog of statutory instruments from the summer months.

It causes me genuine concern that Parliament is not giving them adequate scrutiny. People suffer as a consequence of badly drafted or incompetently worded legislation. Some alarm is felt because a fair measure of criticism is directed at instruments from the Lord Chancellor's Department, which one might expect to get them right the first time.

The statutory instruments Committees often report to the House that a Minister is exceeding his powers, and that those that he claims are not within the scope of the primary legislation and are ultra vires. By and large, the House ignores such reports—although it does have an opportunity to debate the issue if the affirmative procedure is used. If the measure is subject to a prayer and is not debated, it will be passed. The people who are affected then have to go to court.

Courts are expensive places, and if people do not have the means to use them they are left to suffer from legislation that was not subject to scrutiny by the House. If Ministers produce badly worded legislation, that is a failure on the part of the House. This legislature should try to produce legislation that is as clear and precise as possible, without it being necessary to refer it to the courts.

It would be better if clauses 1 and 5 were subject to the affirmative resolution procedure, so that their provisions would come before the House and any faults would be exposed. There would be no question of the Minister seeking to avoid the issue, or of there being no opportunity for debate even if the Minister was keen to discuss the measure but the Leader of the House said that there was not the time available to do so.

The amendments would provide for automatic scrutiny, and I hope that the Minister will say that they are an excellent idea. I suspect that he will not, because all Ministers want the easy option. We should not take the easy option. I want more and more affirmative procedures, so that the House begins to wake up to its responsibility to exercise scrutiny of the vast volume of delegated legislation.

This Government have produced more delegated legislation than any other in the history of Parliament. It is not surprising that Parliament needs to catch up, to ensure the degree of scrutiny to which the people of this nation are entitled.

Mr. McLoughlin: When I saw the amendment tabled in the name of the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) I took it very seriously. He said that I would automatically reject his amendment. He will remember that on a number of occasions during the Committee dealing with the Transport and Works Bill I accepted his suggestions because he made some valid contributions. I therefore looked particularly carefully at this amendment. I had heard his speech before and I knew the arguments that he would use. Although the hon. Gentleman has attacked the use of certain powers available to Ministers, he was pleased when we used one such power on a company of which he is a non-paid director.

Mr. Cryer: I am not a director—I have five £10 shares. The Minister is talking about 1967, when the only way of obtaining a light railway was through a ministerial order which was not the subject of any further parliamentary procedure. I have tried to improve things since being elected.

Mr. McLoughlin: If I am guilty of anything today, making the hon. Member for Bradford, South laugh is a pleasure to us all.

The hon. Gentleman will expect me to explain why I cannot accept his amendment. As I have said, I hope that he will accept that I have looked at it seriously. It may help if I explain the proposed effect of clause 5.

Clause 5 provides that the powers to make regulations under clauses 2(2) and 3(2) are exercised by statutory instrument. The instruments may be subject to either the negative or the affirmative resolution procedure in the same manner as an instrument under section 2(2) of the European Communities Act 1972. The clause follows the formula in paragraph 2(2) of schedule 2 to the 1972 Act. The 1972 Act allows either affirmative or negative procedure to be adopted so that the regulations under section 2(2) of that Act may be combined with regulations made under the powers in other Acts. These Acts may provide for either negative or affirmative procedure, but not for both. The flexibility provided for in the 1972 Act allows section 2(2) regulations to be made using whichever procedure applies under the other Act.

The same consideration applies to regulations under clause 2(2) or clause 3(2) of the Bill. If clause 5 provided only for either the negative or the affirmative procedure, there would be occasions when regulations made under other enactments but on the same matter would have to be subject to different procedures and, as a consequence, different instruments. That would be an unnecessary confusion. In fact, it would increase the number of statutory instruments with which the Government would be required to deal. It would be a waste of time and resources and it would be unhelpful to readers to have to understand the relationship between them. It is far better to ensure that the two sets of regulations are made in the same instrument and are subject to the same procedure.

Mr. Cryer: In view of the explanation given by the Minister and the fact that it is now on the record, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 1, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

The Chairman: I should point out to the Committee that there is a printing error in that amendment. It should have referred to clause 2. Perhaps the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) did not notice that. That is why I have put the question on clause 1 out of sequence.

Clauses 2 to 5 ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 6

INTERPRETATION

Amendments made: No. 7, in page 3, line 46, at end add—

'as adjusted by the Protocol signed at Brussels on 17th March 1993.'.

No. 8, page 4, line 3, at end add—

'(2) References in this Act to the date on which the Agreement comes into force are references to the date on which (in accordance with the Protocol signed at Brussels on 17th March 1993) it comes into force otherwise than as regards Liechtenstein.'.—*[Mr. McLoughlin.]*

Clause 6, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 7

SHORT TITLE

Amendment proposed: No. 9, page 4, line 6, leave out subsection (2).—*[Mr. McLoughlin.]*

Sir Teddy Taylor: The Minister cannot simply ask us to accept that the subsection should be withdrawn without an explanation. The words to be removed state:

"Nothing in this Act shall impose any charge on the people or on public funds, or vary the amount or incidence of or otherwise alter any such charge in any manner, or affect the assessment, levying, administration or application of any money".

Basically, it says that it will not cost us a penny. The least that we should do is ask the Minister what charges he thinks might arise. What levies might arise? Several of us have expressed the view that this will cost us money. We must know why subsection (2) is being taken out. Do the Government now envisage that there will be charges, levies or something else?

8.45 pm

Mr. McLoughlin: I shall try to explain the point to my hon. Friend. This is a procedural amendment relating to privilege. When a Bill involving expenditure starts in the House of Lords, it inserts a privilege amendment which preserves the convention that the Lords does not deal with money measures. That is sidelined in black in the version of the Bill introduced in the House of Commons. This amendment removes that provision.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 7, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.

New Clause 4

APPLICATION OF EC LEGISLATION

'.—Her Majesty's Government shall be obliged to make a report each year to each House of Parliament which provides a full list of the European legislation which is applicable to the members of EFTA in consequence of the Agreement of Oporto.'.—*[Sir Teddy Taylor.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

The Chairman: With this we shall consider new clause 5—*Report to Parliament*—

'A Minister of the Crown shall lay before Parliament every six months a report setting out all transactions Her Majesty's Government has undertaken in the preceding six months in pursuance of the obligations of the United Kingdom under the Agreement including those undertaken on its behalf by the Commission of the European Community, together with a description of any agreements reached or decisions come to under the Agreement during that period by the European Community or its Member States and such countries as have ratified the Agreement or any body acting on behalf of those countries.'.

Sir Teddy Taylor: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

I do not want to detain the House. I have referred to the massive amount of Euro-legislation that the unfortunate EFTA countries will have to abide by, even though they played no part in drawing it up. This matter could be resolved if the Minister would say that he will send me a note, perhaps next week or the week after, giving a list of the Euro-directives and legislation that the EFTA countries will have to adopt now. Perhaps he could put a copy in the Library. It would be helpful to know whether it is three or four measures or nine or 10 measures. I am not asking the Minister to do this every year, but if he promises to send that note and put a copy in the Library, I should be happy to withdraw the motion and let hon. Members get away. It is a simple request.

All the EFTA countries will have to have such a list because they are now obliged to obey that Euro-legislation. I appreciate that democracy is now almost totally dead in this country and that Parliament is almost totally irrelevant in that respect, but the people should be told what is happening. If the Minister will send me a note, prepared with the help of all the clever people in the Foreign Office, that will do me fine. For the one or two Members who are interested, a copy could be placed in the Library. That would be a satisfactory conclusion to the debate.

Throughout the debate we have had a helpful, constructive and positive Minister. He has helped us to conclude our discussion much earlier than would otherwise have been the case. I should be grateful if he could make a positive response to a basic question, and we could then pull stumps.

Mr. Cryer: I should like to speak to new clause 5. It is much the same as that tabled by the hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor).

It would be helpful if, instead of writing notes to hon. Members, the Minister were to accept one of the new clauses so that he could formally lay one note in the Library, which is the convention. We merely seek a record of the progress—if that is the right word—or the regression as the Oporto agreement is implemented.

New clause 5 involves a more frequent requirement: it asks for a report every six months rather than every year. The report would note the transactions undertaken by the Government in the previous six months in pursuance of the obligations laid down in the very fat volume of the treaty. The new clause would also require that anything undertaken by the Commission should also be listed because it is important that we are able to keep track of what the Commission is up to.

In theory, the Commission does only what the Council of Ministers requires it to do but, of course, the Commission also presents reports and makes suggestions

[Mr. Cryer]

to the Council of Ministers, either on its own initiative or in response to the Council of Minister's proposals. We should like a note of what the Commission has undertaken in the previous six months. New clause 5 also calls for

"a description of any agreements reached or decisions come to under the Agreement . . . by the European Community or its Member States and such countries as have ratified the Agreement or any body acting on behalf of those countries."

It is a reasonable requirement.

A criticism accepted by members of all parties is that the Common Market is too remote. We know that legislation is being passed by directive. Hon. Members do not see the directive but see a statutory instrument which implements the directive. As the Committee knows, I am in a more privileged position than most hon. Members because I have to read most of the statutory instruments produced by the legislative blunderbuss of the Common Market.

New clause 5 would require a simple report twice a year to tell hon. Members what is happening. We may approve or deplore what is happening, but at least we would know. What other way is there of finding out? It is true that we have an excellent department in the Library which deals with EC affairs, but it sometimes gets things wrong.

I remember when we received the first outline of the Maastricht agreement. I received a copy from the Library but, within a few days, I received a hasty note saying, "Terribly sorry, that draft is out of date. We have another." It is a difficult job for the Library department. As the Government are involved, they could easily place a report in the Library as suggested in the new clause.

Not all 651 hon. Members would make a beeline for the Library but those who were interested could do so. The Common Market is not the most stimulating topic of conversation. Indeed, if one wants people to go away, one has only to turn to them and start talking about it and one will find that crowds will break up easily. What I am suggesting would be a service to all hon. Members but, in practice, only a few would go to the Library. Those of us who are interested are not being unreasonable in suggesting that Ministers should provide the necessary information regularly.

The new clause would enable Ministers to reach out to the rest of the nation. If something proves useful, we can publicise it. If something proves difficult or onerous, we could highlight that, too. We could also use the procedures of the House, as we already do for other matters: if something listed in the report were disadvantageous to the United Kingdom, an hon. Member could secure an Adjournment debate or raise the issue by the various methods that Parliament affords to hon. Members.

The Minister likes to say often that I served for five years—I was elected on an anti-Common Market basis, I might add—in the EC Assembly. It was an experience. This House affords us many more opportunities to raise issues than the rigid, authoritarian European body which, in reality, is run by the leaders of all the political parties. Although we were not in fact prevented from doing so, critics like myself had great difficulty in airing our views. The House offers many opportunities which we cherish.

If hon. Members were to receive the necessary information in a bi-annual report, we would be able to take advantage of it if we wished to do so. That is a small request, and I look forward to hearing what the Minister's brief says.

Mr. McLoughlin: It is always a pleasure to write to my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor), although I do not know whether he will want me to write to him in the way that he suggested. However, I can go some way to meeting his request and that of the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer).

I share the concern that Parliament should be properly informed of developments in the European economic area. However, the new clause is not necessary as, under the Bill as it stands, Ministers will make two types of report to Parliament on the EEA. Moreover, the new EEA Acts extending to EFTA will be subject to scrutiny under our normal procedures and will be published in the new EC section of the *Official Journal*.

Once the agreement comes into force, the Government will report twice a year to Parliament on the operation of the EEA in a six-monthly White Paper on developments in the European Community. There will be a new section in the White Paper exclusively for the EEA. That follows a recommendation of the Select Committee on Trade and Industry, made in its report on free trade with EFTA on 25 July 1990. I hope that I have proved how we shall meet the request of my hon. Friend and that of the hon. Member for Bradford, South without the need for the new clause.

Sir Teddy Taylor: I am grateful for the Minister's kind and considerate answer. It is very interesting to know that we shall receive so much information in various reports but I was not looking for all that. I merely wanted a list of legislation. We can reach a compromise. I shall table a written question on Monday asking the Minister to list legislation by which EFTA countries will have to abide as a consequence of the Oporto agreement. I shall read the answer in *Hansard*, which will save the Minister trouble. If he really wants to do all that he has offered, I shall be grateful and pleased, and so will everyone else, but there is no need for him to go out of his way.

I thank the Minister for being so understanding. He has done a grand job tonight. I shall table a written question, which will satisfy me and which will, I hope, interest the democratic community. In those circumstances, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.

Schedule agreed to.

Amendment made: No. 10, in title, at end add

'as adjusted by the Protocol signed at Brussels on 17th March 1993'.—*[Mr. McLoughlin.]*

Bill reported, with amendments; as amended, considered; read the Third time, and passed.

Education (North-West Kent)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Robert G. Hughes.]*

8.58 pm

Mr. Bob Dunn (Dartford): I welcome the presence of my hon. Friend the Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire), the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education, who will respond to my argument. Although the debate is about educational provision in north-west Kent, it must of necessity centre on parental rights and school democracy. I shall also introduce the concept of the "right to silence", in the context not of police interrogation of suspects, but of the withholding of their views by the representatives of left-of-centre political parties which sought election to Kent county council in May and which now control it.

Let me sketch my concerns. In 1988, when I was a Parliamentary Under-Secretary at what was then called the Department of Education and Science, I gladly assisted in the passage of the Education Reform Act. Among other provisions, the Act sets down procedures according to which governors and parents seek grant-maintained status and, if successful, take their schools out of local education authority control. Those procedures ultimately involve the parents or guardians of children at such a school in the exercise of school democracy through a parental ballot.

I am also glad to welcome the presence of my hon. Friend the Member for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold)—I know that he would like to catch your eye later, Mr. Deputy Speaker—and that of my hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe), who has been a doughty fighter on behalf of parents in her constituency since we lost control of Kent county council in May.

Between the passage of the 1988 Act and 18 June 1993, four secondary schools in the Dartford constituency successfully applied for and achieved grant-maintained status. Those were Dartford grammar school for boys, Dartford grammar school for girls, the grammar school for girls, Wilmington—that was the first school in Kent to opt out—and Wilmington grammar school for boys. As well as the secondary schools, the Sutton-at-Hone Church of England primary school also received permission to become grant-maintained.

I have already referred to the period between the 1988 Act coming into force and 18 June 1993. The House may ask what the importance of that date is. It is significant because, on 18 June, the new Liberal-Labour majority on Kent education committee voted

"to change its policy on grant maintained schools, from adopting a neutral stance towards schools seeking to opt out of County Council control, to vigorously encouraging them to stay within it.

That change was and is fundamental. I believe that no mandate for it was put before the electors of Kent—at least, not in my part of Kent—by the Labour party or the Liberal Democrats, or by the candidates that they fielded.

When the Conservative party controlled the county of Kent, a neutral stance towards grant-maintained applications was adopted, and of course the authority made objections to some proposals that were considered not to be viable. However, the Conservatives on Kent county council made it clear that, when a parental vote in favour of seeking grant-maintained status was announced, all efforts to keep the school within the embrace of the local education authority would cease. The wishes of parents and governors would be the guiding force. Until May 1993, Kent county council took the altogether proper view that grant-maintained schools in Kent employed Kent teachers to educate Kent children on behalf of Kent parents.

However, since 18 June, another Dartford primary school, Holy Trinity Church of England school, has received approval for grant-maintained status from 1 January 1994, despite hostile objections from Kent county council.

Equally, the Horton Kirby Church of England primary school held a successful ballot, in which a majority of parents voted to opt out. Liberal Democrat/Labour Kent has moved in a hostile fashion against that school, despite the wishes of the parents and despite the unanimous vote of the governing body, which to my certain knowledge has on it some governors who do not vote Conservative. This application, which I fully endorse, is with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education for a decision.

My hon. Friend the Minister will see from the picture I am painting that the policy of grant-maintained schools has been extremely successful in north-west Kent. Nevertheless, the schools that have chosen not to seek a change in status or whose parents may decide to vote no after a properly conducted debate have a claim on my time, support and affection equal to that of the schools that have taken advantage of a policy that I helped to create in the late 1980s.

I now turn to my further concerns, which I suspect are shared by my hon. Friends across Kent, including my hon. Friend the Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw), who asked to be associated with this debate. My concerns are these. The Conservatives lost control of Kent in May this year. The first act of Liberal Democrat/Labour-controlled education committee was to abandon neutrality and to replace it with hostility—a policy now practised consistently against any application made.

I now make a serious charge, which is that, in my constituency at the most recent Kent county council elections, not one Labour or Liberal Democrat candidate, I believe, proclaimed that, if elected and if his or her party was in a position of power after the May elections, he or she would vote to oppose grant-maintained applications as a matter of hard policy.

I have read Labour and Liberal Democrat leaflets, boring though they may be, issued to electors across Dartford, and of those that I have seen, not one has mentioned that change of policy. Interestingly, all the parties at county hall published a countrywide political manifesto. Did the Liberal Democrats and socialists at county hall announce their hostility to grant-maintained schools and to such applications? Not likely. They opted for the right of silence.

Of course, if I am wrong and if a candidate from the left-of-centre parties in Dartford constituency had the courage of his or her policy and mentioned it in the issued leaflets, I shall publicly acknowledge that fact. I challenge the parties to supply me with proof of leaflets issued with their hostility to the grant-maintained policy contained therein.

Those who were elected for left of centre parties from my constituency to Kent county council are, of course, now happy after the election to condemn the policy of grant-maintained schools, and violently to oppose any applications that may come their way. Now they are, of course, beyond the reach of the electorate. I ask, on behalf of my concerned constituents: if the policy of allowing

[Mr. Bob Dunn]

schools to opt out is so worthy of condemnation, why was nothing said by the local left-of-centre party candidates during the Kent county council elections?

I now turn to Mr. Pryke. Under the Conservatives, he was appointed to be our chief education officer. He had always behaved in a truly professional manner, and I was never directly aware of the immense dissatisfaction and disaffection he inwardly felt towards Government education policy. I cannot remember an expression of major concern—although I may be wrong—by Mr. Pryke to me about grant-maintained schools. I am sure that my colleagues from Kent will back me on that—*[Interruption.]* Indeed, they are doing that by nodding their assent. Mr. Pryke kept silent and, as a servant of the authority, perhaps he was right to do so.

With the change in the political status in Kent, with one bound he was free. Thus we saw an astonishing article in *The Times Educational Supplement* on 1 October, which was soundly answered by our good friends Ronnie Norman and Mr. Cecil Knight.

However, it does not stop there. I have a letter dated 1 October 1993, which was sent to the parents of pupils attending Our Lady of Hartley Roman Catholic primary school by the area director of education for north-west Kent. That letter was sent to parents in Hartley after the school governors had initiated a ballot on grant-maintained status.

The area director states:

"Grant-maintained means:
Control by central government;
No better standards of education for your child;
More in-school bureaucracy;
No Local arbitrator for you, the parents."

The final sentence reads:

"and there is no assured long term benefit."

I bring that letter to the attention of my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Education, because I believe the issue of that letter to be a hostile act. I hope that he will take it into account if, as I hope, a submission from that school comes his way.

I hope that what I have said already is of interest to my hon. Friend the Minister. It is deeply important for the people of Dartford and, I suspect, for people in constituencies across Kent who have always attached great importance to the range, variety and choice available to them in the education of their children. If the county of Kent wishes to be set alongside Lambeth and Derbyshire, so be it. In a match of the people versus Kent county council, I am happy to say that I will always back the people I represent.

Let me leave the final word to two of my local head teachers, who were quoted in a local paper on the question of grant-maintained status. Mrs. Jill Hadman, the head of Dartford Girls grammar school, said:

"I am very surprised at Mr. Pryke's comments. We have done a tremendous amount for the pupils since we opted out. We have increased accommodation, provided a full range of expressive arts at examination level in response to parents and got our own language lab.

In two years, we have had the flexibility to do so many things that we previously wanted. There is the sixth form common room for 230 students, additional classrooms and heating system."

Mrs. Hadman said that she thought that she was far more accountable than before, with no more passing the buck to education officials. She added:

"We do, of course, need to co-operate with local education authorities on issues such as admissions."

My hon. Friend the Member for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold) will raise that point later.

Mr. Les Clarke is the head teacher of the Holy Trinity primary school which has just received permission to opt out. He said:

"We are in a strong position with good buildings and have numerous things we want to forge ahead with once we get our budget. Parents are very much in favour and I can only see the school going from strength to strength."

That is the point of our philosopy: to push responsibility from the hub to the rim.

I have seen the schools in my constituency that have become grant-maintained benefit from a new dimension of dynamism and activity. The four points that the area director listed are utter rot, and the authority should be ashamed of them. I hope that, in time, more of my local schools will apply to opt out, and I hope that the Minister will be seized by the arguments that I have advanced, to prevent this activity in the county of Kent.

Finally, I thank Madam Speaker for allowing me this debate on the important subject of parental rights. As I have said, if it is a question of the people or bureaucracy, the people will get my support every time.

9.15 pm

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn) for initiating this debate, which is vital to the education of children in north-west Kent, both in his borough of Dartford and in mine of Gravesham. I can confirm that, in the most recent county council election in Kent, no Labour or Liberal Democrat candidate in Gravesham told the electorate that he or she would conduct this disreputable campaign against grant-maintained schools.

In Gravesham, we have eight excellent secondary schools, two single-sex grammar schools, two Church comprehensives, two single-sex high schools and three mixed high schools—two in urban areas and one in the rural area. Together, they provide an excellent choice for parents. Every one of them embraced local financial management with enthusiasm. It has been a very effective scheme, brought in by Kent county council when it was Conservative, and implemented by an excellent team of officers led by Roy Pryke.

These schools then looked to the opportunities of GM status, which brings with it total local decision-making and financial control in schools. It is a logical extension of Kent's Conservative policy of local financial management. The schools in Gravesham carefully considered and steadily went towards GM status, with overwhelming parental support—votes of 90 per cent. and more in school after school—for instance, St. George's Church of England school, Meopham school, Southfields school, Northfleet school for boys. Parents are now balloting at St. John's Roman Catholic school.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dartford was right about the letters from the area director of education. The parents at St. John's received the same hostile and misleading letter, with hardly a change besides the name of the school itself.

It is ironic that both the grammar schools—Gravesend grammar school for boys and Gravesend grammar school for girls—remain among Kent county council's secondary schools. They both know that the new Labour/Liberal Democrat alliance that is running Kent county council is

hostile to them. According to the policy and instincts of both parties, they would scrap the Gravesend grammar schools, but the fascinating thing is that they cannot do so, trumped by the capacity that the Government have given the schools to go grant-maintained and thus beyond the destructive clutches of the Lib-Lab alliance running the council. So the council has grudgingly accepted the continuing existence of these excellent schools, on the grounds that it is better to have a grammar school in the clutches of Kent county council than no school at all.

Considering all the advantages flowing from local financial management and then grant-maintained status, all should be well—and I can report to the House that all is well in the schools. But all is not well in terms of Kent county council's relations with those schools.

I have a letter from the Rev. Joe King, chairman of the governors of St. George's Church of England school. The House should be aware of this gentleman's background. He appeared in the election address of my Labour opponent at the general election, and he strongly endorsed Labour policy and the Labour candidate. That letter is also signed by four other chairmen of school governors, one of whom is also a strong Labour party supporter and a CND member to boot, and seven head teachers.

This letter from the Rev. Joe King, the Labour supporter, and his colleagues states:

"The Authority's"—

that is, Kent county council's—

"previous neutral stance has apparently been replaced by a very vindictive approach in which a school that has recently obtained Grant Maintained status has experienced petty obstructionism. Two schools in the process of becoming Grant Maintained are experiencing outright opposition from the Authority. Head Teachers are placed in an invidious position in relation to their Local Authority colleagues when matters of concern to all schools are being discussed and there is no clarity in what we can expect from the Local Authority. The matters they should discuss with us include admissions, and failure to reintroduce the proper professional structures will prejudice the education of children in Gravesham."

Another vindictive attack that has come to light may be of interest to the House. Kent county council, now in Lib-Lab control, has exploited historic arrangements relating to the funding of special needs education in grant-maintained schools, and that directly affects young people with special educational needs. Having brought that to the attention of my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Schools, I am glad that he has already tackled the issue with his new code of practice, provided for in the Education Act 1993.

The House would expect to see all schools, regardless of their status, co-operating to provide good education in their areas. Furthermore, it would expect Kent county council to continue to work for the good of education in Kent. However, Kent county council education committee is now under the malign influence of the political prejudices of the new Labour/Liberal Democrat coalition. Mr. Pryke, the chief education officer who has been mentioned in the debate, has made destructive partisan utterances.

We should be absolutely clear on the meaning of grant-maintained status. Some 10 per cent. of education funds is now being spent by grant-maintained schools. That is the proportion of the funding for education that is spent on specialist and administrative services, and that money cannot be spent twice. If it is spent by the grant-maintained schools, as it quite properly is, it cannot be spent by the central education administration of Kent county council.

Consequently, the central administration of Kent county council must slim down accordingly. If it does not, those additional funds can come from only one of two places —Kent county council's taxpayers or the remaining schools under the county council, and that would be totally wrong.

Mr. Dunn: The point to be made in the debate is that it is Mr. King, a Labour supporter, who speaks about the vindictive approach of Kent county council. The children who are being taught in schools that have become grant-maintained are still Kent children. Has not the Lib-Lab coalition that runs the county council effectively declared war on those children and their parents? We are taught to respect the wishes and the result of the ballot box. Why cannot our new masters in Kent county council do the same?

Mr. Arnold: That is the point. The Rev. Joe King, the chairman of the governors, a parish priest and a person who normally keeps out of politics—although he intervened on behalf of the Labour party at the last general election—is so worried about the welfare of the children in his schools that he has spoken out.

My feeling is that Mr. Pryke, as head of the central education administration in Kent, should concentrate on the slimming-down process of that bureaucratic core. He should not spend his time playing politics in pursuit of his vested interests. He has to remember that he is an expert employee of Kent county council. He is not a councillor. He is, indeed, a servant of that county council. He should attend to his duties.

Schools in Gravesham are working well. They are co-operating well. They could do so even better with the co-operation of Kent county council. Those schools have my support in their continuing endeavours to provide first-rate education to the youngsters of Gravesham.

9.25 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education (Mr. Robin Squire): My hon. Friend the Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn) has done a service to his constituents and the House tonight in making a speech that was so well prepared and delivered. It drew on his wide experience and knowledge of education matters. The only pity is that, although he criticised the Labour party and the Liberal Democrats, the Benches opposite were empty. Labour and Liberal Democrat Members will have to read his words in *Hansard*.

My hon. Friend was eloquently backed by my hon. Friend the Member for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold) and by the presence of my hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe), who is a fellow Minister.

Before I go to the heart of my hon. Friend's speech, I hope that he will understand that I cannot comment on the specific school proposals to which he referred. They are currently with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. I assure him that they will receive the closest possible attention. I hope that we shall release a decision as soon as practicable.

I have good news for the House and for my hon. Friends. Today, I approved no fewer than five more grant-maintained schools. There are now 754 grant-maintained, self-governing schools approved or operating in England.

[Mr. Robin Squire]

Self-governing, grant-maintained, status is the most complete form of local management for schools. Parents in an ever-increasing number of schools are voting for it. In the White Paper published in July 1992, the Government made clear their commitment to grant-maintained schools and their hope that, in time, all schools would become grant-maintained. Measures in the Education Act 1993 will ease the transition to grant-maintained status and ensure that an increasing number of grant-maintained schools enjoy the best operating conditions.

Grant-maintained schools control their total budget, and this enables them to focus spending where it counts—on the delivery of education in the classroom. Grant-maintained schools are popular with parents and effective. Independent schools have noted good-quality lessons and deployment of resources, increased demand for places, commendable pupil behaviour and attendance and improved teacher morale.

The grant-maintained movement is about much more than money. Grant-maintained schools find that there are enormous benefits in being masters of their own affairs and having a real sense of ownership. Grant-maintained schools can make proposals for change directly to the Secretary of State—for example, on the age range of pupils.

Decisions are taken by parents, teachers and members of the local community—those who care about the school most, are closest to it and can take decisions faster than a bureaucracy every could. Grant-maintained status encourages increased parental involvement, from the initial ballot for grant-maintained status to increased numbers of parent governors on a grant-maintained governing body.

Despite their new-found independence, grant-maintained schools are far from isolated. There have been encouraging reports of such schools co-operating with one another by sharing information and making joint decisions about the purchase of services. What is more, there is no reason why grant-maintained schools should not continue to have an excellent relationship with schools which remain with the LEA. For example, schools can and do continue to co-operate in sixth form consortia.

My hon. Friends the Members for Dartford and for Gravesham appreciate the resounding arguments in favour of grant-maintained status. They will both be delighted to witness the growth of the grant-maintained sector in their county.

Kent is in the forefront of the grant-maintained movement. Ballots have been held in more than 50 per cent. of Kent secondary schools—more than one in eight schools in general. Only one LEA, Essex, has more grant-maintained schools than Kent. Indeed, of the 754 English schools which have now approved for grant-maintained status, 69, or almost one in 10, are in Kent.

The first self-governing secondary schools in Kent were incorporated in September 1989, and the first self-govering primary schools were incorporated in January 1992. The sector has expanded rapidly since then, and 39 per cent. of Kent secondary schools are now grant-maintained. More than 100 heads have attended conferences in Kent on going grant-maintained.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Gravesham pointed out, the sector in Kent now embraces a wide range of schools: selective as well as comprehensive schools, primary and middle schools as well as large secondary schools, county schools and voluntary schools affiliated to both the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church, as well as ex-county schools.

Nationally, about four out of five grant-maintained ballots result in a yes vote. I am delighted to say that, in Kent, the rate is higher still, at almost 95 per cent., showing clearly that Kent parents recognise what is best for their children's schools.

There has been a great deal of speculation about the effect of the change of county council control on the growth of the grant-maintained sector in Kent, and my hon. Friends both referred to that tonight. However, what really matters is not what Kent county council thinks but what Kent parents think.

Measures in the Education Act 1993 will help to ensure that opinions in county hall do not control parents' thinking. They will create a fair and balanced debate by providing grants to governors to cover the cost of informing parents about grant-maintained status from the 1 January 1994. They will also limit the amount that LEAs can spend on influencing the outcome of the ballot.

Of course, LEAs that are opposed to grant-maintained status are perfectly entitled to put their views to parents in any school that is considering opting out of local authority control. There have been some instances in which LEAs and others have submerged parents under a sea of paper in the process of putting forward their case, while schools have had limited resources with which to conduct their campaign.

It is also important that the information that is sent to parents, from whatever side, is objective, explanatory, factual and non-political in content, tone or presentation. To help to achieve that, the Department and the Society of Education Officers have drawn up a common code of conduct. The SEO has distributed the code to its members, and the Department will promulgate it shortly.

I was disturbed to hear what my hon. Friend the Member for Gravesham said about a particular leaflet. I invite him to forward the leaflet to the Department, where it will be given the closest attention, to establish whether or not it breaches the code.

I have every confidence that the grant-maintained sector will continue to grow, irrespective of the views of Kent county council. I have every respect for the ability of Kent parents to think for themselves.

In the time remaining, I wish to turn to Mr. Pryke's article in *The Times Educational Supplement,* to which my hon. Friend the Member for Gravesham referred. In general, I agree with his views—that is, the views of my hon. Friend.

Perhaps I could take the opportunity to set the record straight on a number of matters. In the article, Mr. Pryke complains about inequitable funding arrangements. True, self-governing schools get some grants that are not available to their LEA-maintained counterparts. However, those grants reflect the additional responsibilities of grant-maintained schools and the additional expenditure they face, which LEA schools do not face.

The real difference in the financial arrangements of grant-maintained and non-grant-maintained schools is not the total amount of money but the fact that grant-maintained schools have control over 100 per cent. of their budget, so that they make all the spending decisions.

Mr. Pryke went on to attack the common funding formula on the grounds that it is a crude national formula

which will not take account of local variations. Yet the formula proposed includes an element for pupils with special educational needs, an element for fixed costs—which will be of particular help to small popular schools—and an element to take account of the additional costs associated with operating a school on more than one site.

Schools have already begun to feel the advantages of heavily pupil-led funding under LMS. The common funding formula will mean that, for the first time, each child can expect educational provision based on a genuine assessment of need rather than accident of birth within a particular LEA boundary.

Elsewhere in his article, Mr. Pryke spoke about inspection arrangements. Frankly, it is absurd to suggest that there has been no evaluation of the performance of GM schools—or, indeed, that there has been some kind of cover-up of the findings. Her Majesty's inspectors published a report earlier this year. Their findings were that, in general, self-governing schools have improved morale among staff and resulted in better management of resources and a much better climate within the classroom for effective education and improved pupil attendance. Those are the firm foundations for higher standards and improved examination results.

Under the new inspection regime, all schools that are wholly or mainly dependent on public funds—including, of course, grant-maintained schools—will be inspected on a regular four-yearly basis. The registered inspectors' reports will be published, as will the governors' action plans drawn up in response.

The Department for Education closely monitors the admission arrangements of self-governing schools. When a school applies for self-governing status, it must include in its proposals details of its admissions arrangements. Once those arrangements have been agreed with the Department, they cannot be changed without the prior approval of the Secretary of State.

Grant-maintained schools have a range of responsibilities beyond those of LEA-maintained schools. They are directly accountable—through governors—to parents and the local community. That is the local democratic base. New arrangements such as those for the Funding Agency for Schools are not about structures that interfere with day-to-day running of individual schools. The FAS will most certainly not be a replacement LEA.

Once 10 per cent. of pupils in a local education authority sector are being educated in grant-maintained schools, the responsibility to ensure sufficient surplus places will be shared between the LEA and the funding agency. That division of responsibility recognises the increasing contribution to the provision of places made by grant-maintained schools.

Each party will be able to act only in relation to its own sector. The FAS will have the power to propose the expansion, alteration, or discontinuance of grant-maintained schools, while the LEA will retain these powers with respect to LEA schools. The FAS will therefore be able to reduce surplus places in grant-maintained schools in precisely the same way that LEAs can act to reduce surplus places in LEA-maintained schools.

Mr. Pryke claims that, because the LEA is not responsible for self-governing schools, the grant-maintained system is unaccountable and undemocratic. That is patent nonsense. No school goes grant-maintained without the majority of parents' approval; that is real democracy at work. Once grant-maintained schools have been established, they are directly accountable to parents and pupils.

I have listened with interest to, and I agree overwhelmingly with, what my hon. Friends have said. I believe, without doubt, that the grant-maintained sector will continue to grow and thrive, both in Kent and across the country as a whole. In years to come, people will wonder why we ever doubted that schools could run themselves on behalf of parents, pupils and their immediate community without being controlled by their local education authority.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-two minutes to Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 22 October 1993

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PETITIONS

Standard Spending Assessment (Greenwich)

9.35 am

Mr. Nick Raynsford (Greenwich): I rise to present a petition signed by more than 2,000 residents of the London borough of Greenwich calling on the Government to revise their standard spending assessment formula to remedy the grave injustice which the present formula causes to Greenwich. For more than 2,000 people to sign a petition on a subject as arcane and technical as standard spending assessments shows the strength and depth of the feeling of the people in my constituency and the whole borough of Greenwich on that issue.

The system is unquestionably unfair, as it rates Greenwich substantially below all the other inner London boroughs and several outer London boroughs on a range of indicators, when there is clear and incontrovertible evidence that the needs of Greenwich compare with those of other inner London boroughs.

For example, the children's social service element in the standard spending assessment allows Greenwich just £308 per child, which is a staggering £147 below the next lowest inner London borough, yet Greenwich suffers from the highest incidence of infant mortality in London and has the fourth highest number of children on the child protection register and the third highest number of place of safety orders issued by magistrates.

Clearly, the current system is failing fundamentally, which has promoted the wave of justified anger among Greenwich residents, who therefore request

"that the House of Commons does everything in its power to obtain a just standard spending assessment for the London borough of Greenwich. And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray".

To lie upon the Table.

Banks Residential Home, Bangor

Madam Speaker: We now come to the Adjournment debate.

9.37 am

Sir James Kilfedder (North Down): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Yesterday, I called at the office upstairs and gave notice that I intended to present a petition this morning. I had my request authenticated and signed, and was told that I could present it at 9.30 today. What has happened, and why am I not allowed to present my petition now?

Madam Speaker: There has been a misunderstanding. From what the hon. Gentleman says, it seems that he went to the Upper Table Office. His petition has been authenticated, although it is not in my dossier. That being so, of course I shall hear it.

Sir James Kilfedder: I am grateful to you, Madam Speaker.

Nearly 5,000 of my constituents are exercising, through me, the centuries-old right of petitioning Parliament to prevent a grave injustice to a small but vulnerable group of elderly people who live in the Banks residential home, Bangor, County Down, and to the dedicated staff who so lovingly care for them.

The petitioners vigorously protest at the proposed closure of this modern, purpose-built residential home by the Eastern health and social services board, which imposes cuts on the health service in the area but never on its own inflated bureaucracy. The board does not seem to care about the traumatic effect on the elderly residents and their relatives of closing its residential home.

The petition reads:

"Wherefore, your petitioners pray that your Honourable House will appeal to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to intervene to stop any possible closure or use of The Banks for anything other than a Nursing or Residential Home. Any tampering with this Home would be cruel to the residents and staff, who together form a big happy family. And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray, etc."

To lie upon the Table.

Northern Ireland

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Robert G. Hughes.]*

Madam Speaker: I inform the House that many right hon. and hon. Members wish to take part in the debate today, which is a good sign. That being so, may I make a plea for fairly short speeches, so that I might call all those who are seeking to speak?

9.40 am

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Sir Patrick Mayhew): We are all extremely glad of this rare opportunity for a full day's debate on the affairs of Northern Ireland. I should like to range widely over the affairs of the Province, while heeding your injunction, Madam Speaker, and remembering that, before the recess, the debate on the appropriation order was curtailed.

Northern Ireland is changing. For the House, but also for people much wider afield and not only within the United Kingdom, the message that I have today is that a far better future is not simply what the people of Northern Ireland deserve: it is something which they sensibly and rationally expect. Already, it is gathering shape.

There seem to be two Provinces called Northern Ireland: the one that many of us know well, and that which is publicly portrayed. To those who see Northern Ireland only at one remove, it must seem quite extraordinary that anybody should be confident that it has a better future. But those of us who know the real Northern Ireland know the extraordinary progress that has been made, and the rising confidence of people who work and live there.

Listen to what the CBI said in its September survey of business confidence in Northern Ireland:

> "Confidence in the Northern Ireland economy exhibits the largest positive balance since the question was first asked in 1987."

If one goes to Derry, pride in what the city has achieved and faith in what the future holds are at once apparent. "Don't talk about the two cathedrals festival being cross-community," said Mr. Donal Doherty to us all after a brilliant musical occasion last Saturday night. "This is the community." He was right.

Hon. Members should go east to Belfast, and talk to privatised Shorts and its workpeople, or northwards to Ballymena and hear the plans that the council and business people now have for its future. They should talk to the managers of business across the Province representing inward investment attracted from overseas. They should talk to the people newly in work and read of tourism's repeated record as more and more people come and find out what Northern Ireland is really like. They will sense that rising confidence.

It is with the economy that I want to start, before turning to social advances within the community, and from there to security matters, before coming lastly to political developments within the complex scene.

Unemployment is still quite deplorably high. It is no comfort that, in the Republic, it is notably higher. North and south, Ireland has always had higher proportions of its people unemployed than has Great Britain. My predecessor of 80 years ago, Chief Secretary Augustine Birrell, once wistfully reflected that, if he could only get the jobs, most of his other Irish problems would subside.

There are real grounds now for confidence in the resilient performance of the Northern Ireland economy over the past four or five years. The main indicators show that the economy has performed well. Indeed, in many ways it has fared better than the rest of the United Kingdom. Over the past five years, the seasonally adjusted numbers of the unemployed in Great Britain went up by 35 per cent. Over the same period, unemployment in Northern Ireland fell by 6 per cent. The numbers in work in Great Britain fell by 4 per cent., whereas in Northern Ireland the numbers rose by 5 per cent.

Manufacturing performance has been even more impressive. In the United Kingdom as a whole, in the five years to 1993, production went up by only 3 per cent. Northern Ireland manufacturing escaped the worst of the recession and, over the same period, the increase in output was 19 per cent.

The prospects, too, are good. Industry's confidence and its investment intentions are at their highest for many years. Those facts give grounds for reasoned hope. I am not talking about optimism. I deny optimism, which has nothing to do with one's reasoning power, and a lot to do with one's insides. Rational hope is what matters. Rational hope depends on the evidence and one's assessment of it.

On top of those facts, we had excellent news from the industrial development agencies. During the past year, 10 inward investment projects were secured by the Industrial Development Board, which involved the investment of £1·6 million and almost 2,000 new jobs. This year, two major projects have already been announced: Carmen Electronics, from Korea, is creating 257 jobs making car stereos in Dungannon; and Valence Technology from the United States of America expects to create 660 jobs producing rechargeable batteries at Mallusk, north of Belfast.

It is particularly welcome—I think that the House will agree—that the Carmen project is located in Dungannon. It will give a major boost to the economy of that town. I understand that the sharing of responsibility within the Dungannon council influenced the company to locate there.

On the home industry side, last year the IDB helped local firms with 59 projects to improve their competitiveness. Its marketing assistance helped companies get orders worth more than £100 million. It arranged overseas trade missions, which have already resulted in firm orders worth more than £11 million, with a further £72 million anticipated. Only this week, we heard of yet another major export success with Mivan of Antrim winning a £21·5 million contract from the Royal Thai Air Force for the construction of acccommodation.

At the lower end of the scale, the record of the Local Enterprise Development Unit is also one of impressive results. Last year, it assisted a record number of new business start-ups, and achieved a 4 per cent. net rise in employment among its client companies. Such work by Government agencies surely is important, and deserves the recognition and support of all of us who have at heart the economic well-being of Northern Ireland.

Equally deserving of credit is the work of the local councils and the community groups for economic development. Over the past few years, they have complemented the work of the agencies and shown that they, too, have a real and valuable contribution to make. Initiatives such as North West International—formerly Derry Boston Ventures—the Tyrone Economic

Development Initiative, Down Chicago, and others have led the way by promoting their areas and developing trade links abroad.

I am pleased to see that other groups—for example, in Coleraine, Ballymena, Craigavon, Belfast, Lisburn and County Fermanagh—have also been quick to learn the lesson and develop their own initiatives. I want to congratulate and encourage them on their admirable drive.

I congratulate also all hon. Members representing constituencies in Northern Ireland who have been associated with such initiatives. It would be invidious of me to single out anyone. No one is better placed to advance his constituency's claim, or its suitability for investment, than its Member of Parliament. Many are the instances in which that has been demonstrated.

Nothing is more impressive overseas than when political opponents from Northern Ireland make common cause, as shown by the hon. Members for Belfast, West (Dr. Hendron) and for Belfast, North (Mr. Walker) on their visit to the United States earlier this year.

I believe that all of them regard it as a major strength that we have a highly developed infrastructure. Of course that infrastructure could be better—we look forward to making it better—but it already comprises good roads, efficient modern seaports and airports, and one of the most advanced telecommunications networks in western Europe. All that comes as a very pleasant surprise to those overseas who are contemplating investment in Northern Ireland, as I know from my conversations with them.

In that context, let me mention two recent major developments: first, the opening last month of the new £20 million port at Londonderry, which will enable the north-west to take full advantage of the opportunities that the single European market affords; secondly, the completion this week of the keystone section of the new railway bridge over the Lagan in Belfast—an innovation which, together with the new road bridge, will revitalise Belfast's transport system. Those are most heartening developments, full of promise for a more prosperous future.

Other advantages, too, are appreciated by those contemplating investing in Northern Ireland: the commitment and motivation of our work force; the high educational levels in the Province, which are, by most standards, the best in the United Kingdom; and—very important—the benefits of the opt-out from the social chapter, which the Prime Minister secured and which Labour would cast away.

The underlying theme of our economic development strategy in Northern Ireland is the virtue of competition. The turn-round at Shorts has been remarkable, in spite of the worst downturn in the history of the aerospace industry. Against a background of falling employment in the United Kingdom aerospace industry, Shorts employs more people today that it did when it was privatised in 1989.

Prime contractors, such as Boeing, Fokker and Rolls-Royce, have had to cut back on orders because of the recession, yet Shorts continues to secure important contracts. Only last week, it secured an order, worth almost £70 million, to modify aircraft for the United States army. The company also disclosed plans to take a leading role in the design and development of a new business jet. That project alone should provide more than 700 jobs when the aircraft is in full production.

Harland and Wolff also continue to provide employment for some 2,000 people, and currently has orders extending to late 1994. The group is now nosing into profit —a very great achievement, in a short space of time, in an industry which is among those most beset by difficulties in the world.

The most recent privatisation in Northern Ireland, of course, has been the flotation of Northern Ireland Electricity, completed earlier this year. Some 50 per cent. of the total share allocation went to people in Northern Ireland—the employees, pensioners and customers of Northern Ireland Electricity. That demonstrates the confidence of the people of Northern Ireland in the company's future in the private sector. Just as the price of gas in Great Britain has fallen by 20 per cent. in real terms since privatisation, so competition, as it develops, will bring down the price of electricity.

When Shorts was privatised in 1989, the company was using production machinery which now, four years later, is in a museum. The Labour party's policy of opposing privatisation ought to be there too.

Privatisation is about choice, competition and enterprise, service and proper jobs. Everywhere in the world, Governments are following our lead and privatising. Last month, the Labour party in Brighton voted to keep clause 4 of its constitution, committing it to wholesale renationalisation. The Opposition Front-Bench spokesman—the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara)—can tell us today whether Labour will duly renationalise Shorts, Harland and Wolff and Northern Ireland Electricity. The workers, among others, have the right to know.

Of course we continue to need more jobs. Meanwhile, those that we have must be fairly shared. We have the strongest anti-discrimination laws in Europe. There is comprehensive monitoring of work forces. The Fair Employment Commission is securing agreements with employers to undertake affirmative action. Substantial compensation can be awarded to victims of discrimination —and it is. There are strong legal and economic sanctions against defaulting employers.

Those facts show that we are treating the fair employment problem—and there is one—with the utmost seriousness, as we should, and that we are making progress.

We have a better story to tell——

Mr. Roy Beggs (Antrim, East): We can all concur with the aims and objectives of fair employment, but will the Secretary of State undertake to look at the unreasonable costs—legal costs and the waste of very senior management time—in defending cases that are sometimes not proven? Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman seek to ensure that when a company has been taken to court on a case of discrimination that is not proven, compensation is given from Fair Employment Commission funds to compensate for the loss to the company?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I sympathise with the hon. Gentleman's earlier remarks. There is a heavy downside to the legislation in terms of costs to employers, but it is one which the House has felt it proper to impose, given the very grave background of discrimination in Northern Ireland in the past.

Such provisions have to be operated reasonably. It is absolutely essential that the commission and the tribunal should be independent of the Executive. I think, however,

[Sir Patrick Mayhew]

that a careful eye needs to be kept on the incidence of cases in which employers are brought virtually to the door of the court, only for the case to be dropped. We must look closely at the extent to which that is happening. I hear complaints about it, but I do not have the full facts and figures at the moment. We must strike a fair balance, always remembering the need for independence on the part of those who administer the jurisdiction.

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): This is a general problem, which exists not only in connection with fair employment legislation but in connection with equal opportunities legislation. Costs are imposed not only on private employers but on public bodies.

In the case of one school in my constituency, the education authority was left with legal costs of about £40,000 in connection with the defence of a wholly unmeritorious claim that had been supported by the Equal Opportunities Commission. There is surely a case for the commission or the public purse to award costs—not, perhaps, in every case, but in cases of unmeritorious claims. The Secretary of State will appreciate that, with regard to equal opportunities legislation, the special factor that he prayed in aid in his response to my hon. Friend the Member for Antrim, East (Mr. Beggs) does not apply.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I understand the strength of feeling on this point. It is notable that such a provision did not commend itself to the House when the legislation was strengthened a few years ago, but it is a point which bears scrutiny.

We have a better story to tell than was the case even a few years ago, and in America, in particular, we are telling it with advantage, especially through our excellent diplomatic posts, to which I pay tribute. Perhaps more valuable than anything, many more people are visiting Northern Ireland and seeing it for themselves.

What of the social scene? In June this year, I was able to announce a £24 million extension of the Making Belfast Work programme; this takes the total allocation of public funds to £124 million since 1988—on top of normal departmental spending—and is intended to help the most vulnerable groups in the most disadvantaged areas of Belfast. Those areas are both Catholic and Protestant.

Making Belfast Work meets needs wherever they arise. Our targeting social need programme is the central plank of Government strategy for promoting equality of opportunity and of treatment. It remains our third biggest public expenditure item. We will continue to attack the most deep-rooted problems in the most disadvantaged areas of the Province, by ensuring that assistance is focused where it is most needed.

We cannot hope to be spared all the effects of the worldwide recession, but accurate analysis of needs and the careful alignment of our resulting interventions can relieve the people of Northern Ireland from many adverse legacies and lead them to the enjoyment of more jobs, fairly shared, and a way of life far more worthy of their great qualities. Our economic and our social policies are harnessed in tandem to achieving those very objectives.

Yet there is one influence that pulls with cruel and savage force in the opposite direction. I restate the Government's attitude to terrorism. It will always be met with stern and unyielding resolution, by the Government and by the security forces alike. Its total elimination is an overriding objective. The Royal Ulster Constabulary and all the security forces will continue to have all the support they need. I know that their courage and professionalism command the admiration of us all.

This morning, I want to add my tribute to all the civilians who serve the security forces in any capacity. Today I note with especial disgust, as we all must, the brutal, loathsome murder of Mr. John Gibson of Glengormley, whose only crime was to work for a construction company that assists the police and the Army, among other things, to protect themselves against mortars thrown into bases. All our hearts go out to the family of that brave man.

Let there be no mistake: the security forces are hitting the terrorists hard. That is evidenced by the charging of 178 so-called loyalists and 105 republican paramilitaries with terrorist offences so far this year. The resolution and commitment of the police and the Army has been translated again and again into successes.

Mr. Clifford Forsythe (Antrim, South): I join the Secretary of State and the whole House in condemning the murder of Mr. Gibson, who lived in my constituency. We all pass on our sympathy to the whole family circle. This foul murder was carried out by members of the Provisional IRA, who have once again stained their hands with fresh blood as they seek to impose their version of the democratic process on the long-suffering people of Northern Ireland.

Another construction worker has been selected for ritual slaughter as part of the IRA's democratic process—a process which decrees, "If you can't convince or intimidate, you kill". We say to all terrorists that the people of Northern Ireland will not be intimidated, and will fight against terrorism until we have peace and stability there.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: The hon. Gentleman speaks with heartfelt eloquence, and no further words of mine are necessary, save to say how warmly that I endorse them.

I was mentioning the record of the security forces this year in bringing to justice terrorists from either side of the community. Examples of their successes in other fields include the interception of 3,000 lb of explosives——

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): Is it not also important that we bring to justice those people who have escaped to a foreign country? Does my right hon. and learned Friend share my disgust that an hon. Member is prepared to go to a foreign country to help a convicted terrorist to escape from British justice? Does not he agree that the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) will have provided comfort and succour to Noraid, the IRA's paymasters in America, on his recent visit there——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. Hon. Members will recall that, only a short while ago, Madam Speaker asked for speeches to be kept short because many hon. Members wished to speak. If we are to continue with long interventions, some hon. Members will miss out.

Mr. Riddick: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the Leader of the Opposition should withdraw the Labour Whip from the hon. Member for Brent, East?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I have noticed with dismay some of the representations that have been attributed to the hon.

Gentleman. I do not wish to say more about the necessary proceedings which are under way for the extradition of somebody who is serving a life sentence in the United States for a vile offence.

Mr. Ken Livingstone (Brent, East): Would the Secretary of State tell us which Minister authorised and instructed Government officials—civil servants—appearing on behalf of the Government in a court in America to refuse to answer questions under oath on 31 occasions?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I am not commenting further on the extradition proceedings. I have described the type of offence of which Mr. Smyth has been convicted and for which he is serving a life sentence, and I wish to say nothing about those proceedings.

Examples of the successes of the security forces include the interception of 3,000 lb of explosives near Portadown in August, the recovery of large quantities of arms explosives and ammunition in north Belfast in September, and the recovery of 70 lb of home-made explosives, firearms, mini-pipe bombs and a dozen arrests, all on the same day in October. In the past few days, the police and the Army have made important arrests and have recovered arms and explosives. There are many other examples.

Some such successes cannot, by their nature, be publicly acknowledged, but they play a vital role in deterring and defeating paramilitary gangsterism. The Chief Constable was right to remind the public in the past month that mass murder and massive destruction have been avoided by the cumulative seizure this year of 32,500 lb of bomb-making material, 130 weapons and 10,000 rounds of ammunition.

In addition, the Gardai have made a number of recent significant finds of arms, explosives and ammunition on its side of the Border. We have close collaboration with the Gardai, for which I am most grateful. Its finds include a large quantity of home-made explosives, with weapons and a rocket launcher in County Donegal in August, a substantial quantity of weapons in a training camp for terrorists in County Louth in September, and four separate finds of weapons, explosives and ammunition in as many days, also in County Louth in October.

But the police need help. It is the responsibility of every one of us, at every post and in every home in Northern Ireland, to contribute to the defeat of terrorism. The security forces stand between——

Mr. Ken Maginnis (Fermanagh and South Tyrone): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: In a second.

The security forces stand between decent, law-abiding people in the province and the ghastly alternative offered by the killers and bombers. I know the fear of intimidation and I know the strength of traditional attitudes, but let the true nature of terrorists never be forgotten.

Mr. Maginnis: Why refer only to the work of the RUC and the Garda Siochana? None of us questions the integrity of those two constabularies, and we are grateful for the work they do. Is it not rather the ambivalence and flirtation —at one remove, we are told—with Gerry Adams and hence with the IRA, the irridentist territorial claim, the lack of sincerity over extradition, pompous platitudes and generalisations, and the double-speak of the Irish Republic Government, which hinder normal relationships between the Irish Republic and Northern Ireland, and a more speedy resolution to the terrorism that besets us?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I cannot endorse that condemnation. From my experience over some 18 months, I believe that there is no daylight whatever between the two Governments in their commitment to the defeat and elimination of terrorism.

Mr. Maginnis: Are the Governments supporting extradition?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I understand that, in a short space of time, the necessary Bill will come forward. *[Laughter.]* I know that the hon. Gentleman's impatience over the question of extradition is one which I have shared. I have been able to speak with the Attorney-General in the south, and I know the nature of the problem that has confronted him. It is a technical one, and I confidently expect the Bill to come forward in the near future.

I was suggesting to the House that the true nature of terrorists should never be forgotten. There is no disguising their heartless brutality, and no justifying it by referring to their purpose. Those people, for example, lure a man out of his home by driving a familiar truck belonging to his friend into his driveway, shoot him dead, leave his children to discover their father and his seven-year-old son to telephone the police, while the children wait beside their father for the police to arrive. These are the people who bring a mother to the doorstep of her home, shoot her and leave her to die in front of her screaming children. These are the people who bomb town centres, homes, shops, schools, churches and hospitals, and call them economic targets. These are the people who gun down men with families while they are on their way to work, or while they are playing pool or walking with their friends. These people care nothing for the 100 children playing in an adventure park who were trapped during a bomb attack and who were left hysterical after the explosion. I take each of those examples from the crimes of these monsters only this year.

Bishop Edward Daly of Derry has tellingly said of the terrorists that by their deeds shall we know them. I believe that to these people—each of them—the whole House says, "You will make by these means not one inch of progress towards your political objectives in this democracy."

In this country, we are used to defending democracy and the rule of law. The price is always high, and always worth paying. We shall defend them in Northern Ireland, if necessary at infinite length. We shall, if necessary, go on and on. We say to the terrorists, "The choice for the future, for yourselves and for your suffering families, is yours and yours alone."

At the heart of our policy is our fundamental commitment to defending the democratic rights of the people of Northern Ireland in regard to their future in the Union. We shall always stand behind their democratic wishes.

Here, we must note the latest Labour think piece. It builds on the earlier options for a Labour Government. On page 111, we read:

"We reply first of all"—

to criticisms—

"that Northern Ireland, at present, is not a legitimate unit of democratic decision-making and rests on coercion."

[Sir Patrick Mayhew]

Is that an opinion which is held officially by the Labour party? I hope that we shall hear.

It is only fair to say that there is a rather engaging passage on page 3:

"Those familiar with Northern Ireland need not read chapter 2."

If the principal recommendation is based on the assertion that I have just read, readers familiar with Northern Ireland need read neither chapter 1 nor chapter 3 through to the end.

However, there is an undeniable need for political institutions in Northern Ireland that all parts of the community could support and in which they could all have greater confidence. With that in mind, the Government have set themselves to help the people of Northern Ireland to secure a comprehensive political accommodation, if possible extending to all the political relationships within Northern Ireland, to the North and the South, and between the peoples of these islands. We are determined to persevere with that. I am grateful for the strong support of the Irish Government in that endeavour.

Many people have been quick to write off the process. I do not agree with them. No responsible person could be happy with the status quo. The overwhelming majority of people in Northern Ireland want to see the problems resolved, want the uncertainties put behind them and want to see the politicians talk. I hear that constantly in my contacts throughout Northern Ireland, from people in the street, in the churches, from the business community and in people's homes.

After I visited Ballymena a fortnight or so ago—I am sorry that the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley), in whose constituency Ballymena is situated, is not present—the headline in the *Ballymena Times*, reporting on my visit, was:

"Ballymena tells Mayhew—start the talks again."

The Opsahl commission was established to encourage a public debate. It undertook the unique and valuable task of canvassing the views of a wide range of people and organisations in Northern Ireland. It suggests in its report that if the talks fail, the Government, in consultation with the Irish Government, should establish a commission to study the situation and to make recommendations for further consultation with the political parties and, if necessary, directly with the people of Northern Ireland.

But the talks have not failed. The process of dialogue is very much alive, and my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary is continuing his exploratory discussions with the parties. They have to be discreet and private; they cannot be out in the open if they are to have a chance of success. The opinion poll on the commission's report showed that a majority questioned in Northern Ireland believed in the importance of the talks, and we shall continue to promote them in every practical way.

For our part, we certainly share the desire to see greater responsibility returned to Northern Ireland's own locally elected representatives. Incidentally, that desire is enshrined in the Anglo-Irish Agreement. However, as the report recognises, for any new structures to be both fair and workable, they must command the widest possible support and allegiance in Northern Ireland. That means that other relationships must also be addressed. The best forum for that is one that involves the main constitutional parties and the two Governments.

Alas, the commission also suggested that the Government should open informal channels of communication with Sinn Fein to test its commitment to the constitutional process without resort to the justification of violence, and that they should persuade the IRA to move towards the de-escalation of violence and, eventually, a ceasefire. We want an end to violence as much as anyone does, and perhaps more than some do.

The Government's position on the matter is quite clear, Sinn Fein must end the violence and demonstrate its commitment to democratic constitutional politics. As I have said before, and as the hon. Member for Belfast, South (Rev. Martin Smyth) and the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) said only last week, it could then begin to earn a place at any future talks about the future of Northern Ireland.

Until then, there should be no doubt that the Government will not conduct talks or negotiations with anyone who perpetrates, threatens or supports the use of violence for political ends. Let there be just one message from these people: perpetrating and justifying violence are over for ever. Then, after due verification, a new chapter could unfold.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: The hon. Gentleman takes such an interest in Northern Ireland that I shall give way.

Mr. Winnick: Although I recognise what the Secretary of State rightly says about combating terrorism and about not giving in to it, does he agree that it is important to explore the latest thinking, albeit of Sinn Fein or the Provisional IRA, when we recognise that after 24 years of murders, they have not achieved by any means what they set out to achieve—a united Ireland, which they will never achieve through terrorism?

Therefore, was not the initiative of my hon. Friend the Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) right in at least exploring what is going on in the ranks of the leadership of Sinn Fein? As has been stated, if terrorism comes to an end—not a ceasefire, but a permanent end to the bombing and terrorising which have gone on for 24 years—Sinn Fein, on the basis of its elected representatives in Northern Ireland, would clearly have a place at the negotiating table.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I have always believed that the hon. Member for Foyle, who has a long and distinguished record of constitutional politics, is the best judge of whom he speaks to.

I have read the newspapers, as we all have, of those within the Provisional organisation who are sick of it all. I wish to do everything possible to endorse that very realistic reaction. I believe that, in time—I believe that it will be a shorter rather than a longer time—more and more of them will come to realise that the British Government, the Government of this democracy, will not give in. It is not a question of their being slow learners; we are not going to give in, and the British people would never permit us to do so.

There are a great many positive things to report about Northern Ireland. It is a sad side of life in Northern Ireland that many good things go unreported. One of the best of them is the calibre of the Northern Ireland civil service, by whom the public of Northern Ireland, I and my right hon. and hon. Friends are so staunchly served. With more than

14 years in the Government, I can say that I have never met higher general standards of ability, and nowhere have I met greater dedication.

Life for public servants in the small society of the Province can never be easy. For many, it can additionally be dangerous. I pay grateful tribute to them all. For us, their Ministers, it is a privilege to serve with their professional support the people—all the people—of Northern Ireland.

10.20 am

Mr. Kevin McNamara (Kingston upon Hull, North): Today is the first opportunity that the House has had properly to consider the momentous events that have taken place in Northern Ireland since the summer. The current political situation is confused, with statements issued daily by various protagonists. Some of the statements have been wholly reported, some partially reported and some totally misreported.

It would be helpful to the House if I were first to set out the principles of the Labour party's Irish policy, as espoused in resolutions that have been passed by the Labour party conference, national executive statements which have been approved by party conference, and statements that have been issued in party programmes and election manifestos. In doing so, I will be responding to invitations from various hon. Members from Northern Ireland in an early-day motion tabled yesterday.

All Labour party conferences have consistently condemned terrorist violence, without equivocation, from whatever quarter it has come. Whatever the alleged provocation, whatever the discrimination, whatever the fear, there is no justification for terrorist violence and killing. Violence will not cement the Union. It will not result in a united Ireland. It just produces stalemate, antagonism and more violence.

Equally, the Labour party expresses its unqualified support for the security forces in the impartial upholding of the rule of law. They have a difficult task, and they put their lives at risk to protect the community against the actions of a small minority of extremists. I wish to associate the Opposition with the comments of the Secretary of State about the recent and gruesome killing in Glengormley, and we send our condolences to the family of Mr. Gibson.

In 1981, the Labour party adopted the following policy statement by the NEC:

> "At the heart of our programme is a long and deeply held belief in the Labour party that Ireland should, by peaceful means and on the basis of consent, be united."

That aspiration is shared by the vast majority of Irish people. It is both a feasible and a proper stance for a democratic socialist party.

In 1987, a key policy statement by the NEC of the Labour party reiterated the commitment by consent, and asserted:

> "no group or party should or will be allowed to exercise a veto on political development or on policies designed to win consent. Labour's objective is to help unite a divided island so it can achieve and sustain economic prosperity and lasting peace."

In 1989, the NEC and the leader of the Labour party issued the final report of the party's policy review. In the report, we again reiterated our commitment to Irish unity by consent. To build the consent that is necessary for unity, the Labour party committed itself to

> "work with the political parties in Northern Ireland to establish a devolved power-sharing administration in Belfast."

We positively endorse proposals to establish an agreed system of devolved government, as specified in article 4 of the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

The Labour party supported the Government in the House in the debate on the Anglo-Irish Agreement. A motion supporting the agreement was passed with one of largest votes ever recorded in the House, of 473 to 47. The preamble to the treaty states that both Governments

> "recognise the need for continuing efforts to reconcile and acknowledge the rights of the two major traditions that exist in Ireland, represented by on the one hand those who wish for no change in the present status of Northern Ireland and on the other hand by those who aspire to a sovereign united Ireland achieved by peaceful means and through agreement."

In article 1 of the agreement, both Governments

> "affirm that any change in the status of Northern Ireland would only come about with the consent of a majority of the people of Northern Ireland . . . recognise that the present wish of the majority of Northern Ireland is for no change in the status of Northern Ireland . . . declare that if, in future, a majority of the people in Northern Ireland clearly wish for and formally consent to the establishment of a united Ireland, they will introduce and support in the respective Parliaments legislation to give effect to that wish."

Article 1 represents a binding international commitment on the British Government to legislate for a united Ireland if a majority in Northern Ireland so wish. The Labour party fully supports that commitment and will continue to do so, although we anticipate difficulties for its "50 per cent. plus 1" formula, a matter to which I shall return to later.

Article 1 does not define the constitutional status of Northern Ireland. In drafting the article, both Governments were anxious to avoid a dispute on definition of Northern Ireland's status. They came to the negotiations with different title deeds. Britain and the Republic both lay claim to sovereignty over Northern Ireland, Britain under section 75 of the Government of Ireland Act 1920 and subsequent legislation, Ireland under articles 2 and 3 of the Irish constitution.

The competing sovereignty claims and the divided allegiances within Northern Ireland which they represent still have not been resolved, yet they must be mutually and satisfactory resolved if we are to achieve a lasting peace. It is for that reason that the Labour party is opposed to the unilateral abandonment of either of the competing sovereignty claims. The unilateral repeal of section 75 of the Government of Ireland Act, as amended, or the unilateral abandonment of articles 2 and 3 of the Irish constitution would not address the underlying causes of the present conflict.

Mr. Trimble: I am curious about the reference that the hon. Gentleman makes to section 75 of the Government of Ireland Act 1920. Does he not appreciate that the repeal of section 75 would have no effect whatsoever?

Mr. McNamara: That is exactly why I say that neither of the competing sovereignty claims should be unilaterally abandoned. Both sovereignty claims should be on the negotiating table. Both Governments should be prepared to consider amending their respective sovereignty claims in the context of a wider agreement, which would secure widespread support throughout the island of Ireland and would help to resolve the conflicting national allegiances which exist in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Andrew Robathan (Blaby): I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his explanation of what I believe to be the rather confusing policy of the Labour party on Northern Ireland. Is he aware that the leader of the democratic left in

[Mr. Andrew Robathan]

the Dail has said that it is frightening that the spokesman for the major opposition party in Britain should be so ill-informed on the subject of Northern Ireland?

Mr. McNamara: If I had the political history of the leader of the democratic left of the Republic of Ireland, I would keep my mouth shut.

The starting point for the Labour party policy on Northern Ireland, and its ultimate objective, is reconciliation between the two communities which exist on the island of Ireland. It is only through reconciliation that we can ever hope for enduring peace. The Labour party recognises that the national question, and hence the border, is central to the conflict, and that only a resolution of that question can bring peace. It is from that belief that our commitment to a united Ireland follows.

The Labour party recognises that, historically, economically and politically, the people of both parts of Ireland were and are bound together, and that, despite their differences, they have more in common with each other than with other communities. It is out of a recognition by the Irish people of both traditions of their common history and interests that consent for a united Ireland must grow.

What do we mean by consent? No democratic Government can yield to a minority of its citizens a veto over relations with other sovereign states or over negotiations of co-operative agreements with such states. No Government can allow vociferous minorities to veto policies which it believes to be in the general interest and which are compatible with the rule of law and the civil rights of its citizens.

Hence the firmness with which the Government, supported by the Opposition, upheld the Anglo-Irish Agreement, which was imposed against the wishes of the majority in Northern Ireland, but with the support of the overwhelming majority in the United Kingdom as a whole.

Any democratic Government must accept that where a transfer of sovereignty is proposed which would directly affect the citizenship of a section of the population, those thus affected should have the determining say. Those are the tenets central to the concept of consent. Its application turns on the distinction between the exceptional circumstances of a prospective constitutional change involving a transfer of sovereignty, when it will apply, and the normal operation of the processes of government, when it may not.

No Labour Administration will allow its commitment to consent to be transformed into a veto on political progress towards seeking unification by consent. But the party's policy is unequivocal on the need for consent before a transfer of sovereignty to the Republic is made.

Those who argue that the requirement of consent should be abandoned conveniently ignore the problems that an Irish Government would face in implementing Irish unification in the absence of consent. Forced unification of the two parts of Ireland would defeat the primary objective of Labour's policy—the achievement of unity by consent.

Those, then, are the basic tenets by which the Labour party examines and states its policy objectives and examines the day-to-day events and changes in the political scene which take place in Northern Ireland and within these islands. It is on that basis that we shall judge any measures that the Government may introduce. Thus, if we believe that proposals introduced in the House are integrationist and seek to tighten the bond between Northern Ireland and Britain administratively, legislatively or in the procedures of the House, or if the Government seek to pretend that Northern Ireland is purely and exclusively British, such proposals will be firmly and vigorously opposed.

However, while the policy of the British Labour party is to support the advance of Irish unity by consent, we are not paternalists. The Labour party, in opposition and in government, would happily accept any agreement freely reached by the parties in Ireland, north and south, which would gain widespread acceptance throughout the island of Ireland.

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): Will the hon. Gentleman anticipate, or say that he does not want to anticipate, what would be the reaction of the Labour party if the House considered establishing a Select Committee on Northern Ireland? Would he regard that as something to be welcomed, something to be opposed, or something that he would like to consider when it comes up?

Mr. McNamara: The hon. Gentleman is anticipating me.

It is for the reason I have given that we supported the Brooke initiative. We welcome the statement in November 1990 by the then Secretary of State that

"the British Government has no selfish strategic or economic interest in Northen Ireland."

We did so because that statement seemed to establish a neutral stance on the part of the British Government in the discussions that were taking place.

As late as November 1992, the present Secretary of State went still further, when he asserted:

"The British Government is not guided by any blueprint or masterplan leading to some pre-selected outcome of our choice."

We supported the three-strand structure of talks, which recognised the three central relationships that had to be addressed—the relationship between Britain and Ireland, that between the Republic and Northern Ireland and that within Northern Ireland. We also supported the negotiating principle that nothing was agreed until everything was agreed. The answer that the Secretary of State gave yesterday when I asked whether that principle still stood was at best equivocal.

The Government have abandoned that three-strand structure in favour of bilateral talks between the Government and the Republic, and on an individual basis with the various Northern Ireland parties. The North-South discussions seem to have been suspended, but we welcome the reports, accurate or otherwise—we hope that they are accurate—that representatives of the Ulster Unionist party are to go and state their position to the Government of the Republic. However, as I understand it, they will not discuss or negotiate any formal North-South-relationship at this stage.

Sadly, the prospect that the British Government will have a constructive role to play in the resumption of talks has been dramatically transformed by the decision of the Ulster Unionist party to support the Prime Minister, and the decision of the Prime Minister to seek the support of the UUP, for the course of this Parliament.

Mr. Maginnis: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. McNamara: This is the fourth and last time.

Mr. Maginnis: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way, despite his reluctance to do so.

Is it not the case that, if one argues from the wrong premise, the logic of one's conclusions will be called into question? Does not the hon. Gentleman realise that, during the 1992 talks process, the Ulster Unionist party put constructive, conciliatory and workable proposals on the table, while the Social Democratic and Labour party and the Irish Government sought to escape from the talks process without making any such contribution?

Mr. McNamara: We can form a judgment and answer the hon. Gentleman's question when the Secretary of State publishes the documents which form the basis of the hon. Gentleman's statement. Only then can we reach that conclusion. *[Interruption.]* I said that I would give way the same number of times as the Secretary of State. He gave way four times, and I have done precisely the same.

Mr. Robathan: That is very decent of the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. McNamara: That is the sort of fellow I am—a very decent sort of fellow.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer said:

"Whoever is an enemy of John Major is an enemy of mine"—

thereby throwing his cloak of security over the head of the First Lord of the Treasury. At the same time, the Leader of the Ulster Unionists warned all other contenders to the throne:

"it would be unwise to assume that our support for John Major would automatically transfer to a replacement."

That must have struck terror into the hearts of the Prime Minister's opponents within his party. With supporters such as these, the Prime Minister should remember what Lenin said of the Kerensky Government:

"I support it, like a rope supports a hanging man."

That, of course, is precisely what the Ulster Unionists did to the last Labour Government.

The Government have put themselves in hock to the Ulster Unionists. That was an opportunistic but myopic move by the leader of the Ulster Unionists. It has forced the Government to revise their neutral stance and to speak again with a forked tongue on Ireland—the habit of the Conservative and Unionist party for more than a century. Gone are the days when the former Secretary of State could say that the British Government had no selfish, strategic or economic interest in Northern Ireland . The Government have a basic selfish interest—that of preserving their majority.

The Government party has resurrected its former name —the Conservative and Unionist party. That is a dramatic alteration in the Government's stance. The Government have lost all credibility for their claim to even-handedness in Ireland, Britain, Europe and the United States of America. Their neutrality has been blown. They now stand four square behind the Union.

The Government have said that there is no deal, not even a relationship with the Ulster Unionists. The Prime Minister has declared:

"Nothing was asked for, nothing was offered and nothing was given."—[*Official Report*, 23 July 1993; vol. 229, c. *631*.]

If that is so, it is curious that the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) made it so plain that only the Prime Minister would do as leader of the Conservative party, and that other contenders should not automatically expect support. The right hon. Member for Lagan Valley must be the first person to have threatened to withdraw support from a deal that does not exist.

During the next Session, we shall see the price that is being paid for Unionist support. Have the Government changed their position on the establishment of a Northern Ireland Select Committee? In the Government's submission to the Select Committee on Procedure in 1990, the then Secretary of State argued that a Committee should be established with the

"support from elected representatives on both sides of the community."

In Febreary this year, the Secretary of State affirmed that it should be only part of a wider political statement. Yet, by 26 July—by strange coincidence shortly after the Maastricht vote—the Leader of the House declared that the possibility of a Northern Ireland Select Committee was under review. Perhaps the Minister will tell us whether the Government believe that a Northern Ireland Committee should be established without without the support of the Labour party or of the SDLP—yes or no?

The most imporant concern of all, however, following the Government's about-turn, is the future of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. There are two key issues. The first is the possibility of an amendment to article 1.

The Secretary of State, in reply to the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley), asserted that he was seeking the amendment of article 1 of the Anglo-Irish Agreement so that it would state specifically and categorically that Northern Ireland is part of the United Kingdom. The Government have refused to state publicly the alternative wording, but any such alteration would need the consent of the Irish Government.

It is significant that article 1 of the Anglo-Irish Agreement is the only article of the agreement that does not come under the review provisions of the treaty. Is that the subject of a current round of talks with the Republic?

As the Secretary of State, in his interview in the *Belfast Telegraph*, did not rule out a possible round of talks about the constitutional status of Northern Ireland, he must say whether that is what he seeks. If so, will the Secretary of State tell us what wording he proposes?

The second issue is whether the British Government will allow the Anglo-Irish Agreement to wither on the vine. The right hon. Member for Lagan Valley, in an interview following his accommodation with the Prime Minister—that deal that dare not speak its name—claimed that the Anglo-Irish Agreement would become just as meaningless as the Sunningdale agreement, which was still around somewhere in the United Nations with a thin layer of dust on it.

Is that the attitude of Her Majesty's Government? Will the Secretary of State give a clear and unequivocal statement that the Anglo-Irish Agreement and the intergovernmental conference will proceed with frequent and regular meetings? Will the Secretary of State repudiate any suggestion that the Government will downgrade the Anglo-Irish Agreement? Will the Government confirm their continued and unequivocal support for that agreement?

Those are important questions, not only because of our relationship with the Republic but because it would be wrong if the Ulster Unionists had been given a false prospectus by the British Government about the support they could get.

Instead of concocting secret deals with the UUP, the Government should be tackling the realities in Northern Ireland. We must confront the fact that within Ireland there are two communities, with allegiances to two different

[Mr. McNamara]

nation states. In Northern Ireland, 43 per cent. of the population are cultural Catholics and 57 per cent. of the population are cultural Protestants.

The divisions between the two communities are becoming more stark. In Northern Ireland, half the population now lives in wards that are either 90 per cent. Catholic or 90 per cent. Protestant. Often, in apparently mixed wards the two communities are divided by so-called "peace lines". The Protestant community is retreating east of the Bann and out of urban areas. That regrettable segregation can only heighten sectarian antagonisms and prejudices.

We must also recognise that, in Northern Ireland, the security forces are overwhelmingly dominated by one section of the community. I am not attempting to deny the intimidation which Catholics who seek to join the security forces encounter, but, no matter how professional security forces are—the majority are professional and impartial, and we pay tribute to their work—the current imbalance breeds suspicion and alienation. In the eyes of many of the present minority, they are policed by another nation.

Those are the harsh realities which have to be confronted—the conflicting allegiances, the divisions within the community and the problems associated with the enforcement of the rule of law. Until they are properly tackled, there will be no lasting and peaceful settlement of the conflict.

I shall now discuss a subject which cannot have escaped anyone's attention during the past few weeks—the report which my hon. Friend the Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) made to the Taoiseach and Tanaiste of the Republic of Ireland about his talks with the President of Sinn Fein and their statement of September 1993, which stated:

"We are convinced from our discussions that a process can be designed to lead to agreement among the divided people of this island, which will provide a solid basis for peace. Such a process would obviously be designed to ensure that any new agreement that might emerge respects the diversity of our different traditions and earns their allegiance and agreement."

That report is now with the Irish Government. We understand that their conclusions on the report will be discussed at the European summit, and that it might be referred to at the next Anglo-Irish conference. Like everyone else, we shall wait to hear the outcome of those talks and the details before making a judgment, just as we wait to pass judgment on the UUP's "Blueprint for Stability", which the leader of the party, the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley, informed us he has been discussing with the Prime Minister in secret since April; and just as we await with interest the details of the DUP's secret document, "Breaking the Log-jam".

However, I hope that, from all those documents, and especially from the document of my hon. Friend the Member for Foyle, a process can be designed to lead to an agreement for the divided people of Ireland that will provide a solid basis for peace. Such an opportunity, if it exists, should not be lightly cast aside. The proposals should be considered on their merits when they are made public. Comments should not be made on the basis of alleged leaks to newspapers, but only when we see the precise text. For the prize that is being offered is peace.

It would be regrettable if anyone's preconceptions and prejudices were so great that they were not prepared at least to examine with care whatever proposals are made. At the end of the day, it might be decided that they are impracticable and unacceptable, or alternatively they may present real opportunities for peace and reconciliation. I hope that they do, but that is a judgment which we should withhold until we see what has been proposed.

Mr. Riddick: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. McNamara: With the greatest respect, I will not.

Mr. Riddick: Why not?

Mr. McNamara: Because I do not want to.

As I have said, the Labour party would prefer the parties to come to an agreement that would attract widespread support throughout the island of Ireland. However, given the current political situation, regrettably such a major breakthrough appears to be a remote possibility.

In those circumstances, it is for the two Governments to recognise the responsibilities that they share. The two Governments must make proposals to break the impasse which exists if they can make no progress in the talks, while constantly bearing in mind the fact that any transfer of sovereignty must have the consent of the peoples of Northern Ireland, as agreed under article 1 of the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

We believe, however, that they should go into negotiations, not in the spirit of exclusivity and not by setting down preconditions, but as friendly neighbours, sharing these islands and accepting that we share a common problem in the island of Ireland, which spills over into Britain. Both Governments must acknowledge their common duty to the people of these islands to search for a lasting peace settlement.

The Governments have a responsibility to break down the barriers between the peoples of Ireland. They must work towards mutual recognition of each community's rights, traditions and differing allegiances. A framework for peace must accord both traditions equal respect and integrity.

If the parties fail to reach an agreement, the two Governments must work within, or without, the framework of the Anglo-Irish Agreement to forge institutions that will ultimately secure the allegiance and participation of both communities, and which will respect the integrity of both the traditions and the aspirations of the people of Northern Ireland.

It is vital that such structures are established to encourage greater co-operation and understanding between the two communities. Those institutions must be just and durable now, and they have to be equally just and durable if there is to be any change of sovereignty under article 1 of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. Those institutions must be in place to avoid a situation in which we merely replace one discontented and alienated nationalist minority in Northern Ireland with another discontented and alienated Unionist minority in the island of Ireland. Such a scenario would simply alter the site of the conflict; it would not solve it.

I think that all hon. Members would accept that the status quo is unacceptable. That is all the more reason for the parties to return to the talks process without preconditions, but if that proves impossible, the two Governments must not give up the search for a solution. It would be an abdication of their duty to do so. The British

and Irish Governments must be creative. They must accept their shared responsibilities, and construct a framework for peace within these islands.

10.49 am

Sir James Kilfedder (North Down): I must commend the Secretary of State for what he has done up to the present time. I thought that he spoke with optimism, but he does not accept that term. I think that he said that he speaks from hope based on reason, or reasoned hope. I have no doubt whatsoever that the words that he expressed in the House today will find a response in the hearts and minds of the vast majority of people in Northern Ireland, who will never capitulate to terrorism. The Government—through the right hon. and learned Gentleman—have made it clear that they never intend to capitulate to the IRA or to any so-called loyalist paramilitary organisation. The people of Northern Ireland have every right to take hope from what has been said in this debate. I adopt the words of the Secretary of State—I "encourage" the politicians and people of Northern Ireland to think and talk about, and seek, reconciliation.

I do not accept that there are two communities in Northern Ireland. As far as I am concerned, there is only one. Perhaps it is divided, on the basis of religion, culture or history, but there is only one community and we must do everything to keep it together. That is why I have always objected to the proposition that parts of Northern Ireland should be pushed into the Irish Republic because they are republican or nationalist. I want to keep Northern Ireland intact and to see its people, with their great talent, coming together and in a time of peace, to give a future to the young people and generations not yet born.

I am sure that other hon. Members feel as I do. It hurts me deeply to hear on the radio, or see on television or in the press, that another bloody murder has been committed by the evil terrorists in Northern Ireland. Last night, another innocent victim was slaughtered and the IRA took pride in claiming responsibility for his death. Only last week I was distressed to listen to a Roman Catholic mother bewailing the killing of her son. She was in great anguish. For her and for all the other bereaved mothers and fathers, whether Protestant or Catholic, the decent people in the Province of Ulster express their heartfelt sympathy.

I appeal to the terrorists, whether Protestant or republican: if they have any heart, they should desist. They should cease their violence to allow the people of Northern Ireland, the remainder of the United Kingdom and the Irish Republic to live in peace and to provide a way forward. I am appealing to those men of violence from this House, but I do not suppose that they will listen to reason, as they have already rejected appeals from the clergy—I suppose that they are not open to reason. They live on extortion, and their power and wealth will come to an end when peace comes to Northern Ireland. There must be some men and women, however, who are connected with the various terrorist organisations and who can give information which could bring peace and could certainly send many of the terrorists to prison.

I have the utmost praise for the police and the Army. In difficult circumstances they have displayed remarkable dedication and courage. The terrorists wish to make them appear biased or partisan to divide our community in Northern Ireland into two bitter camps because they thrive on hatred. The more poison that is spread in our community, the longer the terrorists will survive. However, the security forces, the police and the Irish Regiment—formerly the Ulster Defence Regiment—continue to do their job, for the benefit of the entire community. Everyone in Northern Ireland must understand this message—the security forces are there to protect them from the men of violence.

I am convinced that constitutional politicians must continue to talk together, in the hope that political progress can be made. I hope that the Unionists' elected representatives will not sit back purely on the basis of a slender Government majority and do nothing, as that would be a waste of a couple of precious years. As the Secretary of State has said, the time has come for people to talk informally and to hold discussions to find out whether we can achieve some rapprochement which would enable progress to be made and, eventually, peace to come to Northern Ireland, and with it the jobs that we all seek.

The latest unemployment figures show a slight reduction. None the less, the number of jobless people remains a matter of deep concern to me, especially the number of people out of work in my constituency of North Down, where many school leavers and graduates are unable to find jobs. I therefore urge the Government to make even greater efforts to induce investors to come to North Down. Officials, and perhaps even Ministers, seem to look upon my area as a place of great prosperity. They should visit people's homes, from Bangor to Dundonald —as I do—where they will meet young people and adults who are desperate for work but can find no work at all. We need high-tech industries in North Down and I hope that the Minister will heed my plea.

I have the utmost sympathy for young people who are unable to find work, but I have no sympathy for youngsters who terrorise senior citizens in their homes at night. I have heard many reports from elderly people and from others whose lives have been made a misery by a hooligan element. In one recent case, graffiti were written across an elderly lady's house, her window was smashed, rubbish was thrown into her front garden and youngsters urinated at her front door. That happened while she was mourning the loss of her dear husband.

I do not know what can be done, but we certainly need more police in North Down. There is far too much drunkenness, hooliganism and crime in Bangor and elsewhere in North Down. I have no doubt that that also applies to other parts of the Province. My area needs more police to deal with the criminals and vandals and I look to the Home Secretary to make it easier for them to pursue and convict wrongdoers.

At the beginning of today's business I presented a petition, signed by almost 5,000 people from the Bangor area who are protesting most vigorously, as I do, at the intended closure of the Banks residential home in Bangor. The Eastern health and social services board has promised a period of consultation, but it is a bogus exercise because the bureaucracy has already decided to close the home. I repeat my plea to the Secretary of State to intervene to prevent this purpose-built home being closed and the residents being dispersed. It is a beautiful home for senior citizens and the staff are wholly dedicated. I make the same plea for another state residential home for the elderly, Enler house in Dundonald, which has not been in existence very long. I recently spoke to the residents who are, rightly, angry at the callousness of the Eastern health and social services board.

[Sir James Kilfedder]

I urge the Secretary of State to bring pressure to bear on the board. Its headquarters need to be carefully examined. In a statement to the House yesterday, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health said that we could make substantial savings in administrative costs by streamlining management in the health service. I hope that the Government will examine the overweight bureaucracy of the Eastern health board. Its costs could be slashed and the savings used for the benefit of the people of North Down. Is it not a disgrace that five wards in the Ulster hospital in Dundonald have been closed by the Eastern health board while patients are being diverted to hospitals in central Belfast where the population has fallen? The population of North Down constitutes about 47 per cent. of the entire Eastern health board area. It is time for greater democracy in the running of the health service.

Many other hon. Members wish to participate in this important debate so I conclude by repeating my plea that everyone in Northern Ireland should get involved in trying to find a solution to our problems in the Province.

11.1 am

Mr. John D. Taylor (Strangford): It is good that we have this all-day debate on Northern Ireland, but unfortunately it takes place against a background of continuing violence across Northern Ireland, loyalist and republican. That is not conducive to a good debating atmosphere, but it is important to place on record our continuing sympathy with the people in both communities who have suffered grievously at the hands of terrorists and our rejection of paramilitary activity by republican and loyalist groups.

Violence will change nothing in Northern Ireland. If one Catholic is killed today or one Protestant is killed tomorrow, there will still remain 1 million Protestants and 600,000 Catholics who will nevertheless have to learn to live and work together some day for the good of Northern Ireland.

I welcome the Secretary of State's positive speech. It outlined the great advances being made and the benefits being enjoyed in Northern Ireland. Again, it is important to place on record the fact that Protestants and Roman Catholics are enjoying those benefits. We all rejoice in Northern Ireland's economy.

Of course, Northern Ireland is part of the United Kingdom because of international agreements and because that is the will of the people of Northern Ireland and Great Britain. In Northern Ireland, some 30 per cent. of the people vote nationalist—much the same percentage as in Scotland. Of those 30 per cent., 20 per cent. vote for the Social Democratic and Labour party and 10 per cent. vote for Sinn Fein. Thirty per cent. vote nationalist but 70 per cent. do not.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) mentioned religion and cited various figures. Incidentally, as he was only 26th in the recent shadow Cabinet elections, may I commend him on the way in which he held his seat as Labour's Front-Bench spokesman on Northern Ireland, which teaches us in the Ulster Unionist party something about the views of the leader of the British parliamentary Labour party. I have no doubt that the hon. Gentleman's reappointment has been received with delight and glee by the Tories.

Only 30 per cent. of the people of Northern Ireland are nationalists. We must compare that with the fact that 40 per cent. of the people of Northern Ireland are Catholic. A recent census revealed that just under 40 per cent.—approximately 39·8 per cent.—declared themselves to be Roman Catholic. If 40 per cent. are Catholic but only 30 per cent. vote for the nationalist parties, one in four of the Roman Catholic community is not voting for the two main united Ireland parties. Catholic opposition to the SDLP—to judge from recent comments, the hon. Member for South Down (Mr. McGrady) is especially worried about that—is likely to increase if the SDLP emerges as being more closely linked with the pan-nationalist front, with the IRA and Sinn Fein, committed to achieving a united Ireland or nothing. That, of course, is the message which has emerged in recent weeks.

Statistics on religion are regularly reported in the English press. Following publication of the 1991 census, the *Financial Times* announced that Protestants made up only 53 per cent. of the population of Northern Ireland although only 39 per cent. had stated that they were Roman Catholic. What about the remaining percentage? Thirty nine per cent. declared themselves to be Roman Catholic and 61 per cent. did not describe themselves as such.

When we investigated that peculiar report in the *Financial Times*, we discovered that the report had merely added the Presbyterians, the Anglicans and the Methodists but wholly ignored the 120,000 people who comprise about 7 per cent. of the population and who are mainly evangelical Protestants or fundamentalists, such as members of the Brethren, Baptist, Pentecostal or Free Presbyterian churches. In other words, in order to state that the population of Northern Ireland was now only 53 per cent. Protestant, the *Financial Times* had decided that even the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) was no longer a Protestant. That proves how foolish some of the articles on religion in the English newspapers are.

More recently, an article by Walter Ellis in *The Times* stated that Belfast had a population of 400,000 which was now 50 per cent. Catholic. In fact, the recent census revealed that the population of Belfast, far from being 400,000, is now only 280,000, of which only 40 per cent. declared themselves to be Catholic. Likewise, Mr. Ellis stated that the Malone road area now had a majority of Catholics, whereas statistics clearly show that the Malone road area is 25 per cent. Catholic.

Such poorly researched articles do little credit to *The Times* or the *Financial Times*, and one wonders why they delight in publishing such incorrect figures. Sometimes I think that there is a sectarian background to such articles. We certainly found that in the speech of the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North. The articles imply that if one is a Catholic, one must be a united Irelander. I am trying to convey to the House the fact that Northern Ireland is 40 per cent. Catholic but that only 30 per cent. vote for the nationalist parties. That means that one in four Catholics is not voting for the SDLP or Sinn Fein.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): The right hon. Gentleman is talking about the number of Catholics who are liable to vote for the Union, but has he any information on how many Catholics are actively involved in the affairs of the Ulster Unionist parties?

Mr. John D. Taylor: The Catholics who do not vote for the nationalist parties vote for a range of parties such as the

Alliance party, the Ulster Unionist party in parts of Northern Ireland and the Democratic Unionist party. I have heard the hon. Member for Antrim, North claim that he receives support from Catholic voters in north Antrim——

Rev. William McCrea (Mid-Ulster): And in Mid-Ulster.

Mr. John D. Taylor: And also in Mid-Ulster.

One cannot give figures to show how many Catholics vote for those parties in each constituency, but the overall figures are important. One in four Catholics in Northern Ireland today are not voting for united Ireland parties. That figure is likely to increase the more the SDLP ceases to be seen as a social democratic party and aligns itself more closely with its friends in the IRA. Many moderate Catholics do not like that tendency in politics in Northern Ireland.

Dr. Joe Hendron (Belfast, West): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. On behalf of the people I represent and the people of Northern Ireland, I deeply resent the remarks made by the right hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor) about the SDLP and our friends in the IRA. That is not only inflammatory; it is an absolutely disgraceful remark. I ask you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to ask him to withdraw those remarks.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The right hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor) is responsible for his own speech.

Mr. John D. Tayor: Of course what I meant was the SDLP and its friends in the political wing of the IRA—Sinn Fein—Mr. Gerry Adams and his friends in the SDLP. That is part of the pan-nationalist front.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Although you have reminded the House that we are responsible for the content of our own speeches with regard to the situation in Northern Ireland, for anyone to describe anyone in this House as a friend of the IRA or of Provisional Sinn Fein would be a grave error and it should be on the record that that is not acceptable to this House.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It is still a matter for the right hon. Member for Strangford. On reflection he may wish to withdraw his comment.

Mr. John D. Taylor: I will certainly not do that, because there is a pan-nationalist front and the SDLP is working closely with Sinn Fein, which is the political wing of the IRA. We must not run away from those realities.

Dr. Hendron: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Adams lives in my territory of Belfast, West. On the only occasion I can remember the right hon. Member for Strangford entering west Belfast, he had about 200 members of the British Army with him. I should like the right hon. Gentleman or anyone else to show me the evidence of a pan-nationalist movement in west Belfast or north Belfast.

My leader is speaking to the leader of Sinn Fein for the purpose of achieving peace. That is the reason. When we use words like pan-nationalist, we are going down the road of supporting loyalist paramilitary action and that leads to murder and death on our streets. In the past seven or eight weeks, 30 children have been left without a parent. On a number of occasions, the right hon. Member for Strangford has used such language.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has made his point. No doubt the right hon. Member for Strangford is listening to the hon. Member for Belfast, West (Dr. Hendron). As I have already said, the right hon. Member for Strangford makes his own speech. I have already said that he may consider, on reflection, withdrawing his comment. However, he has said that he will not do that. It is a matter for him to decide.

Mr. John D. Taylor: I have made the point quite clearly. I am trying to develop the point about the increasing number of Catholics who reject the kind of politics represented by those from the SDLP who have recently spoken and by those who vote for Sinn Fein in Northern Ireland.

That is good news for Northern Ireland because we want a greater agreement between the Protestant and Roman Catholic communities in Northern Ireland about our future within the United Kingdom. We want fair play, equal opportunity and the sharing of responsibility in the administration of all aspects of the machinery of the state in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Winnick: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. John D. Taylor: No.

As we look ahead, we cannot wait two, three, four, or five more years for political progress in Northern Ireland. Violence is around us and it raises the political temperature as we have just seen from the hon. Member for Belfast, West (Dr. Hendron). We must create institutions in which people from all traditions can play their part in the administration of Northern Ireland.

We have had round table talks for nearly two years. They have involved the various political parties in Northern Ireland and the sovereign Governments of the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland. The British Conservative party supported those round table talks even though it was, at the same time, totally opposed to round table talks in Scotland about the future of Scotland.

Thirty per cent. of the people vote nationalist in Scotland, but when it was suggested that the various political parties, including the Labour party and the Liberal Democrats—it is noticeable that not one Liberal Democrat Member is attending this Northern Ireland debate today; even though the Liberal Democrats claim to be great supporters of the alliance party in Northern Ireland, they have shown no interest in this debate—should be involved in round table talks in Scotland, the Conservative party rejected that, claiming that such talks would never achieve anything and that it could never reach agreement with the nationalists and Liberal Democrats. If round table talks cannot succeed in Scotland, they are even less likely, with the background of terrorist violence, to reach a successful conclusion in Northern Ireland.

Most parties—the SDLP, the DUP and even apparently now Sinn Fein, the Ulster Unionists and the Alliance party—have produced proposals for the future of Northern Ireland and its administration. The one institution which, after two years of talking, has failed to reach any conclusions is the Northern Ireland Office and Her Majesty's Government. One would have thought that, after two years of listening to the views of all the political parties of Northern Ireland, the Government would have recognised their responsibility to govern and reach their decisions. However, we still wait in a vacuum for the Government's proposals on the future of Northern Ireland.

[Mr. John D. Taylor]

I return to my theme that more and more Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland are thinking alike. Day after day in my constituency, I hear the same criticisms from Catholics that I hear from Protestants. The hon. Member for North Down (Sir J. Kilfedder) referred to a residential home which is about to be closed in Bangor. We have problems with regard to hospital provision in Strangford and North Down. The Eastern health board will not comment about that. That is the level of democracy that we have in Northern Ireland. The people of Northern Ireland and their elected politicians have no come-back because quangos can simply state that they will say nothing.

We have no say in our affairs. The people on the ground —Catholics and Protestants—resent that in equal terms. Whether they be Catholics or Protestants, they want a say in the decision-making process in Northern Ireland. We must move quickly and not wait another two or five years. We must challenge the Government to produce their proposals.

I appeal to the SDLP in particular, as the main political force for nationalism in Northern Ireland, to recognise that Northern Ireland is in the United Kingdom not just because of international agreements, but because most people want it to be within the United Kingdom. It is the SDLP's responsibility to work with the majority community to bring forward the best possible structures of government and administration for Northern Ireland within the framework of the United Kingdom. I hope that the SDLP will stop looking towards the political wing of the IRA and will look towards its Unionist neighbours in Northern Ireland.

What do we need? First, we need a Select Committee in this House for Northern Ireland. Most commentators, even those in the Republic of Ireland, say that the case for such a Committee is irrefutable. Leading articles and comments in the press and media in Dublin state that the case for a Select Committee for Northern Ireland has been won. We appeal to hon. Members to follow through the logic of the debate that has taken place over the past two years about the need for a Select Committee and try to have one approved and introduced at the earliest possible moment.

Such a Select Committee would be the first step towards giving the people of Northern Ireland, through their elected representatives—be they DUP, SDLP or Ulster Unionists —the right to ask questions, through a Select Committee structure, of Ministers from the Northern Ireland Office who perhaps do not want the experience of a Select Committee before which they would for the first time be forced to answer for their decisions. Of course, senior civil servants are probably even less enthusiastic about having a Select Committee because, for the past 20 years, they have been able to administer Northern Ireland without being answerable to anyone for their decisions. That would be the first step towards creating a democracy for Northern Ireland—the formation of a Select Committee on Northern Ireland.

Secondly, we require the abolition of the Order in Council system of creating legislation for the Province of Northern Ireland. Under that system, major items of legislation are introduced in the House and debated for only 90 minutes, 89 minutes being taken up by the Secretary of State and the Labour party spokesman, with one minute usually left for the SDLP, the DUP and the Ulster Unionists to share among themselves. That is criminal. That never happened even in the worst days of Stalinism in the Soviet Union. It is not democracy. We are not allowed to change one word in those laws. We are not allowed to amend them or to table amendments; they are passed in 90 minutes flat.

One major item of legislation—the privatisation of Northern Ireland Electricity, which was opposed by many parties in Northern Ireland—went through. In 1986, we had a major item of legislation, the education order, which will affect the education of our children for generations to come. There were about 300 clauses in that order and we were not entitled to table one amendment. That is an iniquitous system of parliamentary procedure. We appeal to the Government and to the Labour party spokesman to try to improve the democratic and parliamentary mechanisms to assist the people of Northern Ireland.

Mr. Maginnis: The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) does not want to do that.

Mr. Taylor: That does not matter. We still appeal to him because there must be some democracy in the heart of the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North. I know that he has some shady friends.

Mr. McNamara: Of course we want to see that system altered. That is why we urge the right hon. Gentleman to come to an agreement so that he can have a devolved Government of power sharing in Northern Ireland, where he can discuss each and every one of those measures to his heart's content and every amendment that he wants within his own devolved Assembly.

Mr. Taylor: Of course, Members of Parliament for the United Kingdom, be they from Scotland, Wales, England or Northern Ireland, be there devolution or not, would still be here in their national Parliament in the House of Commons, and Northern Ireland Members will continue to be here in the House of Commons, be there devolution or not. I thank the hon. Gentleman for his response. Although it did not go the whole way, he has none the less been more helpful than he has been throughout the debate, so that is progress. We will appeal to his heart even further, perhaps, as we proceed. *[Interruption.]* Did hon. Members prompt the hon. Gentleman? I am sorry, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but someone else is taking credit for the shift in the hon. Gentleman's position.

That brings me to devolution. Of course we want some form of devolution in Northern Ireland—at least I do. We want to see the Northern Ireland people—Catholic and Protestant, nationalist and Unionist, SDLP, DUP and whatever other parties are elected to a devolved institution in Northern Ireland—playing their full part in the administration of the state.

Mr. Winnick: Power sharing?

Mr. Taylor: Someboy is shouting some words. I do not know what they mean.

Mr. Winnick: I was asking from a seated position—I apologise and now do so from a standing position—whether the Unionists have changed their view about power sharing over the past 20 years. Does the right hon. Gentleman recognise that, whatever he might have said earlier about the way in which people vote or do not vote according to religion, there are two separate communities

in Northern Ireland? It is a fact of life. Therefore, is there not a responsibility on the majority community to share power with the minority community, and likewise for the minority community to co-operate with the majority community?

Mr. Taylor: Of course. I thought that that was generally understood. There has been a change in our position on that matter for many years. Before 1972, we certainly had a majority form of government. I served as a Home Affairs Minister in that Government. It was a majority form of government. That system was removed. There has been a movement in the thinking of the majority party of Northern Ireland, which is that we need some kind of devolved Assembly, perhaps based on a committee structure similar to what we have in the European Parliament, in which Catholics, Protestants, Unionists and nationalists would play their part in departmental committees administering the various departments of government.

That is what we call responsibility sharing, not power sharing. Power sharing was in the failed Sunningdale agreement whereby people were appointed to the Executive or, in other words, to the Cabinet by a Secretary of State and not by the elected representatives of the people of Norther Ireland. That is undemocratic in essence and we do not approve it. However, we certainly approve Catholics and Protestants, and Unionists and nationalists working together in a responsibility-sharing mechanism in each department of government. That is the way forward.

The more we can involve what the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) refers to as the two communities—I would not go so far as to say that there are two communities—and the more that we involve people of the different religions and the different political aspirations in the administration of their state for the good of their community and for the good of their people, the more we can isolate the terrorists who currently receive some support from those communities.

We want more responsibility sharing in Northern Ireland, with all religions playing their full part in the administration of the state. With that, we want—unfortunately, for practical reasons it must be unparalleled—more power back to local government in Northern Ireland. One cannot go ahead immediately with more powers for local government until one knows what powers and responsibilities any Stormont Assembly would have. There might be some local government measures that one would wish to concentrate on a regional basis with the Stormont devolved Assembly, and there might be many others that one would want to devolve further to the smaller 26 district councils in the Province.

Again, that requires urgent attention because the people in each district council and borough in Northern Ireland are totally fed up with their lack of ability to influence local authority matters in their towns and villages. They have no power whatsoever and they strongly resent that. That resentment is shared equally by Catholics and Protestants alike. If more power were given to local government institutions, there would be rejoicing throughout most of the Roman Catholic and Protestant communities.

The final item is relationships with the Republic of Ireland. Of course there must be continuing improvement in relations between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. That is even more necessary in the context of the European Community in which we now find ourselves. There is much greater scope today for co-operation between Dublin and Belfast than there has been so far this century.

Sometimes people refer to recent events in the middle east, particularly the Israeli-PLO agreement. But the parallel is not exact because, in that instance, to trigger the new agreement between Israel and the PLO both participants agreed to recognise the existence of the other—recognition of the right of the state of Israel to exist and recognition of the Palestine Liberation Organisation as the political representative of the Palestinian people. Regrettably, recognition and the lack of it is the problem in the island of Ireland, because the Dublin Government refuse to extend to Northern Ireland what the Israelis agreed to extend to the PLO. The Dublin Government, through their constitution and articles 2 and 3, still withhold recognition of Northern Ireland as part of the United Kingdom. That is why articles 2 and 3 are among the fundamental obstacles to future co-operation between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. That is why we want articles 2 and 3 changed, and why every opposition political party in the Republic of Ireland and, once again, much of the media, say that articles 2 and 3 must be changed. Sinn Fein says that they must not be changed. The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North says that articles 2 and 3 must not be changed, and one or two other people say that they must not be changed. However, most people in the Republic of Ireland want to co-operate with Northern Ireland—as we do with them—but recognise that articles 2 and 3 are still an obstacle.

Mr. Maginnis: Does my right hon. Friend agree that articles 2 and 3, and the changing thereof, are a matter of accommodation for a relationship and that they should not be paraded constantly as a trading issue? Rather, the changing of them is an accommodation to enable the two political entities on the island of Ireland to work together.

Mr. John D. Taylor: I entirely agree that the changing of articles 2 and 3 is an accommodation and we require a gesture from Dublin. Dublin could give a gesture with ease to break the deadlock that exists in relationships within the island of Ireland. There is a lot of thinking—a conclusion has been reached—that articles 2 and 3 must be changed. We appeal to the major obstacle, which is the Fianna Fail party in the Republic of Ireland, to reconsider its stance on articles 2 and 3 so that real progress can be made.

If that happens, I guarantee that the Unionist community in Northern Ireland will be enthusiastic to bring about co-operation within the island of Ireland. We already co-operate in matters of trade and farming. Our farmers go to the cattle sales yards in the Republic every week. There is a lot of co-operation in practical terms. It can also happen in political terms. We could create some form of institution within the island which would facilitate co-operation between Northern Ireland and the Republic.

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): There is already a body where there can be political co-operation—the British-Irish parliamentary body. As hon. Members know, two seats on that body are available to Unionist Members. It is about time that that position was reconsidered by the Unionist party. It cannot and will not compromise the right hon. Member's Unionism. It has not touched mine.

Mr. John D. Taylor: The hon. Gentleman has not followed what I am talking about, which is co-operation

[Mr. John D. Taylor]

between Northern Ireland and the Republic. The British-Irish parliamentary group deals with co-operation between the Republic and the United Kingdom. That is a distinctly different matter. What is more important is practical co-operation within the island of Ireland between Northern Ireland and the Republic.

If the little problems that are dealt with by the British-Irish parliamentary body when it meets once or twice a year to coincide with every international rugby match between England and Ireland are resolved, we shall be able to take our three seats. However, that institution is not important. What is more important is the real co-operation within the island of Ireland. It is much better to get the Northern Irish and the Republican Irish to co-operate than to concentrate on the other issues to which the hon. Gentleman referred.

I appeal to those who want co-operation to recognise that articles 2 and 3 are a real obstacle. The ruling by the Supreme Court that every time Dublin meets Northern Ireland it is under an imperative to work to bring about a united Ireland is an obstacle to real respect and accommodation within the island of Ireland.

Finally, I appeal to the Government to have the ability to reach decisions about what they will propose. They have listened to, and consulted, all the political parties in the past two years. If the Government take on board and try to accommodate the thinking of all the main parties that contributed to the discussions, they can provide a formula that will improve the democratic rights of the people of Northern Ireland in this House and give the people of Northern Ireland powers to administer their own state and local district councils. If they put those issues to an election in Northern Ireland, they will find that the vast majority of Protestants and Catholics will back them all the way.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I remind hon. Members that at the beginning of this debate the Speaker informed the House that many hon. Members wanted to speak, and requested short speeches. Considering that we have completed only two Back-Bench speeches in the two hours since the debate started, many hon. Members will be disappointed and fail to catch my eye if others continue to make long speeches.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. During the debate the House will have heard the right hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor) condemn violence on both sides and refer to the need to isolate terrorism. If anyone had then chosen to describe him as being part of the pan-Unionist front with the UVF, I hope that the Chair would have intervened and said that that was unacceptable language. Given the attacks on Social Democratic politicians by the UVF and, previously, by Sinn Fein and the IRA, I hope that on reflection and consideration of *Hansard*, if any hon. Member later in this parliamentary Session uses the kind of language to which objection was taken, the Chair will support those objections.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I made my point earlier. Bearing that in mind, I have not heard any unparliamentary language.

11.35 am

Mr. Andrew Hunter (Basingstoke): I greatly welcome the opportunity provided by this wider debate. I shall be brief because I know that many other hon. Members wish to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In passing, may I say that I identify myself with the speech made by my hon. Friend the Member for North Down (Sir J. Kilfedder), who once again spoke compellingly and with conviction.

I closely followed the speech of the right hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor). In passing, I shall pick on one of the many points that he made. I believe that the argument for there being a Select Committee on Northern Ireland has been won. I have argued that way for some months. I hope that there will be a groundswell movement in the House for the creation of such a Select Committee, which is long overdue.

I listened carefully to the opening words of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State. I especially welcomed the paragraphs in his speech in which he referred to the good news that was emerging from Northern Ireland. Such good news often tends to be overlooked—it receives too little attention. Here is something that can unite all politicians of all parties. We can unite in acknowledging that there are some good developments.

If I were to comment briefly on only three developments, the first that I would pick is housing. I first visited Northern Ireland 30 years ago. When I consider the whole state of housing now and what it was then, the situation is beyond comparison. The Housing Corporation is a success story—its achievements should be acknowledged. The increase in home ownership is another feature which deserves mention. The number of houses that are officially unfit has fallen from 14 per cent. in 1979 to some 8 per cent. That is one area of good news.

One can also look with some satisfaction at the growth of the private sector. The Industrial Development Board has played a vital pump-priming role in attracting inward investment and promoting economic activity. Harland and Wolff and Shorts returned to the private sector in 1989 and have gone from strength to strength. They have met the challenges of the recession, created employment and contributed to wealth creation. There is every reason to be optimistic about the electricity industry following the successful sale of shares in June.

Another aspect where there is good news—it is an area in which I have an interest to declare, as the Register of Members' Interests will reveal—is training. The Training and Employment Agency which was created in 1990 has performed well. It uses its budget imaginatively and boldly to create the skills needed for economic growth.

Inevitably, in a debate of this nature, constitutional and security issues dominate. What are the fundamentals? The first answer comes easily: the Union stands absolute; nothing else is on the agenda. I welcomed the Prime Minister's words on 1 July, when he said:

"The Union is vital for all parts of the United Kingdom. It has the democratic approval of the people of Northern Ireland and we in the Conservative and Unionist party stand four-square behind it."—[*Official Report*, 1 July 1993; Vol. 227, c. 1101.]

I also welcome the words of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State, who said at Hillsborough on 15 March this year.

"The main focus of discussion now centres on the question of how, for the foreseeable future, Northern Ireland should be governed within the United Kingdom."

Within that context—the first fundamental being that the Union stands absolute—is the overriding objective of continuing the fight against terrorism. In this, there have been some notable achievements. Information gathering is the most important weapon in the armoury in the fight against terrorism. I understand that good steps have been made in that respect. Over the years, the Government have given the security forces the special and emergency powers that they need, as well as the financial and manpower resources that they need. In that context, I and many others welcome the reassurance given that the security forces in Northern Ireland will not be decreased in line with cuts elsewhere in our defence services.

Another ingredient in fighting terrorism is to ensure that all possible vigorous, proactive measures are taken. A shoot-to-kill policy is entirely unacceptable. Equally unacceptable is a wait-to-be-bombed policy. I welcome the fact that the power to impose internment remains at the Government's disposal. The use of internment can be fully justified. It is a most effective means of destroying the command and communication structures of terrorist organisations. There are times, particularly during periods of heightened terrorist activity, when I believe that internment should be brought back.

The first fundamental is that the Union stands absolute. The second fundamental is the fight against terrorism. The third fundamental is to seek to recreate constitutional and political stability. That requires new arrangements to hand back major responsibilities to locally elected representatives. There must also be initiatives to promote co-operation between Northern Ireland and the Republic, when it is in the interests of Northern Ireland to do so.

What is the way forward? Politically, there is a short answer: to redress the democratic deficit, direct rule is acceptable only as a lesser of evils. That is why I whole-heartedly support the Government's determination to do everything possible to promote dialogue. There has been a slight change in the format of the dialogue. It varies and evolves over the years, but it is essential that dialogue continues. I hear what my Unionist friends tell me—that the dialogue must be meaningful. There is no point talking for talking's sake.

The paramount importance—the primacy—of what we call strand 1 should be acknowledged. The political well-being and political virility of Northern Ireland demand returning powers and responsibilities to locally elected politicians. Government policy is not to lay down how they should be effected. I now become a heretic and, I believe, pick up an issue raised by the right hon. Member for Strangford, when I say that if the constitutional political parties in Northern Ireland cannot reach agreement, it must be for the United Kingdom Government to impose what it believes to be best. I suggest to my Unionist friends that the less of an exception and the more of a norm the structures of politics in Northern Ireland are, the better it is for the Unionist cause.

Mr. Jim Marshall (Leicester, South): The hon. Gentleman mentioned the need for the Government, in certain circumstances, to impose an internal settlement. Will he answer the question posed by the Secretary of State? Does the hon. Gentleman consider that policy to be coercion?

Mr. Hunter: I would not use that word, but I would hope that the Government would come to a solution that was acceptable to the political parties of Northern Ireland. I do not think that "coercion" would be the appropriate word.

Mr. Marshall: That is not what the hon. Gentleman has just said. He painted two scenarios. In the first scenario, bilateral talks in the Province had failed, and he said that in those circumstances there might be a need for the United Kingdom Government to impose an internal settlement. Would he define that as coercion?

Mr. Hunter: No, I would not use the word "coercion" in that context. I think that the hon. Gentleman is seeking to introduce an alien theme into my argument.

I stressed the primacy of strand 1. I do not believe that we should get too het up about strands 2 and 3. The Brooke-Mayhew talks, if I may call them that, did not result in an overall political accommodation, but all the participants agreed that most, if not all, of the elements that might compose an eventual settlement were discussed. Sir Ninian Stephen, the independent chairman of the strand 2 talks, concluded that the aims of the talks remained "valid and achievable". On 10 November last year, all the parties agreed that

"further dialogue was both necessary and desirable".

I believe in the importance of dialogue and the primacy of strand 1. Strands 2 and 3 will fall into place with the goodwill created by achieving agreement on strand 1.

There are inevitable pitfalls, dangers and inner flaws. Are the nationalists prepared to accept the de jure and de facto reality? If the men of violence are not to win, the men of peace must accept that they are talking about how best Northern Ireland should be governed within the United Kingdom. There is nothing else on the agenda. Do the Government of the Republic accept that articles 2 and 3 must go as a constitutional imperative?

I am worried because when I have conversations with my constituents about Northern Ireland I am made aware of the growing attitude that we should get out and leave them to sort things out. That attitude is worrying. It is a sign that the IRA may be winning the psychological war. It is so important that our resolve to resist terrorism does not falter.

11.47 am

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): I welcome the debate. One factor that will unite hon. Members across the House is the horror of the violence, not only in Northern Ireland but in mainland Britain. Terrible human tragedies lie behind the continued violence, whereby innocent people are killed and families mourn. We are discussing the right way to peace. But there are different views about how peace should be achieved.

I believe that there is not an Irish problem but a British problem in Northern Ireland. The war which has been going on for many years is the greatest single problem in the United Kingdom. It has had an effect, not only on the people of Northern Ireland and the Republic, but on the people of this country. The city of London is virtually fortified. Unlike when I was first elected, the public can no longer come freely to see people in the House of Commons because of the security problems which are due to the danger of violence.

Justice has been denied all round. For example, just the other day, the judges said that they could not try the West Midlands police because they did not think that the police would get a fair trial because of media coverage. That

[Mr. Tony Benn]

confirms what my hon. Friend the Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) said in America about the prospects for justice.

Civil liberties have been denied in Britain. The security services have been engaged in a policy of disinformation in Northern Ireland. I have a copy of a leaflet published by the Northern Ireland security services, allegedly written by Denis Healey and myself, calling for a world revolution. That was produced by public money and it was all part of the Psyops disinformation programme, which has now come to light. The ban on members of Sinn Fein being allowed to broadcast is an absolute denial of every principle of democratic government, the denial of which we have condemned in other countries. The House must reconsider that matter.

I was a member of the Cabinet in 1969, nearly 25 years ago, when the troops were sent into Northern Ireland and I remember vividly that we were told that would solve the problem. I should like to put on record what has happened in those 25 years. There have been 33,000 shootings, 16,000 explosions, incendiaries and defusions, 6,000 claims for damage to property, 3,000 people, civilian and military, killed and 33,000 people, civilian and military, injured. Some 15,000 people have been charged with terrorist offences and 7,000 people have been detained under the Prevention of Terrorism Acts. I asked the House of Commons research department to calculate the total cost of the emergency and, at current prices, the cost of the war has been £14·5 billion.

We should look at what lies behind all those figures —not at the alleged differences between Catholics and Protestants—and at conditions of life. Unemployment in Northern Ireland, according to figures given out last March, stands at 14·6 per cent. compared with 10·6 per cent. in the United Kingdom. One in five people in the Province live on income support or state benefit—21 per cent. of the population compared with 14 per cent. in England. Those statistics must be put on the record when we consider what the Secretary of State said today. He painted quite a different picture.

It is also important to put on the record the opinion, as far as it can be determined, of the people of Britain on the situation in Northern Ireland. Many opinion polls have been taken and a recent one by MORI found that 61 per cent. of people in Britain favour the withdrawal of troops from Northern Ireland. Of those, the majority favour a withdrawal in up to four years. Only 17 per cent. think that British troops have helped the situation in Northern Ireland, while 73 per cent. believe that they have made no difference or have made the situation worse. Some 65 per cent. believe that British politicians—that is us—are not doing enough to solve the problem, 78 per cent. support talks with all parties from the north and south and 51 per cent. support talks including, specifically, members of Sinn Fein.

The House must take those facts into consideration. We must also accept that all the policies that have been followed by successive Governments have failed—failed if the test is that there should be peace in Northern Ireland and the island of Ireland. Partition has failed, Stormont has failed, direct rule has failed, internment without trial has failed, the prevention of terrorism Acts have failed, the Diplock courts—I have seen them in operation—have failed, the supergrass trials have failed, the use of CS gas has failed, strip searching has failed and the Anglo-Irish Agreement has failed. I voted against that agreement, in unusual company, because I felt that it was a deception practised upon the Irish people. None of those measures has ended the violence and therefore we must explore other ways in which to resolve the problem. In as non-controversial way as I can, I should like to put to the House some of the obstacles that must be overcome.

There is distrust between the communities. I have never accepted that that is entirely due to religious belief. I believe that it is largely due to discrimination in employment. No one can deny that that is a huge problem in Northern Ireland. Discrimination still exists, and the Secretary of State has said that he is dealing with it.

Some loyalists are deeply distrustful of the Government because they believe—I think that they are right—that if the Government could find a way, they would like to be out of Northern Ireland. The Anglo-Irish Agreement was thought to be the shoehorn that would gradually ease the responsibilities of the British Government. There is distrust between Dublin and London because those in Dublin do not think that people in the north get a fair trial. The British people are distrustful of the policy towards Northern Ireland because most of them want Britain to get out of Northern Ireland, sometimes for the wrong reasons.

The tragedy is that the British Parliament and its people are not interested in Northern Ireland. The people in the north know that. If there is a crisis, it is too dangerous to discuss it and if there is no crisis the attitude is: why bother to discuss it? The loyalist connection is therefore breaking down.

If we want peace, we must have talks and therefore I greatly welcome what my hon. Friend the Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) has been doing with the president of Sinn Fein. Those talks have also been welcomed by the Dublin Government, but I heard the Secretary of State say on radio that those talks should cease. I believe that most people think that those talks are right.

I welcome what my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) said today when he outlined the long-term prospective of Labour policy, because in 1921 the Labour party opposed the partition at a special conference. It also called for an all-Irish constitution, the safeguarding of minority views and the withdrawal of troops. I have always held those beliefs. I am sorry that the Government have decided not to support the talks between my hon. Friend the Member for Foyle and Sinn Fein. I have, however, no knowledge of them.

The problem, allegedly, is that we cannot talk with Sinn Fein because of terrorism. If we examine that argument against a proper historical perspective it does not stand up to a moment's examination. Mrs. Thatcher called Nelson Mandela a terrorist, but I met him in the House of Commons again when he was over in the summer. Any number of people have begun as terrorists and ended up in Buckingham palace. Nehru, Gandhi, Kenyatta, Cheddi Jagan—who is to visit Britain shortly—were all held in British prisons. I was in Cyprus at the weekend and I can recall when Archbishop Makarios was in a British prison. The idea that one cannot talk to people because behind them are people who practise violence is not a valid argument.

What is David Owen doing in the former Yugoslavia? He is talking to people associated with violence, but he and

the United Nations feel that the problem has to be resolved through discussion. He is right. The worst terrorists in the world are, of course, Governments, but I will not go into that now.

I must confess to the House that it is not for any British politician to say how the people in the island of Ireland should resolve their difficulties. I have long held the view that the problem is that we should not be there. If I am allowed a personal reference, my grandfather was elected in 1892 as a home rule candidate——

Rev. William McCrea: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Benn: I am trying to be brief and to put my case as quietly as I can.

My grandfather defeated a Conservative Minister in east London who had said that if home rule were given to Ireland, terrorism and anarchy would follow. In the 1880s, when the London county council asked for control of the police, the Home Secretary said that, unlike Birmingham, the LCC could not take control of the police because of Irish terrorism.

Northern Ireland was set up by violence. It was the bullet and not the ballot that partitioned it. It was achieved by the Black and Tans. Everyone knows that it is an artificial state created by British military force. It is not possible for the British Parliament to bring about Irish unity, but it is for us——

Rev. William McCrea: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Benn: I will give way in a moment, but I am conscious of the fact that many other hon. Members have much to contribute, notably, my hon. Friend the Member for Foyle. One cannot enforce Irish unity, but the way forward is through the termination of British jurisdiction.

Rev. William McCrea: Does the right hon. Gentleman really believe that it is the presence of troops on the streets of Belfast and Northern Ireland that keeps the vast majority of people within the Union? Does he really believe that if the British troops were to pull out tomorrow the vast majority of people in Northern Ireland would decide that they wanted their future to be founded within a united Ireland? If he does believe that, he knows little of the reality of the truth.

Mr. Benn: I am saying that the British troops in Northern Ireland have not solved the problem of violence and that it is not for the British Government to bring about Irish unity but for the Irish people to decide the relationship that they have with each other. Any sensible person knows —it has been admitted by a number of people now—that there can be no peace in Northern Ireland without peace between the communities. And there is distrust. There can be no relationship between the north and the south other than on a base of trust. To achieve that we must have talks with everybody and make it clear that Britain does not intend to remain and claim jurisdiction.

A bigger peace dividend is to be gained in Northern Ireland and the Republic than in any other part of the world. It is a highly militarised island, north and south, and that peace dividend should be used to resolve the social problem.

The United Nations has a role in getting the talks going. Indeed, during a Cabinet discussion in 1969, Dublin suggested using the United Nations. I wrote to the Secretary-General the other day suggesting that an observer should go. I have invited the president of Sinn Fein to come to the House of Commons to address a meeting.

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): Shame.

Mr. Benn: The hon. Gentleman says "Shame", but if the Government will not allow talks, Parliament has a responsibility. As a Member for Chesterfield, I have a responsibility because soldiers from Chesterfield are in Northern Ireland and our people are in danger. I have had a word with Madam Speaker and there is no obstacle to the president of Sinn Fein coming here to address Members of Parliament. As his words cannot be broadcast, Parliament has a duty to hear him. By now, the Secretary of State has probably received my letter saying that I hope that he will not create obstacles to our hearing the president of Sinn Fein—a former Member of the House—address Members of Parliament and the Lobby.

We have a duty to hear the argument. We were told that publicity was the oxygen of terrorism. Information is the oxygen of democracy and we must be able to hear directly what the president of Sinn Fein and others say, because we have already heard our side.

Mr. Robathan: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that, although the president of Sinn Fein had a seat in the House for eight or nine years, he never once came to the House during that time? His contempt for the democratic process was shown by his failure to come to the House to express his opinion and by his support for terrorism in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Benn: To take his seat, the president of Sinn Fein had to take an oath of allegiance to the Crown, which he could not in conscience do. Why should the Crown be used to deny his constituency its Member of Parliament's right to sit here? The first women Member for Parliament, Countess Markievicz, to whom I shall shortly put up a plaque, was in prison when she was arrested. She could not as a Sinn Fein Member take her seat because unless a Member swears an oath of allegiance to the Crown he or she cannot sit in the House. Charles Bradlaugh was also kept outside for many years, but I will not go into that.

It was the cold war that retained American support for British policy in Northern Ireland, for strategic reasons. The Pentagon did not want an independent neutral Ireland between themselves and the red army. The cold war is now over. President Clinton, who has no love for the present Government because they tried to search Home Office files to prevent his election, has now suggested that he may send an observer. I believe that, before the end of the century, Britain will be out of Northern Ireland. Much emphasis has been placed on articles 2 and 3 of the Irish constitution, but what about the articles in our own Government of Ireland Act 1920, which makes our claim?

If we are to get out in circumstances of peace and by negotiation, the talks—notably those launched by my hon. Friend the Member for Foyle—must be authorised and encouraged. As Churchill said—I heard him say it—

"The only alternative to war, war is jaw, jaw."

We must talk. The answer to violence is discussion, out of which can come a solution that is quite different from the ones put forward so unsuccessfully by successive

[Mr. Benn]

Secretaries of State responsible for Northern Ireland. I have heard them for 43 years and they are no more credible today than they were when I heard them in the past.

12.4 pm

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): I am sure that the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) will forgive me if I do not follow him but try instead to answer some of the things that are so blatantly wrong and false. The ignorance that he has shown about these matters is deplorable.

We in Northern Ireland have heard the voice of the IRA Sinn Fein and its leader. I have seen the result of his voice; in Roman Catholics and Protestants in my constituency who mourn their loved ones, while Gerry Adams, the IRA Sinn Fein leader, puts out statements justifying those acts of murder. Yet we are told that we need to listen to him. We have listened to him. We have seen him in action. We have heard, no later than last weekend, what his policies really are. He is not for peace; peace is not the prerequisite first of all that we should establish. He wants to get a political agreement that will suit him. Unless the British Government are prepared to say that they will consent, that the right of self-determination rests with the whole of the Irish people, he will not give peace.

The Anglo-Irish Agreement, which was much vaunted by the SDLP and hailed as the structure through which we could get an agreement for the people—not "peoples"—of Northern Ireland makes it clear. That entity "the people of Northern Ireland" was supposed to be recognised by Dublin and the SDLP, who were coaching them to get the agreement, said that they alone had the right of self-determination about the future of the Province. Now we are told by Albert Reynolds that he is not reneging on the agreement but thinks that the other proposal will be of great benefit.

The House needs to realise just how serious the situation is. The right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) was telling us all the things that had failed. But look at Dublin. Dublin has failed. What has Dublin succeeded in doing? It destroyed 80 per cent. of the Protestant population who lived there when the boundary was drawn, that Protestant population was 10 per cent. of the total population of the 26 counties. Today, there is little over 2 per cent. of Protestants left.

As bad as the Protestants are painted in the North of Ireland, the figures show that the Roman Catholic population is increasing in Northern Ireland. We have not been guilty of the ethnic cleansing policy, but the South of Ireland has. Those are the facts of the situation. Dublin has failed. It has been suggested that if British troops were pulled out—or those from other parts of the United Kingdom—in some way there would be a change of opinion; the loyalty of the vast majority of people in Northern Ireland who vote unionist with a small U, whether they be Roman Catholic or Protestant, do not desire and will not have a united Ireland. That is a fact.

There is no use in anyone telling the House that there is some way of peace if we take away the troops. I was delayed this morning as, unfortunately, the plane did not take off until 1½ hours after departure time, but I did not see a single soldier. It is not a question of the British Army holding the people of Northern Ireland to ransom, telling them, "You are part of the United Kingdom and we will keep you part of the United Kingdom." We are talking about the will of the people of Northern Ireland, as expressed over and over again. The House must face that fact.

There are Roman Catholics who vote unionist—a fact which can be seen more clearly in elections conducted under a system of proportional representation. In PR elections, one can see the way in which people vote. It is hardly likely that the people voting for John Hume are Protestants in the main, just as it is hardly likely that the people voting for me are Roman Catholics in the main. But I have stood at boxes in the European elections in which not hundreds but thousands of voters have chosen John Hume's name as their first preference on the paper and my name as their second.

Let us be clear that there are Roman Catholics who are happy with and support the Union. Even the prominent priest in Dungannon said some time ago that the Roman Catholic population as a whole could not be branded as wanting a united Ireland. If my memory serves me right, he put the number of Roman Catholics who believed in and would support the Union at some 20 per cent.

The hon. Member for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter) put his finger on the fundamentals. I do not agree with the four priorities outlined by the right hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor). Rather, I agree with the preferences expressed by the hon. Member for Basingstoke. The first thing that needs to be done to save the situation is for the Government to come back and declare their defence and maintenance of the sovereign position of Northern Ireland within this United Kingdom.

Mr. Terry Dicks (Hayes and Harlington): If the Province is to stay part of this country, is it not important that we should finish with the Anglo-Irish Agreement altogether? We do not want a foreign Government having a say in what we do in our own country.

Rev. Ian Paisley: I was rather surprised that that was not mentioned by the Unionist spokesman. The right hon. Gentleman made no mention of the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

Anything that interferes with the sovereign right of the people of Northern Ireland to remain part of this United Kingdom must be dealt with as a first priority. The people of Northern Ireland have been undermined in this matter. If the Government's policy is changing, I welcome that —although actions will speak louder than words. In the past, they have said, "We will stay for as long as the majority wish it, and we will go as soon as possible." That has been the Government's attitude, and that is what they practise. I shall not rehearse the statements made by the Secretary of State, which are fresh in the memory of all people of Northern Ireland.

The constitutional position of Northern Ireland as an integral part of the United Kingdom has been undermined. As long as that remains the case, oxygen is supplied to the terrorists, who say, "Look, we are doing well." Conor Cruise O'Brien—who is not on the same political wavelength as I am—has made it absolutely clear that they are saying in Dublin, "Another push and we will get exactly what we want." He also said, I think, that the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) helped to get him removed from the Dail, and much else besides.

All I can say to the House today is that, if we do not defend that pillar, there will be continuing trouble. The IRA knows today that it cannot win the war. The talks came when there was adverse publicity about the IRA's monstrous killings and about the monstrous killings of its own people. As the hon. Member for Foyle pointed out in a television interview, the IRA was killing more Roman Catholics at a certain time than anyone else, so there was a terrible and awful repulsion growing in the hearts of the community.

Suddenly, the hon. Member for Foyle went into conference with the IRA-Sinn Fein leader. That alone seemed strange to the Unionist population. the hon. Gentleman had made forthright statements, but suddenly he was having talks. Various voices of opposition were heard, even in his own party.

The first statement that came out of the meeting was that the two had agreed that self-determination was the right of the Irish people as a whole. If there was a vote in the whole of Ireland of what to do with Northern Ireland, we would have a united Ireland, because——

Mr. John Hume (Foyle): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Rev. Ian Paisley: I have little time, but I will give way in a moment.

If that vote occurred, Northern Ireland would be finished. It would be asking Northern Ireland to commit political suicide. We cannot do that. The Northern Ireland people refuse to do that, and will not give up their inalienable right of self-determination. It is not something which they alone said was theirs—we are continually told that the Northern Ireland of today was made up by Britain and by the people of Northern Ireland.

The Dail Eireann accepted and ratified the territory of Northern Ireland. The House of Commons and the British Government of the day ratified the territory, the Stormont Parliament ratified it, and it was lodged at the League of Nations. It was not some fanciful state with which the three parties had nothing to do. The South of Ireland had everything to do with determining the territory, so did the North and so did Britain: it was a tripartite agreement.

That territorial treaty was torn in shreds when the 1937 constitution was brought in, by the way. De Valera, who was against the treaty at the time, and was really a Provo in his own country, carrying out a civil war and shooting his own fellows, came back into politics and devised the present constitution. That constitution sought to reverse what had already been agreed by introducing articles 2 and 3 of the Republic's constitution.

I heard the hon. Member for Foyle telling the world that it is no longer a territorial dispute. Well, if it is not, why did his party come to the talks and tell us that articles 2 and 3 must be kept?

Mr. Hume: We did not.

Rev. Ian Paisley: You certainly did.

Why did the Northern Ireland spokesman of the Labour party go to Cork to say that we must retain articles 2 and 3, where he was rebuked by one of the socialist leaders in the South of Ireland for daring to go there and say it?

Why have the present Dublin Government, including Mr. Spring, the leader of the Labour party, reversed and done a somersault? We read at the talks what their *Hansard* reported Mr. Spring as saying about articles 2 and 3. The Dublin Government now say, "They must hold on to articles 2 and 3. They will be a bargaining counter." We are not having any bargaining about articles 2 and 3. They are obnoxious and lay an axe at the very root of the Ulster tree. We repudiate them. Until the Southern Government become a democracy and give up that claim, which is immoral, illegal and criminal, and puts oxygen into the terrorists, the claim must be dealt with.

All I have heard is, "Oh yes, that matter can be on the table." The very Union is now to be on the table as well. We heard the right hon. Member for Chesterfield talk about the Government of Ireland Act 1920. The only thing that is left of the 1920 Act is the definition of the six counties. It has been carried forward in other pieces of legislation. As a Unionist, I will be at no table talking about the Union.

When the original talks were called, the primacy of stage 1, as my hon. Friend the Member for Basingstoke said today, was that it was established that Dublin had no say in the internal affairs of Northern Ireland, and that the constitutional parties, the people at the table, and the British Government who presided at the stage 1 talks were the only people who could have any say.

Yet when we got to the talks, we saw that that was not the attitude of the Social Democratic and Labour party. Earlier today, hon. Members asked why we could not establish what the majority of people wanted. The majority of parties at stage 1 got a basis, a structure and a formula.

Mr. Peter Robinson (Belfast, East): All the parties?

Rev. Ian Paisley: All the parties in the committee.The representatives agreed with the formula, but then their leader came and said that they could not go forward in that way. The Secretary of State made the statement that the British Government saw no difficulty in implementing the formula.

Rev. William McCrea: Does my hon. Friend agree that the real reason behind the veto by the leader of the SDLP was that he was not interested in an agreement within Northern Ireland? He wants the matter to be dealt with in a European or in a united Ireland context. He did not want political progress, although that had been agreed to by SDLP members on the committee when the decision was taken. It was vetoed by the SDLP leadership, proving that they are not interested in an internal settlement in Northern Ireland within the United Kingdom.

Rev. Ian Paisley: Yes, I agree with my hon. Friend. We must realise the primacy of the matter—that we must first deal with the internal structures within Northern Ireland. It is within those structures that talks can take place with the Dublin Government, and only when the Ulster people in their own structures can talk to the Dublin Government not as inferiors, but as equals, dealing with both parts of Ireland, can we come to an agreement between both parts of Ireland.

The right hon. Member for Chesterfield was right to say that there is great disillusionment among the people of Northern Ireland, and that they do not trust the British Government. Why should they, after the way that they have been treated by those deals? Any politician who meets the people of Northern Ireland must realise just how distressed and alienated they are.

The establishment of stage one should come first, and that should be settled without any interference from the Dublin Government. The question should be put to the

[Rev. Ian Paisley]

people of Northern Ireland—not to the people of the Irish Republic—in a referendum that is outside party politics. A referendum would allow everybody to say how they wanted to be governed. In that way, we would find out what the people of Northern Ireland want.

The argument has been put to me by the people of Northern Ireland for years, and I have repeated it in the House. If the people of Northern Ireland are told that they have the final say in their destiny and whether they want to be in the United Kingdom or not, surely in a lesser way they should have their democratic say in how they are to be governed internally.

Mr. Beggs: Will the hon. Gentleman confirm for the record that while the loyalist community have been extremely suspicious of the way in which Conservative Governments and successive administrators in Northern Ireland have treated the majority community, they are no more enamoured, and are more suspicious, of the proposals that the Labour party would like to implement?

Rev. Ian Paisley: Even good British Labour supporters and members of the trade union movement to whom I have spoken are amazed that Labour Members are talking about having the army of the Republic on the Falls road and the British Army on the Shankill road, and saying that that is a recipe for peace. I would think that the hon. Member for Belfast, West (Dr. Hendron) has enough horse sense to admit that that would be the greatest recipe for a war to the death.

There are stupid people who, at a time of tension, are telling us that peace will be found in those ways. There can be no way forward under the McNamara blueprint. Talk of joint sovereignty, talk of British and Irish troops or troops from the United Nations Organisation becoming involved leads to far greater tension in the province.

Mr. Roger Stott (Wigan): For the record, I wish to make it clear and unequivocal that the document to which the hon. Gentleman has referred is the intellectual property of its authors. It is not the property of the British Labour party.

Rev. Ian Paisley: I was commenting not on the McNamara document, but rather on the original document of which I have a copy. The original document was circulated, and I had a discussion with the leader of the hon. Gentleman's party in the House about it.

Let us not be fooled. My hon. Friend the Member for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson) and I met the Leader of the Opposition and talked about the document. He explained that the document had been circulated for information. That is the document that I am talking about. The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara), who leads for the Labour party, approved of and accepted the original document, and it was his document in that sense.

There can be no future as long as the Anglo-Irish Agreement stays in place. I do not know whether it is so, but I was told today that an Anglo-Irish conference is to be convened in Stormont on Wednesday. If that is so, the Government should think again.

To hold an Anglo-Irish conference meeting in Northern Ireland at this time would be not only highly insensitive but could provoke a reaction which would be horrible to contemplate. [HON MEMBERS: "That is a threat."] It is not a threat. When the leader of Sinn Fein has said that he will not declare any peace until the people of Northern Ireland are surrendered and their rights are surrendered, it ill becomes the hon. Member for Foyle to say that we are making threats.

We had better face up to the facts. The situation in Northern Ireland is graver than I have ever seen. I challenge any hon. Member to challenge that statement. I talked to a prominent Roman Catholic barrister this week. He said to me, "Ian, I do not often agree with you, but I agree with you now. We never had a situation in our community as we have at the present moment." It is a fact. Anything that will instil more fear in any section of the community should be guarded against.

Anglo-Irish Agreement conference meetings have been held in London and Dublin. It would be unhelpful to hold one in Northern Ireland. The conference could well meet in London or Dublin. Why are we bringing those members from the Irish Republic on to Ulster's soil at this time, as if to say that they have an inalienable right to be there? Unless that is dealt with, we shall not move forward to any reconciliation or peace.

Rev. William McCrea: Before my hon. Friend finishes his speech, will he join me in abhorring the awful tragedy last night of the dastardly murder of a director of a firm in my constituency? He was a man whose only crime was that he desired to be an honest worker instead of a lazy loafer of a republican. Does my hon. Friend agree that the truth of the matter is that we saw last night in the murder of another innocent Protestant worker the reality of the threat that Sinn Fein holds over the people of Northern Ireland?

It ill becomes the leader of the Social Democratic and Labour party to bring Gerry Adams, whose hands are stained with the blood of the people of Northern Ireland, into some kind of credibility, so that people now call him "Mr. Adams". It ill becomes any Member of Parliament to deal with Gerry Adams, because he has been and still is a terrorist at heart.

Rev. Ian Paisley: I know how my hon. Friend feels. I deplore all murders. I certainly deplore a murder for which the only excuse is that the victim was in a building contract to take part in rebuilding bombed police stations and building places where members of the British Army can sleep, eat and work. For that crime, he was brutally murdered. That man had a great charitable record. He devoted his whole life to charities.

On the other side, there have been the same vicious, devilish and diabolical murders. It is a tragedy of tragedies that such murders take place in our Province, but they will continue until we grasp the nettle. The nettle needs to be grasped. I hope that the Government will grasp the nettle —for the Union and against the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

People are saying, "Oh, but give peace a chance." It is not peace that is proposed: it is surrender. Then the terms under which we live will be dictated. Our fellow Protestants in the South of Ireland agreed to that. Where are they today? Practically eliminated.

12.33 pm

Mr. John Hume (Foyle): The first point that ought to be made is clear. The murder that has just been condemned had already been unanimously condemned across the House before the hon. Members for Antrim, North (Rev.

Ian Paisley) and for Mid-Ulster (Rev. William McCrea) arrived. If what is happening on our streets were happening on the streets of any part of England, Scotland or Wales, the House would be packed to the doors today. Yet we are told repeatedly that we are an integral part of the United Kingdom.

The Prime Minister and all the Government would be sitting there. Indeed in any part of the world today where there is a similar conflict, if a debate were taking place in that country's Parliament the Parliament would be packed. The emptiness of the Chamber tells me everything about the real attitude towards our problem. It tells the same story to the Unionist people. At the end of the day, the Unionist people will find out, as I have often told them, that the only people they can rely on are themselves—their numbers, their strength and their convictions. As we have said repeatedly, we cannot solve the problem without them because the problem of a divided people can be solved only by agreement.

We all know of the terrible tragedies that we have experienced during the past 20 years, but we also know that every attempt until now, as the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) said, has failed to solve the problem. Therefore, there is time for a lot of thinking to be done on all sides, and especially—it is simplistic to say so, but it is true and I say it often—because we are where we are as a result of our past attitudes. Our past attitudes have brought us to where we are. In fact, at times our respect for the past in the North of Ireland paralyses our attitude to the future. If we are not prepared to re-examine our past attitudes we shall stay where we are, in the present conflict situation. Everyone who is responsible has to re-examine their attitudes—the Government, who bear total responsibility for the situation in Northern Ireland, the Unionist people and the nationalist people.

As I have often said, the Unionist people's objective, which is often restated, is that they want to preserve and protect their identity and way of life. That is a legitimate objective, with which nobody can quarrel. I do not quarrel with it. Difference is normal in every country in the world. There is no country in the world that is stable if it is based on total uniformity. It is stable only if it is based on respect for difference and diversity. That is what we have to learn. The problem is that the Unionists do not trust us when we say that. They do not seem to understand that, when I say that, my electorate hear my saying that and have to support or not support what I am saying, and they have given strong support to that approach.

I am not telling the Unionists to change their objective of protecting their identity: I am telling them to take a hard look at their methods. Let us remember that from 1921 until the early 1970s Northern Ireland was governed as a one-party state, run by the Official Unionist party. That party left it in the mess that it is in, so they should not give us too many lectures. Their leading Prime Minister, Lord Brookeborough, boasted that he never employed a Roman Catholic in his life. The method that the Unionists have consistently used to protect their identity—given my understanding that the basis of what appears to be their fear is that they will be subsumed into an Ireland into which they do not want to be subsumed—has been to hold all power in their hands and exclude everyone else. That is a mind set which exists everywhere in the world where there is conflict, if one takes a look around. That is also the Afrikaner mind. That approach will never solve any problems in a divided society—it can only lead to conflict.

I shall come to my discussions with Mr. Adams in a few moments, but listening to some hon. Members' comments on those talks I have never heard such hypocrisy in my life. I have made clear their purpose—the total cessation of violence. I and my party have taken a stand against that violence for the past 20 years and we, and our homes, have been attacked on many occasions. Now I hear people criticising me for talking with that objective. Could you stand up and tell the House that you have never talked to a paramilitary organisation?

Rev. Ian Paisley: No.

Mr. Hume: You have never talked to a paramilitary organisation? You have never heard of the Ulster Protestant—

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. The hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) must remember that he is addressing me.

Mr. Hume: Has the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) never talked to a paramilitary organisation?

Rev. Ian Paisley: No illegal organisation.

Mr. Hume: Has he ever visited the offices of the Ulster Defence Association in Belfast? Has he ever heard of the Ulster Protestant Volunteers, who were the first people to start violence during the present troubles—the bombing of the Silent valley, the bombing in Ballyshannon and the first killing of a policeman in the Shankill road, constable Arbuckle? What about the third force, and marching on hillsides with berets? What about eulogies for dead leaders of the UDA? Come on, do not be hypocritical when you are telling me about talking—

Rev. Ian Paisley: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I made a statement in this House and I shall repeat it on my feet. I have never talked to any banned organisation in my life—or to any illegal organisation. What is more—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member is making a point of substance, but it is not a point of order for the Chair.

Mr. Hume: Is not the UDA a—

Rev. Ian Paisley: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Is it a point of order this time?

Rev. Ian Paisley: Is it not a point of order when a Member accuses another Member of doing something that is absolutely illegal? My answer made it perfectly clear.

Madam Deputy Speaker: If the hon. Member wants to intervene to clarify or refute a statement made by another hon. Member it is open for him to do so.

Mr. Hume: I asked the hon. Member for Antrim, North whether he could say that he had never talked with a paramilitary organisation. His reply was that he has not talked to a banned organisation. The UDA is a paramilitary organisation—has he never talked to it?

Rev. Ian Paisley: No.

Mr. Hume: You have never gone into its office on the Shankill road?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I remind the hon. Gentleman that all remarks must be addressed to the Chair.

Mr. Hume: Sorry, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Recently I saw a photograph in a newspaper showing the leader of the official Unionist party marching with a sash around his neck, surrounded by hooded men. Suppose that I had done that——

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. The hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) and other members of his party have been making those allegations time and again. He has been asked to repeat them outside the House or even to print them on the record here. The harsh reality is that—*[Interruption.]*—Is it a recent picture?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. That is not a point of order for the Chair. A Member can always seek to intervene to refute any allegations made. I hope that this debate will not degenerate. There are important policies to discuss and I hope that hon. Members will address them.

Mr. Hume: I have not degenerated anything *[Interruption.]*—Hold on.

Mr. Maginnis: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hume: No. I am replying to the hon. Members who have made accusations in, and outside, the House. I have never sat down with paramilitary organisations. To work together with them and to achieve a political objective—[HON. MEMBERS: "What about Gerry Adams?"] To work together with them, to achieve a political objective *[Interruption.]*——

Mr. Maginnis: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker: No, sit down. The hon. Member for Foyle has the Floor and he is free to continue.

Mr. Hume: Both Unionist parties in the House sat around the table with a body called the Ulster Workers Council, which included paramilitaries, to bring down the only partnership and power-sharing Executive for which the House ever voted and which we ever had in Northren Ireland. There is no doubt about that. Northern Ireland was set up when the sovereignty of this Parliament was overthrown in 1912—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. In this House, we give the freedom to each hon. Member to speak without seated interventions. The hon. Gentleman has the Floor.

Rev. William McCrea: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Does that apply equally to the threats being made from a sedentary position by hon. Members on the Opposition Benches?

Madam Deputy Speaker: My justice is distributed equally.

Mr. Hume: I have been dealing with what I described as the Unionists' mind set, which is to hold all power in their own hands and exclude everyone else. I have also been replying to the accusations that they have made against me—wholly false accusations, of course—which are dangerous and irresponsible in the present atmosphere. *[Interruption.]* May I be allowed to speak?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has the Floor.

Mr. Hume: I shall move on. I said at the beginning that everyone must re-examine their attitudes. I have been asking the Unionists to re-examine the attitude of holding all power in their own hands, which is an exclusive approach. The nationalist community has to do the same because, all along, nationalism has been about territory—a territorial mind set. There is also a handed down notion in Northern Ireland that patriotism is about dying for Ireland. As we know from our own very sad experience, there has been a thin line between dying and killing, and it is about time that living for Ireland was the mode of patriotism. As for the territorial approach, it is people, not territories, who have rights.

The people of Ireland are divided and they can never be brought together by any form of coercion. The Unionist people know that not only have we repeated that notion at every election but that it is at the centre of our philosophy.

As we look to the future, we face a number of choices. The first choice is the status quo. A number of people are comfortable with that because the troubles do not affect them; the troubles affect people in the poorer areas—that is where the violence is and where the troops are on the streets. It is not a solution.

The second choice is a scorched earth policy, turning Northern Ireland into an internment camp. That is not a solution. The third is a minimalist agreement between the Unionists and ourselves, with the extremism and violence continuing. That is not a solution. The fourth choice is to face reality. One recent positive development is the fact that both Governments, and all parties from Northern Ireland in this House, have agreed that if we are to solve the problem rather than merely discussing who wields the power in Northern Ireland we must deal with all the relationships which go to the heart of the problem and sit around the table to do so. I believe that if we sit around the table in an atmosphere of peace the dialogue will have a much greater chance of succeeding.

Unfortunately, there are in our society a substantial number of people who vote for political organisations which support violence and what they call "armed struggle". If one happens to be a public representative in that society, does one have the responsibility to do everything in one's power to try to bring that violence to an end, in particular, by talking to people?

I make no apologies for entering into dialogue with Mr. Adams for the ojective of bringing a total cessation to all violence. That is the objective and if I can achieve it by talking, despite the risks involved and the irresponsible accusations hurled at us, and at myself in particular, by people from other political parties, and the fact that people's lives are put at risk by such irresponsible criticism——

Mr. Maginnis: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hume: Yes, I will.

Mr. Maginnis: Will the hon. Gentleman acknowledge the fact that it is no good coming to this House again and again to speak in generalisations, platitudes and clichés? What the House needs to know is how the hon. Gentleman

can reconcile what he says with Gerry Adams's unequivocal statement that the liaison that he is having with the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) is not about an end to the violence of the IRA.

Can the hon. Member for Foyle explain why the document which he claims exists, although we have no proof that it does, and which he was able to leave for 10 days when he went to America—surely nothing can be more important than peace—is not, in the words of the Taoiseach of the Republic of Ireland, Mr. Reynolds, to be passed on to the United Kingdom Government? Will the hon. Gentleman admit that, despite his efforts—let us give him the benefit of the doubt and assume that they are honourable efforts—nothing is to be put on the table?

Mr. Hume: First, let me say that my party and I have been in the front line against the violence of the IRA in particular for the past 20 years and our homes have been attacked on numerous occasions by its supporters. Now, because of irresponsible allegations, the homes of our members are being attacked by loyalist paramilitaries——

Mr. Maginnis: What about the rest of us?

Mr. Hume: I know full well that the home of the hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis) was attacked. As he knows, I fully condemned that and went to sympathise with him on that occasion.

A lot of people have been hurling quotations at me in respect of what I am supposed to have said with Mr. Adams. As an example of what I am talking about, let me ask the House what it disagrees with in the following language, which is the language that we have expressed together:

"The exercise of self-determination"—

which everyone is throwing around—

"is a matter for agreement between the people of Ireland. It is the search for that agreement and the means of achieving it on which we will be concentrating . . . We both recognise that such a new agreement is only achievable and viable if it can earn and enjoy the allegiance of the different traditions on this island, by accommodating diversity and providing for . . . reconciliation."

Our second statement says:

"We are convinced from our discussions that a process can be designed to lead to agreement among the divided people of this island, which will provide a solid basis for peace. Such a process would obviously also be designed to ensure that any new agreement that might emerge respects the diversity of our different traditions and earns their allegiance and agreement."

Can anyone in the House claim that an agreement among the divided people of Ireland which respects their diversity and earns the allegiance and agreement of all the traditions is not an objective for which all hon. Members should be working and to which the Government should be totally committed?

Mr. Maginnis: Now talk about the political reality.

Mr. Hume: At the end of the day, I have said publicly that the dialogue in which I am engaged has been the most hopeful sign of lasting peace that I have seen in 20 years. I do not make statements like that lightly. I believe that the dialogue in which I have been engaged is a dialogue of real hope. *[Interruption.]* The proposals that have been put to the Irish Government and, as our statement makes clear —*[Interruption.]* Would you please keep your mouth shut until I have finished?

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. That is a matter for the Chair, not the hon. Member who is speaking. I repeat my ruling that I deplore seated interventions. Those who engage in them may find it more difficult to catch my eye when they wish actually to make a speech.

Mr. Hume: Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker. I have said that this is the most hopeful dialogue and the most hopeful chance of lasting peace that I have seen in 20 years. At the end of the day, as our statement made clear, this process must involve both Governments, and all parties. Its objective is an agreement that has the allegiance and agreement of all traditions.

By the way, why cannot people simply wait and see? I hope that this will happen as soon as possible. I should like to see the two Governments meeting next week. I am standing here and telling the Government that I believe that we have a real process of lasting peace and a total cessation of violence on the basis that I have just stated. I am saying to them, "Hurry up and deal with it."

Mr. Beggs: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hume: I am not giving way any more.

The Government must hurry up and deal with it because the process and the opportunity exist. People are asking me to tell the Government what is in these proposals. I am told by the official Unionist party, the Ulster Unionist party, that it has proposals for a solution—a blueprint for success, but I have never seen it. The Democratic Unionist party gave secret documents to the Prime Minister a number of weeks ago. There is no discussion of those secret documents, but there is a lot of discussing about my dialogue.

I do not underestimate the risks that I have taken in entering into the dialogue, but if, by talking to someone, I can make a contribution to saving human life and creating the circumstances in which we shall never, as we are doing today, stand condemning the murders of yesterday, if by dialogue as elected politicians, who surely were elected to talk—the hon. Member for Mid-Ulster (Rev. William McCrea) is a clergyman, and clergymen tell us that their job is to talk to wrongdoers—what is wrong with talking, particularly if it can bring about lasting peace? I say directly to the Government that I believe that there is now a real basis for lasting peace and the total cessation of violence. I hope that they will examine it in detail and respond positively.

12.57 pm

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): I briefly reiterate the point made that I made in my intervention on my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. I thought that it was intolerable—disgraceful—that the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) should go the the United States and try to help a convicted terrorist to escape British justice. Of course, at the same time he made a number of unfounded allegations against this country. The Leader of the Opposition should seriously consider whether the hon. Gentleman should be taking the Labour Whip. I hope that the Leader of the Opposition will consider that point.

I welcome the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara). We are delighted to see him still in post after the shadow Cabinet elections, although we note that he did not manage to secure election to the shadow Cabinet. None the less, we are very pleased to see him in his place and to know that he has kept his job. However, I was not convinced by what he said. I understand that if a majority in Northern Ireland say that

[Mr. Graham Riddick]

they wish to become part of a united Ireland, all parties —the Labour party and the Conservative party—have to try to fulfil that wish.

I do not understand why the Labour party has the clear and ultimate objective of a united Ireland. Northern Ireland has existed legally and constitutionally for many years as part of the United Kingdom, and it is clear that the majority of people in Northern Ireland want that situation to remain. Therefore, the hon. Member for Brent, East has not justified his party's policy on that matter.

I shall comment briefly on the "On the Record" programme on the BBC last week. I was surprised and dismayed to see that the BBC circumvented the law by interviewing Gerry Adams, the leader of Sinn Fein. The law on this is quite clear: members of Sinn Fein should not be interviewed. The BBC got around the ban by employing the voice of an actor, but, effectively, we saw Gerry Adams being interviewed. The BBC should think much more carefully before it employs such tactics. The fact that Sinn Fein does not like the broadcasting ban is argument and reason enough for the ban to continue to exist.

Mr. Trimble: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that it is remarkable that in the Irish Republic, where there is a prohibition on Sinn Fein in exactly the same words as the prohibition that operates on broadcasting in the United Kingdom, the Irish broadcasting authority operates with greater integrity and does not resort to such cheap tricks in order to get around the ban? The Irish broadcasting authority has greater respect for the law and the established Government than the BBC seems to have.

Mr. Riddick: I am extremely grateful to the hon. Gentleman for making that point. Those who argue that the ban in this country should be lifted should bear in mind that the Government of the Irish Republic have a similar ban. The BBC should be much more careful in the way in which it handles such interviews.

Mr. Beggs: I agree with the hon. Gentleman's suggestion that the BBC should be more careful because it is perceived as being especially insensitive to the Protestant and Unionist community when a member of that community is murdered by the IRA. We never hear reports on the BBC that a Protestant workman has been murdered. However, when a Catholic is murdered, it is almost headline news. We feel that the BBC can inflame the situation and should be more careful. Another typical example is the story this morning of the murder in Carnmoney last night.

Mr. Riddick: I am interested in the hon. Gentleman's point, although I am not in a position to confirm what he says.

This morning, we have seen evidence of how passions run high when the politics of Northern Ireland are discussed. I admire all those people on both sides of the political divide who are involved and who play their part in constitutional politics in Northern Ireland. I hope that the House will tolerate me making my views known on this issue, despite the fact that I do not have any great involvement in Northern Ireland.

What has dogged Northern Ireland since the troubles began has been the desire of mainland politicians to provide a political solution. We have had Sunningdale, the Anglo-Irish Agreement and, most recently, the inter-party constitutional talks. I cannot help but think that every new political initiative provides encouragement to the Provisional IRA. We must recognise that there is a clear political objective behind the violence perpetrated by the IRA—a united Ireland.

The political initiatives that are brought forward in good faith are designed to reduce or stop the violence in Northern Ireland. Without the violence, the political initiatives would not be taking place. Such initiatives have the opposite effect of that intended. They prove to the men of violence that politicians will react to that violence. But the IRA will not stop its campaign because the Catholic community is given a greater say in the affairs of Northern Ireland or because the Government of the Republic of Ireland are given a say in the constitutional affairs of Ulster. The IRA's overriding objective of a united Ireland will remain, and its campaign of violence will continue and be encouraged by the fact that political movement is taking place.

The most effective way of discouraging the IRA and undermining its morale seems to be masterful political inactivity. Politicians' response to the campaign of violence perpetrated by the IRA and the so-called loyalist paramilitaries should be no political activity on the constitutional front and a tougher approach by the security forces. That is why I am sceptical about the talks that the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) is having with Sinn Fein. The only outcome that could possibly satisfy Sinn Fein and lead to the cessation of violence by the IRA would be a united Ireland, but that outcome is impossible to envisage as long as the majority of people in Northern Ireland wish Northern Ireland to remain part of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Eddie McGrady (South Down): I repeat what the leader of my party and my hon. Friend the Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) has said—the outcome of his talks with Mr. Adams has to have the agreement of the Unionist people. Therefore, the outcome cannot be seen as something that will be imposed on one or other of the parties. In the aftermath of the process of peace, we shall have to work together around the table to find out the modus vivendi for all of us in Ireland—north and south, Unionist and nationalist. Nobody seems to have understood that that is what was said. Self-protection lies in the participation, agreement and allegiance of all.

Mr. Riddick: I fully understand that that is how the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friend the Member for Foyle regard the negotiations of the hon. Member for Foyle. My point is that ultimately only one outcome will be satisfactory to Sinn Fein and the IRA: a united Ireland. I do not believe that anything short of that will be satisfactory. With his experience of politics in Northern Ireland, the hon. Gentleman may be able to tell me otherwise, but that is my judgment, for what it is worth.

The danger seems to be that the talks will result in proposals or recommendations which the Irish Government will put to the British Government. The Unionists and the British Government will be unable to agree to those proposals because the bottom line will still be a united Ireland. The British Government and the Unionists will doubtless be castigated by those with liberal opinions and by many people in the United States for

failing to participate in the talks on the new proposals. I do not for a moment doubt the sincerity of the hon. Member for Foyle, but I question whether it is the right thing to do.

I believe that it is time to get back to basic first principles. We must make it crystal clear that as long as the majority of people in that part of the United Kingdom—Northern Ireland—wish to remain part of the United Kingdom, that is exactly what will happen. It may be appropriate to have referendums from time to time to send a message to those people, particularly in America, who talk about oppression and British colonialism, to show them that Britain will remain in Ulster because that is what the majority of people in Ulster want.

I have been encouraged by what my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State said today. I was also encouraged by what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has said on a number of occasions. He reiterated his views and strong commitment to the Union in his speech at the Conservative party conference. Probably the greatest benefit to come out of the year-long debate on the Maastricht treaty was the fact that the Unionists and the Conservative Government were drawn closer together, which I see as a major benefit.

If we make it 100 per cent. clear that the constitutional state of Northern Ireland is not in question, I believe that we will be able to put our relationship with the Irish Government on a much sounder footing. I have no enthusiasm for the Anglo-Irish Agreement, but it exists. We should therefore use that forum as a means to discuss issues of mutual concern and interest between the two parts of Ireland, just as NATO, the Commonwealth and the European Community are used to discuss issues of mutual interest.

Something else is missing in Northern Ireland—any form of genuine self-government. We should look at the possibility of providing a form of meaningful local government in Northern Ireland, which allows the people to have the opportunity to decide what happens in their communities. My prescription will not, of course, stop the violence in Ulster overnight. It is an unexciting prescription based on political inactivity. The only decision that would, in reality, stop the violence would be a complete capitulation to the cause of a united Ireland. No doubt we would then witness a violent backlash from the loyalist paramilitaries.

The only policy that can reduce the level of violence in Northern Ireland, and perhaps stop it—and which would be acceptable to the British Government—is one of long-term determination to keep Northern Ireland as part of the United Kingdom for as long as the people in Northern Ireland want that. That policy, allied with a tough security policy, might convince the men of violence and those within the Catholic community who, unfortunately, sometimes tacitly support the IRA, that their violence leads to nowhere and simply achieves nothing.

It is time for British politicians to put an end to political initiatives and to get on with governing Northern Ireland as if it were part of the United Kingdom like Scotland and Wales.

1.11 pm

Mr. Clifford Forsythe (Antrim, South): One could be forgiven for thinking that this debate was solely about the constitution, but there is no mention of that word in the motion. My understanding is that today's debate is a continuation of the appropriation debate that we should have had before the recess. I have been somewhat surprised by the fact that most speakers have dwelt on constitutional matters.

Mr. Barnes: Only a few hon. Members attend the appropriation debate despite the fact that it gives hon. Members the chance to discuss the budget for Northern Ireland. There are far more people in the Chamber today from outside Northern Ireland than is normally the case when we discuss the Province. I hope that some hon. Members who have listened to today's debate, which has concentrated on constitutional matters, will also turn up to discuss the economic and social issues connected with Northern Ireland.

Mr. Forsythe: From my reading of the motion, I understood that the debate concerned all issues relating to Northern Ireland. For my part, there are many matters that I could raise.

There is no doubt that the constitutional position is extremely important, but many other things are of equal importance in Northern Ireland. I could talk about the level of unemployment and the troubles that are associated with planning. I have a list of things that I could discuss were it not for the shortage of available time. I could talk about the problems faced by handicapped people. I could speak for the whole debate on the problems associated with social security and the operation of the social fund. Those problems have not even been mentioned; neither have the homeless, those who are not receiving enough benefit, or those who will be in trouble if VAT is imposed on fuel.

The Secretary of State mentioned the civil service. One could raise a considerable number of problems within the civil service, such as the reporting forms that are filled in at the end of each year by superior officers reporting on their staff. If the reports are queried, they cannot be changed. Even someone who is superior to the superior cannot change the little box that has been ticked, so there is a great danger that if the reporting officer dislikes someone he will give a bad report that cannot be changed. That is bad for civil service morale.

We could discuss a number of planning issues. I should like to mention in passing a mundane matter—that of grass cutting. Why plant grass in areas where local authorities will not cut it? Why does the Department allow grass to be sown and then take no responsibility for it? I see that the civil servants in the Box find that funny, but I assure them that it is extremely important to everyone in Northern Ireland. If Departments in Northern Ireland carried out their jobs properly, we might not have to raise such matters so often in the House.

We could discuss a number of matters related to agriculture. There are drainage problems and people's houses are being flooded because of what is happening on farms.

I wish to discuss briefly the non-existent overall transport plan in Northern Ireland. We have no overall transport plan, simply a hand-to-mouth existence whereby every year the Treasury hands out a little crumb to the Northern Ireland Office with no due regard paid to an overall transport plan. Surely, funds allocated to the roads should be allocated on the basis of an overall Northern Ireland transport plan linking all roads in a proper manner for business and commuters. The same problem exists on

[Mr. Forsythe]

the railways, although we have few railway tracks in Northern Ireland. Why do not the Government look at that matter to save using the roads and link rail and road?

We do not have an overall plan for the ports. We simply let each port get on with its own business. We give them grants, but do not say how they should tie into the overall scheme of things, with the result that three or four ports are fighting for the same business.

For some time, the international airport in Northern Ireland has been given millions of pounds to update its facilities to ensure that, regardless of our troubles and bothers, people arriving in the Province will have a proper impression of it and the people who live there. So, having ploughed millions of pounds into the international airport, the Government then decided, for ideological reasons, to privatise it. The privatisation process is now going on.

The Government decided to give grants of millions of pounds, not only to the international airport but to other airports in Northern Ireland, one of which was the city airport—or harbour airport. The idea behind the grants was simply to ensure that the airports were complementary to one another. The smaller airports would look after regional flights and, by definition, the international airport would look after international and main flights to Heathrow.

Now that those grants have been paid, the airports are in competition. The city airport could not be regarded as having any reasonable facilities whatever. When I think of the criticism that is levelled at gate 49 at Heathrow, I wonder why such criticism has not been levelled at the city airport. I have nothing against private enterprise or privatisation provided it is brought in for all the right reasons, and provided it is useful to do so. There is no point in having a state-run airport if grants are then given to the commercial enterprise airport in Belfast, which is in competition with the international airport which is still under public control. The result is that the airlines take advantage of the situation. That is their job. They are commercial airlines and they play off one airport against the other.

Mr. Trimble: Does my hon. Friend agree that, whatever one's ideological attitude to privatisation, now is not the best time to privatise the international airport, because, in view of the uncertainty and factors that he mentioned, together with the effect of the slump, one would not get a decent price for the international airport? For that reason alone, it would be better to wait until those uncertainties have been resolved and the economy has recovered.

Mr. Forsythe: My hon. Friend makes a good point, and I fully support it. As for the international airport, we require swift, comfortable and efficient flights between Belfast and the rest of the United Kingdom. As we are part of the United Kingdom, that is essential. The great difficulty is that, if we have competition, and are relying solely on the profit motive, it will be to the detriment of the people of Northern Ireland. After electricity privatisation, we found that the promises that we were given—one of them being that the price of electricity would not rise—had not been met. Those of us who have seen what happened with privatisation of the airport are worried about whether the same thing will happen with flights between Belfast and the rest of the United Kingdom, which are essential.

Because of the time factor, I do not wish to go on too long, but there are many things that I could say. However, I should like to ask the Minister whether the Northern Ireland Office still feels that, with the changed circumstances with the airlines in Northern Ireland, privatisation should proceed at this point. Will the taxpayer get full recompense for all the public outlay that has been put into the airport? Is the Northern Ireland Office prepared to accept any price to privatise the international airport? Has account been taken of the probable loss of passengers to Belfast city airport?

Many pundits, including the General Consumer Council for Northern Ireland, have made suggestions concerning the disposal of the slots at Heathrow that are at present available to the different airlines that fly between Belfast and that airport. They suggest that instead of those slots being haggled over and horse-traded by the airlines, the Government or the relevant authority should make them available specifically for flights to Northern Ireland—as well as to Scotland, Birmingham and the other regions. It would then not be up to the airlines to haggle over the slots and about where to send their flights. In the absence of such a system, an airline might decide to use its slots at Heathrow for something else—for example, for the European market—in the hope of making a greater profit and it might discontinue its flights to the international airport or even to Belfast city airport. I ask the Minister to let me have information about that at some stage—perhaps that is letting him off the hook—or, if there is time, to give me some answers at the end of today's debate.

Finally, I remind the Minister that, although he is not responsible for these matters, other Ministers who have occupied his position have been responsible for them. They should now make up for lost time and formulate an overall transport strategy for Northern Ireland.

1.27 pm

Mr. Jim Marshall (Leicester, South): The hon. Member for Antrim, South (Mr. Forsythe) rightly drew attention to some important issues in the Province. If he does not mind, however, I shall not follow his example but propose to return instead to the more general debate that we have been having about the political situation in the Province.

First, let me pick up some of the points made by the hon. Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick). Like one or two other hon. Members, he referred to my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) and his lack of a position in the shadow Cabinet. I am sure that my hon. Friend appreciates those hon. Members' views. I should point out to the House, however, that my hon. Friend increased his votes by 26—or 40 per cent.—this time. If that approval rate continues, I am sure that next year my hon. Friend will finish up as a middle-ranking elected member of the shadow Cabinet. I am sure that that is what the Government as well as the official Unionists want.

The hon. Member for Colne Valley referred to the constitutional position of the Province and said that it should not be in doubt. Every time he commented about the constitutional position of the Province he placed it in doubt. That must also be the position of the Government since he shares their view on the matter. While there is a majority of thought in the Province to remain part of the United Kingdom, Northern Ireland will remain a part of the

United Kingdom. If and when there was a majority desire to leave the United Kingdom, the Government have said —I am sure that the hon. Member for Colne Valley agrees —that they would enable Northern Ireland to leave the United Kingdom and, if it wished, to join the Republic of Ireland. So there is no certitude in anything that the hon. Gentleman said, but a great deal of uncertainty.

I have reluctantly come to the conclusion that the 50 per cent. plus one concept is a great source of uncertainty in the Province. For that reason, I no longer accept the main thrust of the Labour party position because I should like to see a constitutional settlement which would be fair to both communities but durable and not subject to the uncertainty surrounding the 50 per cent. plus one rule. The hon. Member for Colne Valley should reconsider his view of the present constitutional position.

I thank the Secretary of State for describing the economic and social progress that we have seen in the Province over the past few years. Irrespective of party affiliation, I am sure that all hon. Members wish to see an increasingly prosperous Northern Ireland that is beneficial to both communities. We also want social provision to increase year by year in the Province. I pay tribute to the Housing Executive. It has done a great deal to improve housing provision in both communities over the past decade. I wish that the Government would show the same enthusiasm for public housing on this side of the water as they do for provision of public rented housing in the Province.

Mr. McGrady: Favourable comments have been made about the Housing Executive in Northern Ireland, especially from the Government Front Bench in the Secretary of State's introduction. If that is the case, and I certainly agree that it has done a magnificent job in difficult circumstances since it was set up, why are the Government proposing to disband it, to privatise it, to sell it to private companies, to renovate houses, to run houses and to manage tenants if it was such a great organisation that they endorse 100 per cent? It is a contradiction of the needs of Northern Ireland people to dismantle what is good and put in its place the unknown and the unwanted.

Mr. Marshall: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. He has made his point through me to the Minister and I am sure that the Minister will pick up that point and answer it when he replies.

Despite the economic and social progress, the conflict continues. I share the view of my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) that the conflict in the Province is the single most important domestic issue facing the United Kingdom. It continues to sully Britain's reputation abroad. I recently became a member of the Council of Europe—a body which speaks a great deal about civil liberties—and I always hear wry laughter when British spokespeople speak about civil liberties, bearing in mind Britain's history in the Province.

The conflict has cost billions and billions of pounds over the past 20 years and it has greatly contributed, as my right hon. Friend said, to the continuing erosion of the criminal justice system in Britain. Despite my assertion that it is the single most important domestic issue facing the country, it is continually swept to the so-called margins by mainstream politicians—as my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield once considered himself to be.

Mainstream politicians sweep the issue to the margins for one of two reasons. One reason is that there are no votes in it. When I talk to many British politicians they say, "My average voter does not care two hoots about the problems of the Province." As there are no votes in it, it is not designed to catch their attention. The second reason is that it is no quick route to enhancing their reputations. While that attitude persists, death and violence continue to stalk the Province and mainland Britain.

You may remember, Madam Deputy Speaker, that I worked for five years, together with some of my hon. Friends, as a Labour spokesperson on Northern Ireland. Although I was not so frequent a traveller to the Province as some of my hon. Friends were, on my visits there I met many people from all sections. What always impressed me was their resilience and their fortitude in the face of all the difficulties of the past 20 years.

There was a common factor running through everyone whom I met from both sections of the community. They all shared one common desire—a desire for peace, although not peace at any price. I do not like using that phrase because it underpins the war stance to which my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield referred. The people there do not want peace at any price, but a peace that would enable them to live their lives to the full and a peace that would respect their traditions and ensure that they could live free from social, economic and political discrimination. There is a fundamental desire for peace.

However, we must recognise that peace will be attained only with the development of political institutions of which both communities accept the legitimacy and to which they are prepared to be loyal. Any successful settlement must be based on that proposition and must also fulfil at least four other conditions. The first condition is that the settlement must address the relationship between Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the relationship between the Republic and Northern Ireland.

The right hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor) made one significant statement this morning, although I am not sure that he recognised its significance. When he talked about the relationship between Northern Ireland and the Republic, he kept referring to the state of Northern Ireland. In other words, he was suggesting that there was a relationship between Northern Ireland and the United Kingdom different from that between England, Scotland, Wales and the United Kingdom. That fundamental difference must be addressed.

The second condition for a successful settlement is that it must address the historically entrenched national, cultural and religious differences within Northern Ireland. We might wish that those differences did not exist, but, despite some of the figures given by the right hon. Member for Strangford, we must recognise that those differences exist and that we must take account of them.

Thirdly, we must accept the need for the wide acceptance of the judicial system and the policing institutions in the Province. They must be widely acceptable to both communities, not just to mainly one community. Fourthly, the settlement must eventually lead to a reduction in the level of violence and a removal of the rationale for the existence of paramilitary groups.

My view is not held by me alone. The Secretary of State referred to a document, so I shall bring it formally to the attention of the House. It is a document dealing with the future governance of Northern Ireland. My view is expressed in the document, as are the views of the other

[Mr. Marshall]

three authors. The authors share the view that nationality, or the sense of belonging, is the fundamental axis of conflict in Northern Ireland. The majority community feel themselves to be British and feel that they belong to the United Kingdom and to Great Britain. The minority community—whether we like it or not—have a different sense of belonging. They feel that their tradition associates them with the independent country to the south.

We have to accept that difference, and that it is based on the sense of belonging and on nationality. The national question motivates republican as well as loyalist paramilitaries and accounts for the major cleavage between the two political blocs in Northern Ireland. It has polarised political opinion in the Province since 1969, and any solution that is to be permanent cannot ignore the national question. If it does, it is doomed to failure at the outset. In the coming months and years, I and others hope that we shall convince people about the truth of that statement.

If the statement is true, any settlement that entails one national community—whether Unionists or nationalist—triumphing at the expense of another will be ruled out. I will give examples from each side. On the Unionist side, a full and permanent integration of Northern Ireland into the United Kingdom or, as is more commonly spoken about now, devolution in a purely United Kingdom context will be ruled out. On the nationalist side, and the hard line nationalist side in particular, the full integration of Northern Ireland into the Republic of Ireland would also be ruled out, as would be a federal or confederal Ireland.

I now accept, and an increasing number of people now accept, that Northern Ireland cannot be stably eased into purely Irish institutions. I have espoused the official Labour party policy for a decade, and have spoken in its favour at many private and public meetings. It is with some reluctance that I discard the views that I have held for the past decade. However, I have come to the conclusion that the British and Irish Governments should advocate reconciling the different interests at stake between the two communities through institutions that share political power between the two sovereign powers, represented by London and Dublin, and the people of Northern Ireland. My own view is that only by such a system of shared authority—I am not trying to sell the book at this point—can the present deadlock be broken and a durable and effective government created in the Province.

I emphasise the need for durability, which is an essential ingredient. It is essential that Unionists are assured that shared authority would not be a transitional mechanism which would coerce them into a territorially unified island of Ireland. It would be necessary also to reassure nationalists that it would not be a halfway house to a future independent Northern Ireland.

Mr. Barnes: Does not such a shared authority have to be established by the agreement of the two communities in Northern Ireland, and are there not considerable difficulties in trying to convince Unionist elements that they should become involved in agreements which involve links with the nationalist community?

Mr. Marshall: Perhaps I can answer my hon. Friend in this way. I said that I was about to make my final point, but now my peroration, if I am capable of making one, has been destroyed. The system of shared authority that I support would cover the whole gamut of consent or lack of consent. Clearly, it could be imposed by the two sovereign Governments or it could be achieved by consent. My view is that it should be implemented by the consent of the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland and of the two communities in Northern Ireland. Consent is clearly the best way.

I have outlined to the House the journey that I have made in the past 10 years, and particularly in the past five years, in which I have had some involvement with the people and problems of Northern Ireland. I have seen the anguish. I have experienced at second hand the pain and heartache that undoubtedly exists in the Province. We all share a responsibility to seek to eliminate that. It cannot be done quickly by forcing reluctant people into a united Ireland. The best way to achieve a lasting and peaceful solution in the Province is for the two communities to realise that they will continue to live under a unitary authority in Northern Ireland, to bury their differences and to meet halfway to share power together with their patron countries of Great Britain and the Republic of Ireland. I am sure that the wisdom and truth of that will become increasingly apparent in the next few years.

1.46 pm

Rev. William McCrea (Mid-Ulster): I have no doubt that the hon. Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Marshall) is genuine and sincere in what he has concluded from his visits to Northern Ireland. However, much of what he said is far from reality. Indeed, it is fantasy because it is not acceptable through the ballot box. It is not the democratic wish of the people of the Province.

I come to the debate with a heavy heart, as do other hon. Members, because once again a firm in my constituency has been attacked and a very honourable member of that firm was murdered last night. The backcloth of the past week also includes the death of an elderly lady. Mrs. Annie Bogle was done to death when the IRA threw a bomb at old people's property. Annie was suddenly taken from us. I have a letter in my possession which she sent to me when she entered that fold and which I shall cherish as long as I am a Member of Parliament and even after those days. She wrote that she was so happy that we had been able to assist her in getting that little house. Little did I know when I assisted her to obtain that little house that it would be the means by which Annie would be taken from us and called to eternity. It certainly grieves me sore. Those are the harsh realities of the situation in Northern Ireland.

I have listened with care to all that has been said here today about the future of the Province. A few realities had better be faced. Northern Ireland is a part of the United Kingdom not because there are troops on the streets, not because there are policemen there with weapons in their hands, but because it is the democratic wish of the people of Northern Ireland to be a part of the United Kingdom. Therefore, all constitutional uncertainty as to the position of Northern Ireland within the United Kingdom should be removed.

The Government owe it to the long-suffering people—those whose fortitude in the face of danger amazed the Member for Leicester, South—to come out from the sidelines and off the fence. The Government and the Secretary of State should declare openly and clearly, not only that they accept that Northern Ireland is a part of the United Kingdom and should be a part of the United

Kingdom as long as the majority of the people want it to remain a part of the United Kingdom, but that the Government are committed to the United Kingdom and want Northern Ireland to remain a part of the United Kingdom. That is what the long-suffering people of Northern Ireland long for.

When the Secretary of State was asked the other day whether he was Unionist, he said something which I find alarming. He said he was a "new Northern Irelandist". Whatever that is under the sun, I can assure him that the people of Northern Ireland do not know what that means. Had any Unionist made that statement, he would have been lambasted as someone desiring an independent Ulster. Through the ballot box the people of Northern Ireland are Unionists and they are a part of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Beggs: Will the hon. Gentleman re-emphasise that we continually refer in Northern Ireland to the greater majority? In canvassing, people from both comunities, at every opportunity given to them in the past—denied in recent times—have declared their desire to remain in the United Kingdom. So for the foreseeable future, for many generations, the position will not change and we have to be granted stability through that recognition.

Rev. William McCrea: I whole-heartedly agree with the assessment of the hon. Member for Antrim, East (Mr. Beggs). Many figures have been bandied about and often we are told by Members of Her Majesty's Opposition that in a period of time there will be a majority of Roman Catholics in Northern Ireland and that, therefore, the Unionists should look over their shoulders. I reject that because I do not believe that it is factual. People said that in the 1930s. They are still saying it.

It is an insult to suggest to quite a number of my constituents, even west of the Bann, that, because they happen to be born into a Roman Catholic home and believe in the Roman Catholic faith, that automatically puts them into a little political box of those in favour of a united Ireland, or that they are united Irelanders. That is not true. Her Majesty's Opposition owe an apology to the people of Northern Ireland, and especially those of my constituents who resent that suggestion. If that suggestion were true, there would be a difference in the complexion of the membership of the House.

Many of the people of mid-Ulster have strong opinions. Many of them are happy in the Roman Catholic community and I defend their right to be happy; they are members of the United Kingdom and they want to remain so. Why should they not? They were born British citizens. Why should they not desire to remain so? No member of the SDLP or of Her Majesty's Opposition has the right to take away those people's British heritage or to regard them as lesser mortals because they do not believe in the fantasy of a united Ireland.

Not only is Northern Ireland a part of the United Kingdom, but it follows automatically from that that there is only one legitimate Government of the United Kingdom. We have to get away from the tragedy of the Anglo-Irish Agreement which allowed a foreign Government to have a say in the internal affairs of Northern Ireland. In the historic and even recent past—one only has to think of the Falklands war—they proved themselves to be not only a foreign Government but a foreign enemy Government because, when we had our backs against the wall and were facing the bombs, bullets and aggression of others, we discovered where they stood when it came to the testing time. They are now given the right to interfere in the internal affairs of Northern Ireland, a right which even we, who sit in this House, do not have.

Under the Anglo-Irish Agreement, a determined effort is to be made to reach an agreement with the Government of the Irish Republic but all parties represented in the House, and those from Northern Ireland, know full well that the Government are under no obligation to make a determined effort to reach an agreement with the people and their representatives in the Province. The Government have given to a foreign Government a right that they deny even to hon. Members who sit in the House.

Mr. Terry Dicks (Hayes and Harlington): To use a religious analogy, does the hon. Gentleman agree that if one were to write the benefits of the Anglo-Irish Agreement on the back of a postage stamp, there would be enough room to write the Lord's prayer in long hand?

Rev. William McCrea: I agree with the hon. Gentleman. No one—not even the most committed advocates of the Anglo-Irish Agreement at the beginning—can suggest that it has brought any real benefits. Indeed, its supporters are now saying that it has failed. Unfortunately, not only has it failed but it has cost the innocent blood of the innocent British people of Northern Ireland and the ordinary individuals, the young lads from the mainland who rightly came to defend a part of the United Kingdom. Many have been carried home in boxes because Sinn Fein, with which the SDLP is in cahoots, said that the lesson to be learnt from the Anglo-Irish Agreement was "More violence, more concessions". Indeed, it was Danny Morrison, the person who stood for Sinn Fein in my constituency and whom I beat by 78 votes, who said that the lesson to be learnt was "More violence, more concessions". Therefore, the agreement has failed.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): The hon. Gentleman said earlier that there was no determined effort to work with the people in Northern Ireland. Will he confirm that this day week, in conjunction with the hon. Member for Belfast, West (Dr. Hendron) and a representative of the Alliance party, we sought to present various issues to the Minister with responsibility for health and social services in Northern Ireland. There was not obviously a determined effort to reach an agreement with us.

Rev. William McCrea: That meeting certainly took place, but I cannot say what the outcome was. We are still hoping that the Government may have a change of heart. However, we have made a joint representation, as is appropriate and proper, as the unanimous voice of the will and wish of the people. I therefore believe that the Government are duty bound to make a determined effort to respond to that representation.

I shall be brief, although I refer to an issue of great importance. Unlike some, I do not believe that the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) is being used by the IRA in the current talks. That is far from the truth. I believe that he deliberately went into cahoots with Sinn Fein/IRA as a way of adding muscle to his demands for an all-Ireland solution which eluded him in the previous talks. Of course, that tactic has been used before. It was used in 1982-86 at the Prior assembly which the SDLP boycotted and set up an alternative Irish forum in Dublin. The SDLP always

[Rev. William McCrea]

runs to Dublin. The SDLP will not sit down and produce something which will meet the needs of the Province within the Province. As we have already said——

Mr. McGrady: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Rev. William McCrea: No, I am sorry. Time is running out.

Mr. McGrady: Why not hear the truth?

Mr. William McCrea: I know the truth. The reality is that as far as the present talks are concerned—and I listened to the hon. Member for Foyle who spoke extensively today—we are simply told, "Wait and see."

While the people of Northern Ireland are dying, an elected representative and Sinn Fein spokesman went to the United States a few weeks ago, as did an hon. Member of this House, and stated that the IRA was morally justified. We are not talking about the Provos; we are told that that is the view of Sinn Fein. Let us find out what is the difference between the two. As that Sinn Fein representative tried to prevent the extradition of a terrorist from the United States to the United Kingdom, he said that the IRA was morally justified in assassinating British judges and members of the British establishment.

That statement encompasses the Front Bench because it is part of the establishment. Was that statement made when Margaret Thatcher faced the hunger strikers? No, it was made when the leader of the SDLP told the people of Northern Ireland, "Wait and see. With Sinn Fein and Gerry Adams, we are producing peace." The talk is of peace, but the heart is a heart of blood and war.

Once again, the people of Northern Ireland face the usual con trick. They will be offered peace. The SDLP press release states that the new idea has two basic ingredients. It involves the language of consent and, at the same time, it incorporates the tactics of coercion. It involves consent because the Unionists' agreement and allegiance would be required before any decision arising from a multi-party conference could be implemented. Coercion arises because self-determination would be based on the right of the Irish people as a whole.

In other words, the hon. Member for Foyle and his friends in IRA-Sinn Fein are demanding the biggest gerrymander in the history of political activity to ensure a majority for their demands. The people of Northern Ireland will not have the right to decide the constitutional future of the Province. Instead, that will be placed in the hands of the people of a foreign Government and those in the south of Ireland.

The SDLP can come up with any kind of eyewash. It can try and pretend to talk peace, but the people of Northern Ireland know exactly what this is all about. It will take away the right of the people of Northern Ireland to remain an integral, full and vital part of the United Kingdom family.

Without a shadow of a doubt, no matter what trick in the book is tried and no matter how the SDLP tries to paint us, the vast majority of the people of Northern Ireland will not go down the Dublin road because the people of Northern Ireland have sealed their Britishness—not only their rights and heritage, but their Britishness—with the blood of the innocent people of our Province. No one, and I care not who that person is, has a right to deny the people of Northern Ireland their British right as expressed through the ballot box.

Some hon. Members may not accept those facts and realities. They can deride whoever says such things and they can say whatever they like. They can say that this is poppycock. However, I can assure you, Madam Deputy Speaker, that the reality is that Northern Ireland's majority will not change its mind about the Irish Republic. It wants and desires—it has always desired—to remain a friendly neighbour. And why not? Do hon. Members think that people are fools if they do not want genuine and lasting peace north and south? Certainly we do, but we can have good neighbourliness only as long as the people living beside us are good neighbours. The United Kingdom Government and the people of the United Kingdom have reached out the hand of friendship down the years, desiring to be good neighbours.

I have never once in all my political life expressed any designs upon the territory of the Irish Republic. I have never once interfered in the right of the Government of the Irish Republic, no matter what I have thought of them personally. They have a right to govern and they have a right to be the Government of the Irish Republic. But when they interfere and, in articles 2 and 3, illegally claim a part of her Majesty's territory, and the IRA rides on the back of that claim and murders, as it has, my own family and kith and kin and those of my constituents, I would be treacherous and a traitor to my people if I were to place my hand to anything that would undermine the democratic process and the right of the people of Northern Ireland to be a part of that United Kingdom.

Right hon. and hon. Members can call Gerry Adams "Mr." as long as they like, but I can assure them that the leopard has not changed his spots. Gerry Adams has been and still is a terrorist, and until the day he dies he will have the blood of the innocent people of Northern Ireland on his and his deputy's hands.

Whenever there was a Cook report on a constituent of mine who happened to be in the loyalist community, the next morning that constituent was arrested and questioned. It would be strange if the Goverenment were not somehow in cahoots in this messy situation. Why was Martin Maginnis not arrested the next morning? Programmes such as the two on Martin Maginnis are a damning indictment of any person. He should have been arrested. He would have been arrested had he been a Unionist. He would have been arrested if he had been from the loyalist community.

It seems to be that one cannot touch Sinn Fein. I have to say to the hon. Member for Foyle that there is an old saying in my part of the country—the hon. Gentleman's constituency is next to mine—that if you lie down with the dogs you rise with the fleas. The reality of the situation is that John Hume has lain down with the dog of Sinn Fein. How could any constitutional Unionist regard John Hume in any talks as the constitutional——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. We will start with the rules in this House. The hon. Gentleman knows that we refer to people by their constituencies, not by their names.

Rev. William McCrea: I apologise, Madam Deputy Speaker. Certainly, I am delighted to mention the hon. Member for Foyle from Londonderry. The hon. Member for Foyle has soiled himself by sitting down with Sinn Fein. He has soiled himself by putting his hand to

something which he can run off to America and tell them about. He can run off to Dublin and tell them about it, and he can run and call in Mandela and tell him about it, but the only people whom he cannot tell about it are the United Kingdom Government or the United Kingdom people.

It seems that we are to be left in the dark and our people still to die. IRA Sinn Feiners still murder the people of Northern Ireland and still we have the words, "This is the greatest effort towards peace." It is the biggest con trick that Northern Ireland has faced for many years. They might con some of the people and some of the elected representatives, but my colleagues and I are not conned by what is happening. There is an agenda—an agenda for the destruction of Northern Ireland. One thing is sure: Gerry Adams might say 1,000 times how much he dissociates himself from violence. I could not care if it were five years or 10 years. He will never change the reality of what he is—a terrorist. He will always be a terrorist. He has no place at any conference table. Members of the Ulster Democratic Unionist party will not sit down with him.

2.9 pm

Mr. Roger Stott (Wigan): I agree with the Secretary of State that it has been a long time since the House has been able to debate Northern Ireland for a whole day. The debate has allowed many hon. Members who are elected by the constituents of Northern Ireland to express their views. I am sorry that not all hon. Members have had an opportunity to participate in the debate. I am sure that the Minister will need a little time to answer some of the points raised.

This year, the world has witnessed two great historic events that none of us imagined could happen. Nelson Mandela and President de Klerk have rightly been recognised by the Nobel committee for their personal and political courage in finding a lasting peace settlement for South Africa. Two months ago on the lawn of the White House. Yitzhak Rabin offered the hand of peace to Yasser Arafat, accompanied by the word "enough". In South Africa, Israel and Palestine, some people will do everything that they can violently to destabilise the peace process. Thankfully, the vast majority of ordinary people in those countries are willing to make peace and democracy work, while respecting their differences and traditions.

In the light of those historic events, many people in the United Kingdom have rightly been asking, "If it can happen in South Africa, Israel and Palestine, why cannot it happen in Northern Ireland?" Northern Ireland is the most politically violent region in the whole of the European Community. The conflict in and over Northern Ireland is a collective catastrophe for all of the people who live in these islands. We are all affected by the conflict. We are all affected by the deaths and the destruction that it brings, the corrosive effect that it has on people's civil liberties and its economic, legal, security and political costs.

Some people contend that the problems of Northern Ireland are insoluble. As someone who has had the opportunity to be involved in Northern Ireland politics for some years, I do not subscribe to that facile school of thought. It is a view which only leads to the complacent acceptance of the status quo. In that regard, I agree with the deputy leader of the Democratic Unionist party, the hon. Member for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson), who said some months ago:

> "We face the situation where there is widespread instability; there are no political structures dealing with the regional government of Northern Ireland; over 3,000 people have been murdered; over 35,000 have been maimed and mutilated. Only a fool would suggest that that was a satisfactory solution. Clearly the status quo is not acceptable."

The unacceptability of the status quo should be the starting point. While the democratic deficit exists in Northern Ireland, the void will clearly be filled by the despicable atrocities that have been perpetrated by both sets of paramilitaries. Despite the appalling horror and violence, there are many encouraging signs emerging of greater co-operation. I listened carefully to what the Secretary of State said this morning about those signs. I absolutely agree that there is another agenda in Northern Ireland that we should publicise even more.

During the appropriation debate in the summer, I outlined what is a fact of daily life—the growing co-operation between Northern Ireland and the Republic's business community based on Sir George Quigley's vision of "Ireland—An island economy". Incidentally, that speech was predictably rubbished by the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley). However, to anyone who does not actively seek to become the last political dinosaur in "Jurassic Park", it is self-evident that the new internal market in the European Community necessitates greater co-operation. Such co-operation is absolutely vital within the island of Ireland across all sectors of industry and the economy.

Today, my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) clearly and unambiguously set out the Labour party's position on Northern Ireland and its preferred options. But any solution to the problem of Northern Ireland must start from a recognition by everybody of each community's core values. It will require the creation of political and legal institutions, which will enable both communities to enjoy the benefits of equality, without having to assimilate them forcibly. It will require institutionalising equal respect for nationalists and loyalists, for their culture and for their religious heritage. Without institutionalising the respect for those core values, no settlement would have any lasting value.

I said earlier that the conflict in Northern Ireland affects everyone in these islands. Although I cannot speak for people in the Irish Republic, I can say genuinely and sincerely to hon. Members from Northern Ireland that in the rest of Britain there is a feeling among many people that they are fed up with what they perceive to be the whole sorry mess—I deeply regret that. Hon. Members should not underestimate the school of thought that believes that we should "let them get on with it". That school of thought was referred to by the hon. Member for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter) and it is all too pervasive. I intended to say much more about that but, in passing, I say to the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) and his colleagues on the Unionist Bench that there are thousands of families in the coalfield communities of this country, mine included, who will not lightly forgive or forget the part played by the Ulster Unionist party in aiding and abetting the Government in the butchery of the British coal industry. Loyalism is a two-way street.

When the so-called Brooke initiative on Northern Ireland was taking place, and when the present Secretary of State took over the talks process, my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, North and I, on behalf of the British Labour party and Her Majesty's Opposition, did everything that we could actively to encourage the talks

[Mr. Roger Stott]

process. Those discussions between the constitutional parties in Northern Ireland and the Irish and British Governments are still our preferred option. For those discussions to stand any chance of success, there can be no wrecking preconditions. It is in the interest of the people of Aldershot and Accrington as well as of the people of Antrim that a just and durable settlement can be found.

Mr. Riddick: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Stott: No, I shall not. I want to finish my speech and let the Minister reply to the debate.

I have two questions for the Minister. Are the Government considering creating the Select Committee on Northern Ireland without the agreement of all the constitutional parties in Northern Ireland? Will the Minister confirm from the Dispatch Box that the Government are unequivocally continuing their support for the Anglo-Irish Agreement?

During the debate, we have heard many shades of opinion. The debate has been extremely interesting and occasionally heated. No one would for one moment suggest that it should not have been. The constitutional parties in Northern Ireland and the British and Irish Governments have a solemn duty to find the personal and political courage to cross the rubicon. They have a duty to find a solution to the problem in Northern Ireland—a solution for which the vast majority of people in these islands yearn. In case it could help the process along in any way, I have asked my good friend Afif Safieh, the head of the Palestine Liberation Organisation mission in London, whether the chalet on the fjord is still available. The answer is that it is.

Mr. Livingstone: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. When the Secretary of State opened the debate this morning, he denounced me. Given the number of hon. Members who wished to speak, it was not possible for me to catch your eye or that of any of the other occupants of the Chair in order to respond to those attacks. Would you use your authority to grant me five minutes in order to answer those charges and put the alternative view? There is a tradition in the House that if an hon. Member is attacked by another, that hon. Member is called in the debate to respond.

Dr. Hendron: Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. My colleagues, as well as the leader of my party, have been attacked most maliciously today by a number of hon. Members, but just one of my colleagues was called to speak. I have been in the Chamber since prayers at 9.30 am and I have not had the opportunity to speak in the debate. Should you give the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) five minutes to speak, I, too, should be given the same time.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. Before I take any further points of order, I should like to deal with the issue raised. Such problems arose from the fact that hon. Members on both sides of the House ignored Madam Speaker's earlier plea for short speeches. If short speeches had been the order of the day, everybody, but everybody, would have had the opportunity to put his or her point. I am afraid that it is not possible to grant the request of the hon. Member for Brent, East (Mr. Livingstone) for five minutes to put his case.

Mr. Barnes: Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. If you had chosen to grant that request, could you have arranged for someone to attack me in the House as well, since I have been here all the time?

Madam Deputy Speaker: I take the hon. Gentleman's point.

Rev. Martin Smyth: I believe that the hon. Member for Belfast, West (Dr. Hendron) is a little forgetful, as he was not in the Chamber for prayers—I was. My party, which is the largest party in Northern Ireland, has been attacked but just two of my colleagues were called to speak. Perhaps the opening speeches from those on the Front Benches could be a little shorter in future.

Mr. Livingstone: Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Could I ask for the debate to be extended for half an hour to take in a further six five-minute contributions? Could I move that formally?

Madam Deputy Speaker: The rules do not permit that.

2.21 pm

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Sir John Wheeler): I am very glad to have the concluding nine minutes of the debate to try to reply to some of the many points raised by right hon. and hon. Members.

This has been an important debate for the House, in prime time and during a good part of the day, not least because many hon. Members from Northern Ireland have been able to be present to make a contribution in their various ways. That was particularly welcome. I shall reply to some of the points mentioned by the hon. Member for Wigan (Mr. Stott) in a few moments.

One of the themes of the debate has been that everyone has condemned wanton violence and killing, regardless of the cause. We associate that thinking in the House today with the murder of the building contractor, Mr. Gibson. That was yet another in a long line of wanton, pointless killings that achieve precisely nothing. At least there is some small consolation for the relatives of the latest vicitm that today the House remembered that murder with great concern and grief and condemned it absolutely. I assure the House that the Royal Ulster Constabulary will leave no stone unturned in its search for those responsible.

I should like to consider some of the points raised by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara). He asked specifically whether the Government intended to stand by the Anglo-Irish agreement. I can say without hesitation that the Government intend to do so. Meetings of the intergovernmental conference held under it prove a useful mechanism for co-operation between the Republic of Ireland and the Government, and that arrangement will continue.

Rev. Martin Smyth: I appreciate the terms in which the Minister is responding, but does he agree that the last talks commenced with both Governments and all parties making a commitment to seek to replace that agreement with a better one? Was it not tragic that Albert Reynolds, the

Taoiseach, called for cancellation of the talks because he thought that the Anglo-Irish Agreement was withering? Where was the good faith there?

Sir John Wheeler: I am grateful for what the hon. Gentleman says. Of course the talks will continue to explore all the possibilities. If alternatives can be found which meet with the approval and agreement of all the concerned and interested parties, I assure the hon. Gentleman that they will be put forward for further consideration.

Mr. Peter Robinson: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir John Wheeler: Will the hon. Gentleman allow me to continue for a few moments and deal with a further point raised by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North? He referred to a Select Committee for Northern Ireland. As he knows, I have some small knowledge of Select Committees and how they operate. I also know how people come to be appointed to them and removed from them, as I have some experience of that, too. It is for the House to decide whether there should be a further Select Committee specifically for Northern Ireland. The membership of such a Committee would also be decided by the House, and the House would vote on the names recommended, from wherever they may come, to approve them or substitute other names for membership of that Committee. It is not for me to say what the House should do about that, but entirely a matter for the procedures of the House.

Mr. McNamara: Will the Government support the establishment of such a Committee if it does not have the support of the Social Democratic and Labour party and the Labour party?

Sir John Wheeler: As the hon. Gentleman knows, it is for the usual channels and the procedures of the House to determine those matters. The hon. Gentleman has yet to make it clear whether his party would unhesitatingly support such a proposal, so it remains a matter for the parties and the House as a whole to decide.

The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North also referred to deals with the Ulster Unionist party. I cannot see why there should be a need for such deals. Members of that party have only to consider the Opposition's policies to determine how they should vote in the House. All they need to do is consider the Opposition's support for the so-called social chapter to recognise that it would rob the Northern Irish people of the job opportunities that they so desperately need. They have only to look, too, at the future that the Opposition have in mind for Northern Ireland to come to their own conclusion. They require no special arrangements to make up their minds about that.

I hope that I have put that matter to rest.

Among those who spoke today was the hon. Member for North Down (Sir J. Kilfedder) who, if I may say so, is a great champion of his constituents; he is always going into bat to improve the quality of life of the people of whom he is privileged to serve. The Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary will look with interest at the hon. Gentleman's comments on policing in his constituency to see how it may be further improved, perhaps through the police liaison committees which operate so effectively.

The hon. Member for North Down asked about the future of residential homes. I can tell him that the consultation process is still under way. So far as the Banks residential home is concerned, the hon. Gentleman will be glad to know that there is to be a public meeting about its future on 10 February 1994. No decision has yet been made. I know that those who have a concern about the matter will heed his voice with care.

It being half past Two o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

Business of the House

Ordered,

That, at the sitting on Tuesday 26th October, notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Orders No. 14 (Exempted business) and No. 15 (Prayers against statutory instruments, &c. (negative procedure), the Speaker shall put the Questions necessary to dispose of proceedings on:

(a) the Motion in the name of Mr. John Smith relating to Health and Safety at Mines not later than Seven o'clock;

(b) the Motion in the name of Secretary Sir Patrick Mayhew relating to Northern Ireland (Education and Libraries) not later than one and a half hours after their commencement; and

(c) the Motion in the name of Mr. John Smith relating to Education (School Teachers' Pay and Conditions) not later than one and a half hours after their commencement;

and the third Motion may be proceeded with after the expiry of the time for opposed business.—*[Mr. Michael Brown.]*

Ordered,

That, at the sitting on Friday 29th October, notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business), the Speaker shall, not later than half-past Two o'clock, put the Questions necessary to dispose of proceedings on the Motions in the name of Mr. Michael Alison relating to the Priests (Ordination of Women) Measure and the Ordination of Women (Financial Provisions) Measure.—*[Mr. Michael Brown.]*

Simpkin Partnership

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Michael Brown.]*

2.30 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): I am pleased that, at last, I have been able to secure the Adjournment debate on the Simpkin Partnership and Nuclear Electric. It has taken some time to get it and I am grateful to have it at last.

The problem is that Martin Simpkin, a constituent of mine, is the principal partner of the Simpkin Partnership, which is an engineering and quantity surveying consultancy that has offices at his home in Highbury, in my constituency. Its work is essentially troubleshooting on major contracts on things such as nuclear power stations —the burden of the argument I shall put forward today —and it also does quantity surveying, and the preparation of documents for contractors, in negotiation with the client, on how and when a final settlement and final payment should be made. Payment is usually made on the basis of fees for the partnership for its professional services and also a proportion—in this case 10 per cent.—of the final payments that are agreed as savings between the main contractor and the client.

The Simpkin Partnership was formed some years ago and was a fairly small partnership, but grew quickly because it was successful and well thought of in the work that it does. At its height, it employed some 20 people who did a variety of jobs, and was well known for its commitment and zeal for its work and the dedication of its staff. At its high point, it had a turnover of £1 million in fees, which had risen from £3,000 in 1985 when it was formed, so we have an idea of how quickly and well it did its work.

The problem that the Simpkin Partnership now faces, particularly Martin Simpkin, is that he initially undertook to do some work for Modern Security Systems in 1991. MSS had achieved a contract with Nuclear Electric to install security systems at Heysham power station in the north west of England. That contract was going extremely badly. I should say that MSS is a wholly owned subsidiary of the Ash Group. The contract was heading way behind contract date. The company was clearly in problems, as it had hoped also to achieve further contracts at other power stations Trawsfynydd, Dungeness, Oldbury and Hartlepool. Its future success depended much on the success or failure of its contract for the initial work that was being done at Heysham power station.

I have here details of the state of Modern Security Systems' trading account on its nuclear power station work when the Simpkin Partnership was brought in: by October 1991, MSS had lost £1·3 million on the work itself plus liquidated damages and quantity surveying fees—a total loss of £1·892 million on the contract. The date is important, being the date at which the Simpkin Partnership was brought in to assist in project management and to try to turn the thing round so that the project could be completed to the satisfaction of the main contractor and client, Nuclear Electric.

By June 1992, the contract was making a profit of £2·64 million less liquidated damages of £427,000 and fees of £150,000. In other words, a loss of nearly £2 million was turned into a £2 million profit in less than a year, largely due to the work of the Simpkin Partnership. Before the

partnership was brought in to assist it, Modern Security Systems had been losing a great deal of money on all the power station contracts. Clearly, some success can be attributed to the work of the Simpkin Partnership.

As I said earlier, the partnership's work involved troubleshooting, project management and documentation of the final negotiations that would take place with Nuclear Electric before it would be satisfied and make final payments to the company. I have seen volumes of correspondence suggesting that, initially, Nuclear Electric was extremely disappointed with the progress of the work being done by Modern Security Systems and extremely disatisfied with its quality and that on various occasions it made veiled or not so veiled threats to withdraw the contract altogether and end the relationship with the company. That would have had a catastrophic effect—and those words were used—on the future of Modern Security Systems. The Simpkin Partnership's work turned the thing round so that by 5 November 1991 Nuclear Electric was able to say that it was

"pleased to bear witness to the improvement of the performance of MSS . . . in relation to one particular contract."

That is typical of this whole sorry saga.

The nub of my argument concerns the system of payment. The Simpkin Partnership is a small company which was brought in in desperation by a larger company because it was failing badly. Had the contract failed completely, it would have led to serious problems for MSS, if not to the company's liquidation. It was a desperate situation. The Simpkin Partnership was brought in, pulled the fat out of the fire, turned the contracts round and ensured that MSS gained further work and further contracts out of which it subsequently made a great deal of money.

The problem is—and it is a problem that seems rife in other sectors of industry, too—that, in an arrogant and high-handed way, MSS simply refused to pay the Simpkin Partnership what it was owed. The total amount paid was £50,000 in management fees and £15,000 in surveyors' fees—a total of £65,000. The amount owed to the Simpkin Partnership is considerably greater than that. At least £350,000 is still owed as a combination of fees and a proportion of repayments made by Nuclear Electric to MSS plus the partnership's legal costs plus interest on the money owed. We are talking about a global sum of roughly £500,000. At the same time, payments have been made by Nuclear Electric for the security work. The contracts related entirely to personnel security work around power stations, fencing, closed circuit television and so on. In the case of Hartlepool power station, £1·7 million has been paid; in the case of Trawsfynydd, £1·3 million; in the case of Dungeness, £3·1 million. The Oldbury and Heasham contracts are unresolved.

This state of affairs has put the Simpkin Partnership in a desperate situation. It has had to give up its offices, and Mr. Simpkin now has to work from home. The company is a much smaller operation than it was. It is a devastating blow to the partnership that it is having to involve itself in acquiring extensive legal advice and in potential litigation to secure the money that it is clearly owed by MSS.

Mr. Simpkin asked me for assistance and advice. I wrote to the Secretary of State and tabled a number of parliamentary questions, but it is a complicated subject. Who is responsible for ensuring that Modern Security Systems stands up to its obligations and pay the partnership the money that it is owed? I hope that the Minister can help.

Nuclear Electric, which administers the power stations, undertook the building of them and let the contract to the Automated Security (Holdings) Group and MSS for the security work, in which the partnership became involved, is a publicly owned company. In that sense, the Minister is responsible to Parliament for the operation of that company and one hopes that he will look seriously into its work.

Secondly, the quality of work that was initially done by MSS was not of the best order. There are piles of documentation to suggest that. If litigation finally proceeds, around 100,000 documents may be examined that consider the poor quality work, which was turned around by the Simpkin Partnership. One should look carefully at how the contracts are let and who is involved in letting them.

There is also the question of the payment of the subcontractor. There is provision by which Nuclear Electric can bypass MSS and pay the money, which they clearly owe, directly to the Simpkin Partnership.

We should consider the role that the Department of Trade may be able to take. The Department of Trade and Industry has a number of responsibilities. As the energy Department, it is responsible for the entire operation of nuclear electricity production and the safety of nuclear power stations. That responsibility includes the safety of the operation of the generation capacity and the physical safety of the buildings, the plant, equipment and access to it. Also, the Department has a responsibility, with its other arm, for the relationships between big and small businesses in industry. There is a legion of big contractors taking on smaller contractors to do their work. There is nothing wrong with that; it is normal in contractual relationships, but what is entirely wrong is that when the big companies find the going is getting tough—as they have during the recession—they boost their cash flows by delaying payments or not paying smaller contractors, which has devastating consequences.

The Simpkin Partnership has had to give up its offices, and there has been a great deal of strain on Martin Simpkin and his family. Also, relationships with his bank have been put under tremendous strain. The bank has been co-operative, but its patience will wear thin unless some final payment is made as a result of the pressures that we may exert on his behalf.

I look to the Minister to outline exactly what his responsibilities are in those areas, what pressure he is able or prepared to put on Nuclear Electric, to examine the quality of the work done by MSS and to ensure that this small engineering consultancy, which has a high reputation for good-quality work and which employs an enthusiastic group of people who are determined to do a good job in engineering and quantity surveying are paid the money that they are owed so that they can continue working normally. No company should be put through such a process as a result of the arrogance of large companies. I hope that the Minister says something about the approach that many large companies take towards smaller companies.

If the situation is not resolved, what are the alternatives open to a small company such as the Simpkin Partnership? Must it shut up shop and become bankrupt, resulting in a number of people becoming unemployed? A number of skills would not be put to good use for a long time and we

[Mr. Jeremy Corbyn]

would all be generally worse off. If there were some legal and financial regime to ensure that such companies are not allowed to behave in such a way, especially when the major client company is a publicly owned company, the likes of the Simpkin Partnership and many similar companies would be a lot better off.

This is an important case. It is a crucial case for my constituent and I am pleased to be able to speak for him and to represent him. It is also an important case because of its implications which run widely within the industry. I hope that the Minister can help us in that respect, and that he will ensure that my constituent gets his money quickly so that he can get on with his business and his life, rather than having to surround himself with documents going back years as he pursues litigation that he should never have had to pursue in the first place.

2.44 pm

The Minister for Energy (Mr. Tim Eggar): I am grateful to the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) for raising the issue and I am sure that his constituent is also grateful. It is fair to say that this is a slightly unusual case, in that there are no allegations that Nuclear Electric itself has behaved improperly or has delayed payments. The involvement of Nuclear Electric is almost incidental; the dispute is between Modern Security Systems, in most cases the main subcontractor to Nuclear Electric, and MSS's adviser, retained consulting engineer and quantity surveyor, the Simpkin Partnership.

Having made that point, having been for some time the Minister responsible for small businesses and being aware of the considerable and widespread concern about the late payment of debts, and about the nature of the relationship between large companies and small companies, I agree with the hon. Gentleman that it is important that companies of all sizes pay the contractual debts that are due. We all, of course, accept that from time to time there are contractual disputes. That is in the nature of business, and the Simpkin Partnership knows that more than most because it makes a living out of advising people on disputes, as I understand it from the hon. Gentleman's description of the business.

Mr. Corbyn: Part of its living.

Mr. Eggar: As part of its work. As a general matter of principle, the Government attach much importance to the prompt payment of debts. One of my questions when I knew that the issue would be raised by the hon. Gentleman on the Floor of the House concerned Nuclear Electric's own record. It appears that apart from slight initial problems when it first became an independent company, Nuclear Electric has had a good record of paying invoices when they are due. Certainly, no cases of late payment per se have been brought to my attention while I have been Minister. There are, of course, as in any big business, a number of disputes about the amount that must be paid. That is something rather different.

The hon. Gentleman raised the question of the relationship between the Government as 100 per cent. shareholder in Nuclear Electric and the management of the company. The company is wholly owned by the Government, but I take the strong view as Minister that the correct relationship between a nationalised industry, and the Department and the sponsoring Minister is that Ministers should expect the management to manage the company and should not expect to intervene in day-to-day management matters.

There have been a number of recent developments with regard to Nuclear Electric which support my approach to establishing the relationship with senior management. I do not believe that Ministers should be in the business of second-guessing nationalised industries at every turn. Over past years, the tendency for political intervention has contributed significantly to the lack of efficiency and to the unresponsiveness that were, going back to the war, such features of nationalised industries. I pay tribute to Nuclear Electric for the way in which it has improved its efficiency over recent years and months. It is widely accepted that the present management has done an extremely good job in terms of increasing output and of decreasing costs.

I shall respond in brief to the hon. Gentleman regarding the Government's role in contractual matters. In the absence of clear evidence of fraud, maladministration of funds or of similar matters, the contractual matters must be left to the management of Nuclear Electric. The hon. Gentleman raised implicitly a question about whether the dispute between the Simpkin Partnership and MMS regarding the quality of work carried out by MSS had in some way adversely affected the security arrangements at nuclear power stations. That is obviously of concern to the House, and to me.

I have made inquiries and I have received an absolute assurance from Nuclear Electric that, whatever its views on the quality of work that was provided by MSS, it does not believe that security at the power stations was in any way affected. The difficulty that we have, and I have made it clear in my response to a letter that I received from the hon. Gentleman, is that the dispute is between the Simpkin Partnership and MSS. It would be obviously inappropriate to intervene in any way in a contractual dispute, which, as the hon. Gentleman said, appears to be in the hands of solicitors of the two parties concerned.

The hon. Gentleman stated to me in a previous conversation that there may be a possible contractual right for Nuclear Electric to pay moneys directly to the Simpkin Partnership. If he would try to explain that statement on behalf of the partnership, I will ask Nuclear Electric to study it. In the relatively short time that I have had to investigate the matter, it appears to me that, if the sub-clause that I have identified is the sub-clause to which he has referred, I do not think that that power applies in this case. However, I will look at it and I accept the point that there is the possibility of a locus between Nuclear Electric and the Simpkin Partnership. I would not want to exclude that without asking Nuclear Electric to investigate the matter further.

I understand the hon. Gentleman's concern that he has expressed on behalf of the Simpkin Partnership. Because of my time as the Minister with responsibility for small businesses and because of my experience as a constituency Member of Parliament, I appreciate the difficulties which small companies can get into in contractual relationships with large companies. From time to time, there is exploitation by large companies of the relatively weak position of smaller companies.

Mr. Corbyn: The Minister is aware that Nuclear Electric has paid £6·1 million to MSS for security works. Clearly the money was not paid on to the Simpkin

Partnership or the dispute would not exist. Is the Minister prepared to try to write into future contracts with companies such as MSS that they must fulfil their obligations to their own subcontractors which, in effect, are being paid at arm's length by Nuclear Electric?

Mr. Eggar: My immediate reaction to the hon. Gentleman is that this must be a matter for contractual negotiation between the main contractor and subsequently between any subcontractors to the main contractor. Normal commercial negotiation is the best way to approach the matter. I will certainly raise the issue with the managing director of Nuclear Electric and ask him to consider it, because I understand the point that the hon. Gentleman has raised.

I wish that I could be more helpful to the hon. Gentleman. I always seek to play as constructive a role as possible in Adjournment debates. It is an important function of Members of Parliament to raise such issues on the Floor of the House. Often, an Adjournment debate makes it possible for Ministers and Members to move things forward. However, in this case, the nature of the dispute, which by common consent does not involve Nuclear Electric directly, makes it difficult for me to be as positive as I should otherwise like to be.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at five minutes to Three o'clock.

House of Commons

Monday 25 October 1993

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Tourism

2. **Mr. Jenkin:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what briefing he has received from the English tourist board on the regulations which might be removed from tourist businesses.

8. **Mrs. Lait:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what representations he has received from the English tourist board on the regulations which could suitably be removed from tourism businesses.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for National Heritage (Mr. Iain Sproat): The English tourist board has contributed information suggestions to my inquiry into the effects of regulation on tourism and to the retail tourism and other services task force established by the Department of Trade and Industry. In addition, I have had many representations from trade associations and individuals in the tourism and leisure sectors. I am taking up with ministerial colleagues a number of the concerns that they have raised.

Mr. Jenkin: May I congratulate my hon. Friend on that response and remind him that he was chairman of a committee of Conservative Back-Bench Members who considered matters of deregulation? The tourist industry is the biggest foreign exchange earner in the country and therefore looks to him to make its job easier. Will he undertake to pursue that task with all vigour?

Mr. Sproat: Certainly, I will pursue it with all vigour. My hon. Friend makes an important point. There are about 18 million foreign visitors to Britain every year who spend £7·8 billion. That is a vast industry, which in the past has been severely underrated.

Mrs. Lait: Is my hon. Friend aware that in one noisy disco in Birmingham an environmental health officer instructed the barman to wear ear muffs? Is he further aware that when it was pointed out that the barman would not be able to hear customers, the officer said that it was not his problem? Does my hon. Friend agree that it is time for regulations that produce such daft decisions to go and does he further agree that all environmental officers should be well trained in the understanding of the bottom line in business?

Mr. Sproat: I certainly agree, and I congratulate my hon. Friend on how well informed she is on those matters. One of the main problems with all regulations is that they are not applied in the same way in different parts of the country. It is often extremely difficult for people running tourism-related businesses to know how environmental and fire regulations officers and others will apply regulations. That is one of the problems that we are seeking to address in the current campaign.

Mr. Skinner: Is the Minister aware that one of the tourist attractions in the mining areas are the miners' brass bands and that where Government decisions have closed pits, many brass bands are placed in jeopardy, which affects the tourism trade in places such as Bolsover and elsewhere? If privatisation of the coal industry takes place, will he, as he suggested to me previously, consider the position of the Coal Industry Social Welfare Organisation to ensure that those who have the capacity to finance the brass bands in the pit areas will be able to do so and function as before?

Mr. Sproat: I take extremely seriously the point that the hon. Gentleman raises. I remember that he also raised it on the announcement of the abolition of the United Kingdom Sports Commission. I hope that when the national lottery is up and running and the Sports Council is attributing funds, such areas as the old sports grounds run by the miners' welfare associations will be eligible for help. I shall gladly discuss that further with him. The brass bands are an extremely important part of our artistic and cultural heritage and I will do everything that I can to see that they, too, are supported.

Mr. Pendry: Is the Minister aware that he has a reputation in the tourist industry as someone who wishes to deregulate anything and everything? Will he recognise that some regulations, especially in the areas of health and safety, are necessary in the industry? Therefore, before rushing headlong into a spate of deregulation measures, will he take time to differentiate the good from the bad? The package travel directive certainly comes in the latter category. As the Minister hinted earlier, the industry needs clarification of existing regulations and consistency in their implementation.

Mr. Sproat: The hon. Gentleman makes a fair point. Some regulations are unnecessary and over-bureaucratic; some are extremely important. We seek to distinguish between the two.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned the package travel directive. That is a good example of the original directive not being directed at so many of the people whom it catches. I am currently in discussion on that matter with ministerial colleagues in the Department of Trade and Industry. I had a meeting with them last week and we shall raise the matter with our European colleagues to try to cut it off at source.

Mr. Waterson: Did my hon. Friend benefit from his recent meeting with the Eastbourne Hotels Association? Will he do everything that he can to try to remove unnecessary burdens from hoteliers and guest house owners, especially on matters such as electricity at work, and the regulations relating to the preparation of food and to the disposal of waste?

Mr. Sproat: I well remember my meeting with the Eastbourne group and an especially valuable meeting it was. I give my hon. Friend the assurances that he seeks.

Rugby Football

3. **Mr. Hinchliffe:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make a statement on the assistance given by his Department to the sport of rugby football.

Mr. Sproat: Most Government funds for sport are distributed through the Sports Councils, which allocate them according to their own policies and priorities. In 1992-93, the Sports Council of Great Britain provided grants of £20,000 to the Rugby Football Union, £2,250 to the Rugby Football Schools Union, £160,000 to the British Amateur Rugby League Association and £7,500 to the English Schools Rugby League.

Mr. Hinchliffe: Many of those involved in rugby league and in rugby union welcome the Minister's personal interest in improving the relationship between the two codes and wish him well in his forthcoming visit to what might be regarded as the Jurassic Park of British sport, the Rugby Football Union at Twickenham. Will he impress on the Rugby Football Union the great anger about its continued discrimination against rugby league players? Will he make it clear that the anger relates to the fact that the RFU's amateurism principle resembles the emperor's new clothes? Can the Minister give any assurance that the Rugby Football Union will be dragged towards the 20th century before it is too late, bearing in mind that the split between the two codes occurred almost 100 years ago?

Mr. Sproat: I thank the hon. Gentleman for arranging my extremely enjoyable and educative visit to Wakefield on Friday night. I enjoyed it very much indeed. I take extremely seriously the hon. Gentleman's point about the division between the two codes. I do not like that division. Both are marvellous games and it seems idiotic that, after 100 years, such things should still prevail. As it happens, this very morning my officials have been in touch with the office of Mr. Dudley Wood at the Rugby Football Union to set up a discussion at which, among other matters relating to the Rugby Football Union, I want to discuss the relationship between rugby league and rugby union.

Mr. Waller: Is my hon. Friend aware of the high standards of crowd behaviour at rugby league grounds, including Cougar park in Keighley where crowds have quadrupled in the past couple of years, with many families being attracted? Will he note that any requirement to bring standards up to those that apply in association football grounds, because of crowd problems there, would impose great burdens on rugby league clubs?

Mr. Sproat: My hon. Friend makes an extremely important point. When I was at Wembley a week last Saturday, I was very struck by the fact that, although there were huge crowds there, there was not one spot of trouble among 35,000 people, and very impressive that was too. I understand that rugby league grounds have considerable problems in finding the finance to meet the requirements of the outspill of the Taylor report and other findings. My hon. Friend may be interested to know that I have said to Mr. Rodney Walker, the chairman of the Rugby Football League, and to Mr. Maurice Lindsay, the chief executive, that I hope that we can have a meeting to discuss ways in which we can find the funds to ensure that the grounds come up to standard.

Mr. McCartney: May I congratulate the Minister on wearing a Wakefield rugby league tie—although, given the way Wakefield are playing at the moment, perhaps they might offer him a contract rather than a tie. In the summer, the parliamentary rugby league group sent him a dossier about discrimination against the sport by senior officers of the Ministry of Defence. Is the hon. Gentleman in a position to make a statement to the House about the discussions that have taken place and about whether the Ministry of Defence has taken action to stop the discrimination?

Mr. Sproat: I thank the hon. Member for sending me that extremely interesting file about what goes on in the armed services and rugby league. I have read the file and I have asked that a meeting be set up as soon as possible between myself and the relevant Minister at the Ministry of Defence. That meeting will take place in the next few weeks.

Tourism

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what is the proposed grant in aid to the English tourist board for 1993-94, 1994-95 and 1995-96.

Mr. Sproat: Grant in aid to the English tourist board totals £13·9 million in the current year. The planned figures for the next two financial years are £10·8 million and £9 million respectively.

Mr. Atkinson: Does my hon. Friend accept that the reduction in funding to the ETB that he has just announced, following the withdrawal of section 4 development grants in England, has had a demoralising effect on the English tourist industry, not least in the unassisted areas such as my own? What encouragement can he provide for coastal resorts to resist decline and to compete more effectively against continental rivals with better climates than ours?

Mr. Sproat: My hon. Friend makes a very important point about coastal towns. Some of them have recently received assisted area status. I understand that the tourist industry does not like the fact that the grant to the English tourist board will be cut, but the grant to the British Tourist Authority—which tries to suck foreigners into this country so that they can then be dispersed around the United Kingdom—has remained at about £30 million and will increase in cash terms during the next three years. Although I take my hon. Friend's point, he can be assured that the BTA money is secure.

Mr. Olner: The figures that the Minister has just given are to be regretted. Has he made representations to the Treasury to look at VAT on holidays? Some of my constituents are alarmed that VAT is charged on holidays in this country at a different rate from that charged in continental Europe and that we are not working on a level playing field. With the reduction in grants, will the Minister make representations to ensure that the VAT level is equal?

Mr. Sproat: The hon. Member makes an important point. Since I last spoke in the House on the subject, I have visited all the regional tourist boards in England and that argument was very forcefully, and rightly, made at every one. I have as forcefully communicated that to the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

BBC

5. **Mr. Whittingdale:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage when he expects to publish his proposals for the future of the BBC; and if he will make a statement.

6. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make a statement on the future of the BBC.

The Secretary of State for National Heritage (Mr. Peter Brooke): I hope to publish a White Paper early in the new year which will set out the Government's proposals for the future of the BBC.

Mr. Whittingdale: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for that answer. I congratulate John Birt and his team on the progress that has already been made in reducing overheads and bureaucracy in the BBC, but does the Minister agree that there is still considerable scope for making savings to increase efficiency, and that the best way to achieve those is to maintain pressure through the licence fee?

Mr. Brooke: In line with the arrangements that were announced by my predecessor, I invited Touche Ross to examine the progress that the BBC had made in relation to the recommendations that Price Waterhouse made in 1990. Touche Ross reported that the BBC is ahead of the progress that Price Waterhouse was urging. I, too, congratulate the BBC on that progress. The powerful incentive that the BBC has for making those improvements in efficiency is the ability to reinvest in programmes.

Mrs. Gorman: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the BBC, which has an enormous amount of talent and ability in its ranks, is fully able to take its place in the commercial world where the competition would bring about the economic advantages that were outlined by my hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, South and Maldon (Mr. Whittingdale)? Does he also agree that it is wrong these days that elderly people should pay a charge of £80 —which could easily be eliminated—to watch television, and that the whole structure that leads to quasi-police vans driving round the streets hunting down people who do not have a licence is out of date and inappropriate in our type of society?

Mr. Brooke: My hon. Friend has always been a doughty opponent of the licence fee principle. There are, however, more people than myself who think that there would not be sufficient funds in the commercial world to finance the BBC as well as everything else.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Is the Minister aware that public service broadcasting is one of the few real jewels left in the cultural crown of this country and that any attempt to destroy it would have a very deleterious effect? Is he aware that there is already clear evidence that the pressure on producers within the BBC is leading to a direct loss of original material and of children's broadcasting? Is he proud of that?

Mr. Brooke: I am grateful to the hon. Lady for the testimony and tribute that she has paid to the BBC, but she is underestimating the number of things that this country still does remarkably well. On the second half of her question, the Government made it clear in the Green Paper published last year that they foresaw a continuing need for public service broadcasting, which would probably, but not certainly, be financed by the licence fee.

Mr. Maclennan: Has the Minister noticed the warning that Mr. John Birt gave in his speech to the Royal Television Society that although the BBC is making welcome economies and expects to make considerable further economies next year—13 per cent. of central overhead expenditure and 7 per cent. of unit costs—it would be damaging for its productive output and programme making if those savings were to be reflected in any further pressure on the licence fee? He has asked explicitly that the fee be retained and linked to the retail prices index until a further settlement is considered in the charter review. Will the Minister give that undertaking today?

Mr. Brooke: The hon. Gentleman may rest assured that the public statements made by Mr. Birt at the Royal Television Society convention have also been made privately in communication and correspondence with myself. I shall make an announcement about the licence fee shortly.

Mr. Jessel: May I remind my right hon. Friend that the Select Committee on National Heritage will shortly produce a report on the future of the BBC—a report which may well include some interesting and challenging findings? Could he await that report before his ideas crystallise too much for the White Paper?

Mr. Brooke: The whole House is in the debt of the National Heritage Select Committee for conducting that examination and inquiry. I look forward to hearing what it has to say and assure my hon. Friend that we shall not publish a White Paper until we have heard from him and the rest of the Committee.

Ms Mowlam: Regardless of the job that I do, I have an on-going interest in the need for more open government and for making greater information available to the public. I shall, therefore, be interested if the Secretary of State will tell the House why he will not publish the Touche Ross report that he mentioned in an earlier answer, keeping confidential those pieces that are commercially confidential. Surely it would increase the open and frank debate on the future of broadcasting if he allowed the rest of us to have the information that he has.

Mr. Brooke: I know that the whole House would wish me to welcome the hon. Lady to the Dispatch Box in the capacity in which she comes today. We shall treat her with the courtesy that anyone who has been shadowing the citizens charter would expect. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster is so relieved that she will no longer be opposing him at the Dispatch Box that he has come to the House to make sure that it is really true that she has left him.

On the Touche Ross report, any publication would be premature before I have made an announcement about the license fee.

Mr. John Marshall: Will my right hon. Friend consider suggesting to the BBC that it should cede the Greater London Radio, GLR, frequency to which very few people listen, and give it to the London Broadcasting Company, LBC, which is a much more popular station in London?

Mr. Brooke: There may be some minor complications in my hon. Friend's suggestion. Decisions about frequencies are made by the Radio Authority, rather than by channels taking the decision between them.

Arts Provision

7. **Mr. Hain:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what assessment he has undertaken on the impact of the spending plans for his Department in 1994-95 on the structure of future arts provision.

Mr. Brooke: This question could be interpreted in a number of ways. I have interpreted it as referring to the effects of decisions taken by the Department in respect of allocations of funds to the arts. I confirm that the indicative planning figure given to the Arts Council for its grant in aid in 1994-95 is £220·9 million—a reduction of £4·7 million or 2 per cent.

Mr. Hain: All that waffle means that the Secretary of State is not answering my question. Will he confirm that the Treasury's philistine axe will savage the right hon. Gentleman's budget by as much as £5 million? That will be a double body blow, coming on top of millions of pounds of cuts forced on local authority budgets. It will mean, in particular, that discretionary awards to students of dance and drama, which are virtually impossible to obtain at present, will become even more difficult to make. Does not the Secretary of State realise that Britain's high reputation for arts and culture will be destroyed by the undermining of the ability of our young people to contribute to them?

Mr. Brooke: If the hon. Gentleman will put down clear questions to me, I shall be delighted to give him clear answers. He referred in the latter part of his question to local authorities. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education, into whose budget the provision for discretionary awards flows through local authority spending, has confirmed that appropriate resources have been available for those awards to be made up. Discretionary awards are, by their very nature, for local authorities to decide.

Sir Thomas Arnold: Will my right hon. Friend make representations to the Arts Council about the apparent mismanagement of its property portfolio?

Mr. Brooke: I believe that my hon. Friend refers to the lease that the Arts Council took at the height of the property boom on premises in Yarmouth place, to provide overflow space behind its headquarters at 105 Piccadilly. After the council's move to Great Peter street, it was unable to find a tenant to take over the lease. It has now found a buyer for the property and has divested itself of the lease at a cost considerably less than continuing to pay rent until the end of the lease. That will mean more money for the arts in future years.

BBC

9. **Mr. Grocott:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what plans he has to change the structure of the board of governors of the BBC.

Mr. Brooke: None at present, but the role of the governors is one aspect of our consideration of the BBC's future after 1996.

Mr. Grocott: Does the Secretary of State share my alarm at the part of the Thatcher memoirs that describes the appointment in 1986 of Marmaduke Hussey as BBC chairman as an "improvement in every respect"? Does he agree that that view is not widely held? Since 1986, there has been a progressive and serious decline in morale at the BBC as budgets have been cut, programmes threatened and staff lost. The BBC needs not mad Thatcherite economics but a commitment to programme makers, viewers and the values of public service broadcasting.

Mr. Brooke: I have not even taken the first step that many politicians have made, of looking up my own name in the index to the Thatcher memoirs. Therefore, I certainly have not reached the stage of reading any other part of them. Happily, the gentleman to whom the hon. Gentleman made reference is still the BBC's chairman, and I much enjoy working with him. I repeat the answer that I gave to an earlier question. The admirable feature of the efficiency gains that the BBC has been securing—to which the hon. Gentleman may have been referring adversely and obliquely—will go into programme improvements.

Mr. Corbett: When the renewal of the BBC charter is considered, the Secretary of State will have an opportunity to make some important changes to the way in which the BBC is governed. Will he consider replacing the present BBC governors with an independent board of trustees, which would monitor performance promise on behalf of viewers and listeners? Would it not make the BBC more openly accountable if representative organisations nominated potential trustees, who would be examined by a Select Committee and then appointed by a broadcasting appointments commission? That would end the situation in which the Government are seen as appointing their cronies as governors.

Mr. Brooke: Some of what lay behind the early part of the hon. Gentleman's question, about the role of the board of governors and how it should work in the future, is reflected in the Green Paper. As to how the board of governors should be appointed, if one of the preoccupations is to ensure total political insulation, I am not wholly confident that that would come about if the House were involved in nominating.

Sports Coaching

12. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what plans he has to increase the amount of public funds allocated to sports coaching; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: The National Coaching Foundation is the lead body providing coaching support for sports organisations. In 1993-94, the foundation will receive a grant of £1,340,000 from the Sports Council, an increase of 40 per cent. over the previous year. This reflects the importance which the council attaches to this area of work.

Mr. Greenway: I welcome my right hon. Friend's reply. If he compares the amount of sport played by children out of school time nowadays with when he was at school, he will see that much less sport is played. Is that not a tragedy? Does it not mean that financial assistance must be given to clubs, at all levels, in all sports, to enable them to welcome and coach children? That would overcome this difficulty and give our children a chance.

Mr. Brooke: My hon. Friend was kind enough to refer to my schooldays. He engages in a wide variety of sports, and that does him tremendous credit. There is a common feeling in the House, among those interested in those matters, that we have to find new ways in which the young can become involved in sport. It is a preoccupation of my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State and myself and I am encouraged by the fact that my hon. Friend takes an interest in the subject. In so far as it relates to the national curriculum, that is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education.

Mr. Maxton: When allocating public funds to sports, will the Secretary of State have regard to whether their governing bodies or members are discriminatory, particularly on sex grounds? Golf clubs in particular discriminate against women, either by not allowing female members or by discriminating against women who are members.

Mr. Brooke: The hon. Gentleman well knows—this applies north as well as south of the border—that the decisions about the allocation of central Government money for sport are made through the Sports Council. I am certain that the Sports Council will read the hon. Gentleman's question.

Mr. John Carlisle: My right hon. Friend is justifiably proud of the increased funding available for coaching, but he should not forget that thousands, if not millions, of volunteers, parents and teachers give up their Saturday mornings to coach our youngsters. On a similar basis, will he encourage some of our famous sportsmen and sportswomen who, through their sports, have become personalities and millionaires, to give voluntarily of their time so that the excellence that we all seek may be passed on to our youngsters?

Mr. Brooke: I join my hon. Friend in paying tribute to those who give up their free time so gladly to assist with the coaching of the young and to share the enjoyment that they experienced earlier in their careers. I also pay tribute to the sports personalities who provide such heroic role models for those returning to the field. The more of that, the better. I commend my hon. Friend for his interest in the subject.

Tourism

13. **Mr. Rowe:** To ask the Secretary of state for National Heritage what representations he has received regarding the signposting of tourism sights.

Mr. Sproat: I have received numerous representations detailing wide-ranging concerns about regulations restricting the use of tourism signposts. I am discussing these complex issues with ministerial colleagues.

Mr. Rowe: I am delighted to learn that my hon. Friend is engaging in such discussions. Is he aware that there is considerable disquiet about who chooses the tourist sights to be signposted and considerable dissatisfaction about the fact that some sights do not appear to be allowed to advertise their existence? Will he also bear in mind that, in my part of Kent, people could not see a tourism signpost if they tried, because of the bollards on the M20?

Mr. Sproat: My hon. Friend has raised an extremely important matter. The problems of securing proper signposting for tourist attractions have been with us for a very long time. As I have said, I am now engaged in discussions with the Department of Transport, which is responsible for such matters in Whitehall, but I must point out that county councils can be extremely difficult in this regard. If my hon. Friend cannot see too many tourist-attraction signs in Kent, perhaps he should have a word with his county council as well. He may wish to discuss the matter with me, however: I should like to obtain as much evidence as possible, to sort out this important matter once and for all.

Television Licences

16. **Mr. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what percentage of viewers have a valid television licence in the United Kingdom (a) as a whole, (b) in Scotland, (c) in Northern Ireland, (d) in Wales and (e) in England.

Mr. Sproat: I understand from the BBC that the percentage of viewers with a valid television licence, as at 31 March this year, is estimated to be, for the United Kingdom as a whole, 92·3 per cent.; for Scotland, 92 per cent.; for Northern Ireland, 69·7 per cent.; for Wales, 92·7 per cent.; and for England, 92·9 per cent.

Mr. Bennett: I thank the Minister for those figures. I am sure that he appreciates that many of my constituents would be horrified if there were any thought of BBC programmes being interrupted by advertisements; at the same time, however, many of them—particularly pensioners—feel considerable resentment about the present licence fee system.

Will the Minister ensure that further investigations are carried out into new ways of financing the BBC? The figures suggest that some people in some parts of the United Kingdom are not paying the licence fee—indeed, that that is widespread—and that, in many cities elsewhere, individuals are cheating on the system. That is not fair on the pensioners who do not pay the full amount.

Mr. Sproat: The hon. Gentleman has made an important point. It has been estimated that £173 million a year is lost through evasion of the fee. That is a substantial sum, and reinforces the hon. Gentleman's point. I certainly undertake to examine the matter again, although I cannot undertake to say that we will cut the licence fee for pensioners.

Mr. Fabricant: If my hon. Friend is considering alternatives to the licence fee, will he note that, when Michael Grade gave evidence to the Select Committee on National Heritage only last week, he said that allowing advertising on the BBC would mean the end of Channel 4? Will he also note that, when Nigel Walmsley came along—he is the managing director of Carlton and the former managing director of Capital Radio—he said that it would also mean the end of ITV and independent radio? There is not the advertising money to go round.

Mr. Sproat: As my right hon. Friend said in answer to a previous question, we are aware of those beliefs. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving me the details, and I assure him that they will be taken into account.

Mr. Trimble: I have been advised to preface my question by saying that I have paid my licence fee.

Does the Minister have any explanation for the remarkable discrepancy in the figures? In other parts of the United Kingdom, 92 per cent. of licence fees have been paid, while in Northern Ireland the figure drops to below 70 per cent. Does the Minister agree that the figures reinforce the general impression which already exists among the licence payers of Northern Ireland that certain republican areas are immune from any effort to enforce the licence?

Mr. Sproat: The Northern Ireland figures are, as the hon. Gentleman rightly says, shockingly different from those elsewhere in the United Kingdom, and they may be a result of terrorist activity. I will draw his remarks to the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Citizens Charter

32. **Mrs. Angela Knight:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what discussions he is having with members of the United States Government about the citizens charter; and if he will make a statement.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (Mr. William Waldegrave): I met Vice-President Gore and key members of his staff on 18 October. We discussed the United States Administration's national performance review initiative. The Vice-President emphasised the similarities between the recently announced United States programme and our citizens charter. He was grateful for the help his team had already received from British civil servants and he wanted this dialogue to continue. Members of his staff will be attending the "Service for the Citizen" conference in London in December.

Mrs. Knight: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that Vice-President Gore's national review includes setting standards, market testing and reducing unnecessary regulation? Does he agree that the United States Administration are following Britain's lead and adopting our principles and our citizens charter to improve their public services?

Mr. Waldegrave: In this matter, the answer clearly is yes. Both Governments are faced with the same problems of rising expectations and the search for greater efficiency. Both Governments have come to similar conclusions, and I am happy to say that Britain is some two years ahead.

Mr. Enright: Will the right hon. Gentleman take the advice of the United States on open government? If he has taken such advice, will he consider resigning in view of the fact that, in a previous post, he was affected—whether deliberately or not—by one of the greatest cover-ups of which we have heard recently?

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Gentleman would be wise to wait for the end of the inquiry. It is not incumbent on members of a party which was not trusted enough by its leader at the time to be told about the Chevaline project to give us lectures on the subject.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: Does not the fact that Vice-President Gore's review has come to the same conclusions as my right hon. Friend show that my right hon. Friend's policies of market testing and compulsory competitive tendering are the way forward for the delivery of public services? Is not that the right way to bring about a cultural change in the delivery of this country's public services so that an enormous amount of money can be saved, particularly in the delivery of local authority services?

Mr. Waldegrave: The principles behind what both we and the Americans are doing lead to those conclusions. It is better for public services, and better for those who work in public services, to know that waste is being winkled out. They do not want to waste taxpayers' money, any more than taxpayers want that money to be wasted.

33. **Dr. Kim Howells:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what progress has been made to date under the citizens charter.

The Parliamentary Secretary, Office of Public Service and Science (Mr. David Davis): Excellent progress is being made. There are now 37 charters, and 411 organisations applied for this year's charter mark competition. We shall announce the winners on 27 October.

Dr. Howells: Will the Minister comment on the progress of one of those 37 charters, the taxpayers charter, which is, as I am sure he will agree, an important one? How will the public's access to the mysteries of the payment and administration of taxes be helped by the wholesale closure of tax offices all over the country, including in my constituency?

Mr. Davis: A new adjudicator has been appointed to work on the taxpayers charter, which was the first to be implemented. There has been a significant improvement in the service to individuals who are pursuing their tax concerns. We have received letters complimenting us on the effect of the taxpayers charter.

Mr. Dickens: Is it not the most natural thing in the world that it was the Conservative party which introduced the citizens charter in this country? Were we not the party which gave ordinary council tenants the right to buy, the party which gave parents their rights and also the party which gave trade union members on the shop floor their rights?

Mr. Davis: As ever, my hon. Friend puts things in perfectly clear terms and is absolutely right. The citizens charter is now such a success that both Opposition parties are now claiming to have invented it.

Mr. Meacher: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that his right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster has undermined progress both on the citizens charter and on open government by the way in which he has handled his own Department? Either his civil servants were not open with him and did not give him the relevant information on the arms to Iraq affair, in which case his incompetence to run a Department is proven, or they did give him the relevant information, in which case he has given neither Parliament nor the Scott inquiry the full truth. Is it not abundantly clear, either way, that on grounds of integrity and honesty he ought now to resign?

Mr. Davis: It falls to me to welcome the hon. Gentleman to his new post. Last time I exchanged words with him across the Floor of the House it was about the dock labour scheme, of which he was an avid supporter.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Answer the question.

Mr. Davis: I shall answer the question in a second. I had hoped that in the meantime the hon. Gentleman had perhaps gained rather more respect for good management and value for money. The hon. Gentleman, like all of us, will have to wait for the outcome of the Scott inquiry.

Mr. Davis: As ever, the hon. Gentleman makes his judgment half way through the case and shows just how much respect he has for judicial procedures. He should wait for the outcome of the Scott inquiry, when I suspect —in fact, I am certain—that all that he has to say will be proved wrong.

Mr. Simon Coombs: Can my hon. Friend tell the House what has been the effect of the public relations campaign to broadcast the existence of the charter mark scheme? How many applications have been put in this year and how does that number compare with last year? Can my hon. Friend tell the House something about the quality of those applications?

Mr. Davis: There have been 411 charter mark applications this year, all of very high quality. There has certainly been a net improvement in quality over the year. The scheme is proving to be an excellent incentive in the improvement of public service throughout Britain.

34. **Mr. Raynsford:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how much his Department has spent on publicity and public relations activity related to the citizens charter.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Charter Unit has no separate publicity budget. However, media, production and distribution costs for projects carried out by the Charter Unit was just over £1 million in each of the first two years and, in this financial year, just under £500,000 by the end of October.

Mr. Raynsford: At a time when many public services are teetering on the brink of closure because of underfunding and when many others are facing the prospect of their budgets being savaged by the Chancellor next month, does not the right hon. Gentleman agree that it would be a better use of that publicity material—of that publicity budget—to persuade the Chancellor that the delivery of proper and efficient public services depends on investment in those services? If the right hon. Gentleman had sat with me and many colleagues at lunchtime today listening to the appalling story of London Transport's betrayal by the Government, who promised funding but have now withdrawn it, he would surely recognise that it is nonsense to talk about improving public services without the requisite investment in them.

Mr. Waldegrave: I should have hoped that the hon. Gentleman would agree that it is a proper part of any public service that its users should be given proper information about how to use it and about their rights, and in connection with their expectations. One cannot expect to run a proper public service unless one does that, and to have a small central unit encouraging that is very worth while.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Will my right hon. Friend accept that those of us who have followed the Scott inquiry admire the open and frank way in which he responded to all the questions? In old-fashioned parlance, he behaved like a gentleman.

Mr. Waldegrave: I am grateful to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: Given the emphasis that the Government are now putting on tackling the problems of crime, in the context of the amounts being invested in publicity for his citizens charter, will the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster examine the amount of money that goes to victim support, and the action that he can take on victim support, as many of the groups that provide support are under enormous financial pressure and do not feel that they are getting from the Government the support that they need to help victims of crime?

Mr. Waldegrave: That programme falls to the Lord Chancellor's Department. As a long-standing supporter of the Bristol victim support scheme, I know exactly what the hon. Gentleman is talking about. It is not so much a matter of publicity; it is a matter of finding funds for a worthwhile service.

Sir Paul Beresford: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the sums to which he referred as being spent on promoting the citizens charter pale into insignificance when compared with the amount that many Labour local authorities, particularly in London, are spending on promoting their propaganda and covering their incompetence?

Mr. Waldegrave: My hon. Friend speaks with great experience of what Labour authorities get up to in neighbouring boroughs to that which he used to administer. It is worth drawing the attention of the House to the fact that I answered the hon. Member for Greenwich (Mr. Raynsford) by saying that my Department's budget for publication was £1 million a year. Our public expenditure is £244,000 million a year. It does not seem like an incorrect balance to me.

Market Testing

36. **Mr. French:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster by what factor the savings arising from his Department's market-testing programme exceeded its costs.

Mr. David Davis: The savings arising from market testing by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster's Departments since 1 October 1992 exceed costs by a factor of more than four to one.

Mr. French: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that information, as it underlines the importance of the market-testing programme. It is widely reported that £750 million-worth of business opportunities is available in information technology. What proportion is going to in-house bids and what proportion to external suppliers? Of the latter, what proportion goes to small businesses?

Mr. Davis: I suspect that the £750 million to which my right hon. Friend referred applies to the whole programme, not just to the Department for which I am responsible. It is rather early at the moment to assess that. There is a huge amount of information coming in, which is being collated. To give my hon. Friend an idea of the order of magnitude,

my first impressions are that about half and half is going inside and outside the public sector, which I think is a good indicator.

Mr. Flynn: Does the Minister agree that the British civil service is still the least corrupt and even now the least politicised of any civil service in the world? Is not there a grave danger that, by market testing, contractorising and privatising the civil service, we shall end up with a civil service, such as those in many countries, run by Group 4 and Mega-greed plc? Is not it true that the savings made in the 1980s on civil service changes have come almost entirely by cutting the wages and conditions of low-paid staff?

Mr. Davis: As to the first part of the hon. Gentleman's question, I agree entirely. We have a superb civil service of enormous integrity. As to the second part, it is perhaps best answered by the fact that the First Division Association, which knows our civil service as well as anybody, has said quite clearly that it is not against market testing. It sees market testing—as do many impartial observers—as the best route forward for reducing costs and improving efficiency in our service.

Mr. Paice: Without market testing, would not it be impossible to know whether the organisations that have traditionally provided those services were as efficient and up to date as it is possible to be? Is not it clear that not only does market testing sometimes bring in outside organisations, but time and again the traditional suppliers still win the bids, and improve their service and the quality of what they produce and give the taxpayer better value for money?

Mr. Davis: My hon. Friend is right. The typical savings on market testing, irrespective of whether the service stays inside the public service or goes outside it, are 25 per cent. That is an enormous saving for the taxpayer and an enormous improvement in value for money. In addition, the whole process of market testing sets both standards and levels of quality and measures them in a way that has not been done before.

Science and Engineering White Paper

38. **Mr. Whittingdale:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many representations he has received concerning the science and engineering White Paper.

Mr. Waldegrave: I received more than 800 representations during the consultation period for the White Paper. Since its publication, there has been much interchange between my Department and scientists and others in relation to the programmes initiated by the White Paper.

Mr. Whittingdale: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, contrary to some recent articles, the proposed introduction of technology foresight has been given a warm welcome by individual companies, business organisations and all those who have a direct interest in the well-being of British science?

Mr. Waldegrave: My hon. Friend is right. The *New Scientist*, for example, has argued that the technology foresight programme gives a real prospect of bringing academia and industry closer together. That is one of the principal objectives of the White Paper.

Mr. Cohen: Has the right hon. Gentleman had representations on the science White Paper that concern chemical warfare and chemical weapons? Does he remember, when he was in the Foreign Office, meeting me, my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) and representatives from Kurdish organisations and from anti-chemical war bodies and telling them that he was concerned about Saddam Hussein gassing the Kurds in Halabja? Was he not at that time approving arms to Iraq? Should he not be releasing into the public domain all the documents about that situation, and should he not resign?

Mr. Waldegrave: The Scott inquiry will deal with those matters and the hon. Gentleman will find that, in his enthusiasm to throw mud, he has got it almost exactly wrong in every respect.

Mr. Rowe: Does my right hon. Friend share my view that, by the time a child has reached the age of 11, he has in many cases already decided whether his interests fall into the arts or science divisions? Therefore, will my right hon. Friend give an assurance that he is looking seriously at promoting science and engineering in primary schools, where the impact will be the greater?

Mr. Waldegrave: Last week, I met the Association for Science Education—an admirable organisation—which has, with the Gatsby organisation and others, done much good work in secondary schools. We talked about the importance of the subject that my hon. Friend mentioned.

Dr. Moonie: I am delighted that the right hon. Gentleman has been able to see the *New Scientist* article on technology foresight—clearly his civil servants are on the ball. Does he agree with the views expressed by Dr. Fiona Steele of the CBI, that concerns are being expressed about the future of the technology foresight exercise and how valuable it will be? Is he aware that what is at stake here is not the substance of the exercise itself but what is done with it thereafter? What further plans does he have for expanding and developing his ideas after technology foresight has taken place?

Mr. Waldegrave: I met the CBI which, jointly with us, held a seminar on the subject after the article appeared. It made a public statement saying that it very much approved of the exercise as long as—we are thoroughly in agreement with it on this—it was market led. I hope that the hon. Gentleman and the Labour party will support us on that.

I am disappointed to see that the hon. Gentleman is still not in the shadow Cabinet. It is disappointing to the science community that the Labour party does not think it worth while to have a shadow Cabinet spokesman on science and technology. A number of people in the shadow Cabinet did not receive any votes, so I do not see why the hon. Gentleman should not be there as well.

Mr. Ian Bruce: Has my right hon. Friend had any representations from the Atomic Energy Authority, or as it is now known AEA Technology, about the excellent work that it is doing to move Government-funded scientific research into the private sector and to develop the AEA Technology centre at Winfrith in my constituency? Can he tell the House what his Department is doing to encourage that excellent initiative?

Mr. Waldegrave: I attended an excellent meeting, on the fringes of the Conservative party conference, sponsored by AEA Technology in which it put forward a

strong case for showing that it will thrive in the free market and carry through exactly the kind of technology transfer that the Government and the country want.

Magistrates

41. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he next expects to meet the representatives of the magistrates in Bolton to discuss his criteria for appointing magistrates; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: I visited Bolton on 30 March when I met members of the Bolton Forum. I last had discussions with Bolton magistrates during November last year. I hope to visit Bolton again next year.

Mr. Thurnham: I hope that my right hon. Friend will soon find an opportunity to visit Bolton again. Will he find an opportunity to turn his courts charter into a real charter against crime and incorporate as many as possible of the Home Secretary's 27 points against crime in that charter?

Mr. Waldegrave: The Conservative party and the country as a whole are strongly behind my right hon. and learned Friend's proposals. The courts charter has less ambitious but important objectives—to diminish delays in the courts, make the courts more accessible and to help witnesses and others who must attend court understand the processes of the law. The courts are now committed to those valuable objectives.

Madam Speaker: Since the House reassembled following the summer recess, far too many Members who put questions on the Order Paper have absented themselves without withdrawing their question or giving me so much as an apology. I am sure that the House shares my view that good manners cost absolutely nothing and standards will have to improve.

Security (Northern Ireland)

3.30 pm

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Sir Patrick Mayhew): With permission, I will make a statement about Saturday's bombing by the Provisional IRA.

At around half-past 9 on Saturday morning, a house in north Belfast was taken over by two masked men, who said they were members of the Provisional IRA. The occupant of the house was forcibly detained in an upstairs room for some three and a half hours. His car was stolen.

Shortly after 1 pm, a similar car was seen parked on the Shankill road, close to Berlin street. Two men got out of the vehicle. One was carrying a box. Both walked from the car into Mr. John Frizzell's fish shop at 275 Shankill Road. At eleven minutes past one a bomb exploded inside the shop, which is on the ground floor of a three-storey building. This is a popular shopping area which, at the time, was especially crowded with people doing their weekend shopping. The building was completely demolished.

The police, fire and ambulance services were quickly there, and a major rescue operation ensued, with local people providing tremendous help. The injured were taken to a number of Belfast hospitals whose medical and other staff responded immediately. The work of all concerned, both at the scene and in the hospitals, was beyond praise. I am most grateful for the tributes so widely paid to them already, to which I gratefully add my own today.

Ten people died: two children; four women; and four men. They included a seven-year-old girl and her parents; the owner of the shop, Mr. Frizzell, and his daughter; a wife and her husband; a 38-year-old woman; and a 13-year-old girl on an errand for her mother. Fifty-seven people were injured, ranging from young children to elderly shoppers.

In a statement on Saturday afternoon the Provisional IRA claimed responsibility for this atrocious act. It subsequently said that some of those who carried it out were unaccounted for. The Chief Constable of the RUC took immediate steps to safeguard security. In particular, more police and military manpower has been deployed in Belfast and other areas. Two people have been arrested in connection with the explosion.

The whole House will condemn with revulsion Saturday's hideous attack. There can be no possible doubt about this: these people intended, in any event, to commit mass murder, and to commit it in a busy street full of Saturday shoppers and their children. Once again, the Provisional IRA has taken away the lives of children, along with those of ordinary men and women who, in two instances, were their parents.

The natural reaction of humane men and women to crimes of this enorminty is one of rage. The restraint and dignity shown by the people of the Shankill is therefore all the more to be admired. Horrible though the provocation is, I urge the whole community in Belfast and throughout Northern Ireland to continue to show equal self-control in the days ahead. I share the Chief Constable's belief that it will do so.

Reason tells us that revenge merely multiplies the murder and injustice that it reacts against; and reason, not rage, must be our guide. Reason tells us that all violence, from whatever quarter, and certainly including recent loyalist attacks—which have already resulted in another murder since Saturday—must be consistently and universally condemned. But reason also tells us that in this democracy those who commit these terrible crimes, those who commission them and those who justify them must not be bargained with.

To the innocent victims of this attack, and those near and dear to them, our heartfelt sympathies go out. I assure them, and the people of Northern Ireland, that the RUC, with the Government's full support, will spare no effort to track down the remainder of these criminals; and to protect the public from others like them. The RUC needs, and it deserves, the help of everyone.

To those who did this terrible thing, and to those who justify the use of violence, the message, and the only message, is this. In this democracy, no political purpose, whatever it may be, will be advanced by a single inch through the use or the threat of violence. No campaign, however horrible or protracted, will shift us from that determination.

Finally, this atrocity surely reinforces the challenge to all the participants, including the two Governments, who are currently involved as constitutional politicians in the urgent search for a solution to Northern Ireland's political problems. In this democracy, it is only through dialogue —dialogue between those who unequivocally reject the use or threat of violence—that the foundation will in the end be found for a fair and hence a lasting peace.

Mr. Kevin McNamara (Kingston upon Hull, North): May I thank the Secretary of State for his statement? Like everyone else, I deeply regret the circumstances that have led us to appear before the House today.

Over the past 20 years of atrocities in Northern Ireland, including the spate of recent killings in Belfast, culminating in those of Saturday, we have exhausted the vocabulary of horror. I can do no better in these circumstances than to quote my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the Opposition, who said:

> "This is a despicable act of violence perpetrated by depraved people. There will be no question of talking to any people or organisations who are capable of such vile cruelty to innocent people."

On behalf of the Leader of the Opposition and of my right hon. and hon. Friends, I join the Secretary of State in extending our sympathy to the bereaved and to the families of the dead and our hopes of recovery for the injured. There must be no hiding place for the people who carried out and organised this terrible crime.

I also join the Secretary of State in expressing our admiration for the work of the support services and, in particular, for the role of the ordinary men and women of the Shankill on that Saturday afternoon and for the restraint that they have shown since.

Is the Chief Constable satisfied with the level of forces that he has at his disposal in what was already a period of high tension? Indeed, the RUC and the Army were already overstretched before this atrocity. Will the Army provide any additional troops that may be needed for an extension of this period? It is important that the security forces in Northern Ireland should not be too overstretched, despite the demands of Bosnia. An additional force presence can help to bring back to members of both communities a degree of confidence; that applies particularly to those who live in isolated communities.

Secondly, is the Secretary of State aware that all people in these islands wish the constitutional parties in Ireland

again to sit down to try to work out together institutions that would have the support of their communities? It would be helpful if all the proposals from all the parties and party leaders were on the table so that judgments could be made and a process designed that will lead to an agreement for the divided people of Ireland that will supply a solid basis for peace and justice.

If they are unable to do so, the two Governments must work actively together for a solution. Therefore, the whole House and the country and all the people of these islands expect the two Governments to redouble their efforts to persuade the constitutional parties to come together on the basis of the original three strands. We must refuse to allow bombs and killings to determine the democratic agenda.

Finally, I refer again to the comment of my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the Opposition:

"There can be no question of talking to any people or organisations who are capable of such vile cruelty to innocent people."

The best gesture that the IRA or Provisional Sinn Fein can make is to end the killings of fellow Irish men, women and children. We hope that there will be no reprisals or attempted reprisals. There must be an end to violence, and then the possibilities of talks open. The finest indication of a blueprint for peace that the IRA could give is an end to violence now.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I welcome what the hon. Gentleman and the Leader of the Opposition have said about those who commit violence.

The hon. Gentleman asked whether the Chief Constable is satisfied that he has the forces that are needed. The leaders of the security forces have been satisfied that the forces now available, the manpower, are sufficient for the tasks that are imposed on them in Northern Ireland. I spoke to the Chief Constable this morning, and I am certain that if he had felt there was a need for reinforcements he would have said so. Fortunately, as the House probably knows, following reinforcements at the turn of the year 1991-92, those force levels have not been reduced. It is important that those who serve in the Army in support of the Royal Ulster Constabulary should not come to the Province without the prior training in the special problems and difficulties of Northern Ireland that they receive when sufficient notice is given to them.

Secondly, the hon. Gentleman asked whether I shared his view that continued dialogue between the constitutional politicians of Northern Ireland and the two Governments remained of cardinal importance. It is absolutely clear that that is my view; and, indeed, I ended my statement to the House with an assertion to that effect.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. Now that the initial exchanges are finished, may I have brisk questions on the statement? I am sure that I shall get brisk replies from the Secretary of State.

Dr. Joe Hendron (Belfast, West): I join the Secretary of State and hon. Members in expressing total and utter revulsion at the sectarian slaughter of so many innocent Protestant people on the Shankill road on Saturday afternoon. That slaughter was committed by the Provisional IRA, and I agree with the Secretary of State that it intended to kill many people. I saw some of the injured in the Mater hospital on Sunday afternoon. The people of the Shankill behaved with great dignity.

I know that the Secretary of State and the House will also agree with my expression of revulsion at the murder of so many innocent Catholic people, especially over the past few months, by the so-called loyalist paramilitaries —the UDA and the UVF. Does the Secretary of State accept that there must be urgent and unequivocal determination by the British and Irish Governments to bring peace to the long-suffering people of Northern Ireland, and that therefore no effort will be spared and, above all, that no opportunity, great or small, will be missed either at this time or in the immediate future to achieve that goal? I am very much aware that the British and Irish Prime Ministers are meeting on Friday.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: The whole House will understand the fervour with which the hon. Gentleman, who has a courageous record in constitutional politics in west Belfast, has spoken. I assure him that no opportunity will be missed by either of the two Governments. There is no daylight—if I may put it that way—between us in our opposition to terrorism. No opportunity will be missed in the quest of which the hon. Gentleman spoke. However, the two Governments cannot do it alone—it is the people of Northern Ireland who will bring peace to their Province. We want to help, and we shall miss no opportunity to do so.

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): I am sure that the Secretary of State is aware that I represent in another Parliament the area concerned. The right hon. and learned Gentleman, the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara)—the Opposition spokesman—and other hon. Members have spoken to me today. I want to convey to the House the fact that the people of the Shankill road acted with great patience, great courage, great decorum and great dignity on Saturday. I was there with them, and I did not hear any threats or blasphemies; all I saw was co-operation.

The people asked me, on every possible occasion, to thank the local police, some of whom could not be distinguished as police officers on Saturday because their uniforms were torn and they were covered with rubble and blood. They were using their hands to dig out the victims of the bombing. They were joined by ordinary young people from the district, who formed a human chain to lift the rubble off the many mangled, broken and scarred bodies.

I also pay tribute to the paramedics and the fire service. In particular, I must mention the man from the water service who, with his vehicle, was working round the corner. He immediately put himself at the disposal of the rescue services.

The best of the Ulster people came out on Saturday, and I was proud to be associated with the Protestants of the Shankill road.

The IRA Sinn Fein leader, Mr. Adams, has said that the British Government must make a favourable response to what has now become not a peace initiative but an ultimatum. He has made it clear that the response that he wants is for the Government to say that self-determination is no longer to be the right of the people of Northern Ireland alone, but must be given to the whole of the Irish people. I want the right hon. and learned Gentleman to make it clear today that that cannot happen.

For as long as people perceive that to be the intention of the so-called peace proposals, there will be fear and

[Rev. Ian Paisley]

reprisals in the community. No one wants reprisals and we have all appealed for there to be no such reprisals at this time. There certainly will not be any reprisals from the people who stood in the Shankill road on Saturday—that was not their attitude. The right hon. and learned Gentleman must go to the southern Government and deal with the territorial claim because until it is dealt with such incidents will arise again and again.

Did the right hon. and learned Gentleman see the editorial in *The Times* today, which said that the gist of the Government's policy has been one of concession to Dublin and the nationalist community? It said that that was not the route that should be taken at this time to achieve peace in Northern Ireland.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I warmly endorse what the hon. Gentleman said about the courage and dignity of the people of the Shankill. I have already in this House tried to do justice to the tremendous efforts and selfless work of all the emergency services, as well as the police, on Saturday.

I greatly welcome what the hon. Gentleman said about the importance of there being no reprisals, and I attempted to put my own views about that to the House a few minutes ago. I also greatly welcome his warning against reprisals and his confidence that they will not take place.

As the hon. Gentleman's comments about self-determination, it must be all too bitterly apparent that the Provisional IRA granted no right of self-determination to the people whose lives they snuffed out on Saturday. I do not think that I want to enter—and I do not think that the people of Northern Ireland would wish the House to enter—into a discussion of the wider political aspects that the hon. Gentleman mentioned when bodies are still unburied. Let it be said that it has been made entirely clear for a long time, and never more trenchantly than recently and in the Prime Minister's speech in Blackpool, that only an act of self-determination by the people of Northern Ireland will ever change the constitutional status of Northern Ireland as part of the United Kingdom. I reaffirm that, but I do not think it is appropriate to go further than that today.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): I welcome the Secretary of State's statement. May I apologise for the absence of my hon. Friend the Member for Belfast, North (Mr. Walker) who is abroad due to a terminal illness in the family and was therefore not in Belfast on Saturday? I associate myself with the tribute paid to the people who were there.

Does the Secretary of State agree that news reporters who immediately spread information given by the IRA are acting as agents for the IRA and that, in so doing, they added calumny to the nefarious crime that they committed when they implied that Mr. Frizzell was one of the terrorist leaders, which was the thrust of the BBC report and the experienced reporter whom I challenged? He was a man whose Christian principles have been known in the Shankill road for many years and they were absolutely clear—he was a former boys' brigade member and a member of the congregation of which I later became the Minister. That is the type of person who was murdered on the Shankill road on Saturday.

I understand the Secretary of State's unwillingness to enter into a political debate at the moment, but I believe that his statement will give some assurance to the people of Northern Ireland as we look for action, not words. I also put on record the fact that the people of Northern Ireland welcome the broadcast made by the Leader of the Opposition—he has been silent for so long—and are surprised that the Labour party continues to have someone who comes low down on the shadow Cabinet voting list to be responsible for Northern Ireland's affairs.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman felt able to respond as he has to what I said. I was present on Sunday when he took up in person with the BBC the matter with which he began his question. Although I have not heard what the BBC said, I feel sure that the hon. Gentleman will be glad that he has had this opportunity to vindicate the reputation of Mr. John Frizzell.

Sir James Kilfedder (North Down): When I visited the Shankill, I was overwhelmed by the feelings of grief, courage and anger. I am sure that the Secretary of State will agree that it is right that the people of the Shankill and elsewhere should give oral expression to that anger, but may I also plead that there should be no retaliation against any Roman Catholic? I trust that there will be no tit-for-tat murders.

Did the Secretary of State note the very strong words of denunciation uttered by Cardinal Daly about this crime against humanity? Has he read the full-page editorial in the *Irish News?* Perhaps the terrorists would like Northern Ireland to degenerate into civil war, as has happened in Bosnia, but perhaps we, the people of Northern Ireland and elsewhere, can use this latest fiendish atrocity as a watershed so that all the decent people of Ulster, Protestant and Catholic, can work together for peace and progress.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I warmly endorse what the hon. Gentleman said at the beginning of his question. I have noticed what has been said so trenchantly by Cardinal Daly and the editorial to which the hon. Gentleman referred. I should like to add my endorsement of what Mr. Dick Spring said about Mr. Adams:

> "If he is serious in what he has been saying in recent weeks, I believe he should acknowledge the horror of what happened, he should condemn it outright without reservation or without any conditions and he should call for and establish immediately a cessation of violence."

I endorse every word of that, as I am sure does the whole House. I warmly endorse what the hon. Gentleman said at the conclusion of his question.

Mr. Seamus Mallon (Newry and Armagh): I join other hon. Members in utterly condemning what was a remarkable atrocity even by Northern Ireland's standards. As one who lives in a constituency that has seen so many deaths at the hands of the Provisional IRA, I repeat what I have repeated so often: what it is doing will never succeed, and all it is doing is driving the people of Northern Ireland into further suffering and bitterness.

Does the Secretary of State agree that, when the emotions of today fade into the realities of tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow, it will take enormous courage, integrity and strength to deal with these problems? Does he agree that my hon. Friend the Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) has shown that courage, honesty and integrity by trying to take on a problem from which both Governments have recoiled in the past 22 years? He should be commended for that. The Secretary of State must ensure that, after almost a quarter of a century, the full political

weight of both Governments is thrown behind the solution to this problem so that the political process in its totality can start to deal with what it should be doing—solving a problem that is a cancer within all sections of society.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I welcome what the hon. Gentleman said, and in particular I endorse his message to the Provisional IRA that what it is doing will never succeed. That is absolutely correct.

The hon. Gentleman referred to the hon. Member for Foyle, whose courage in attempting to achieve a breakthrough I salute. I agree that it will call for qualities of the highest order if we are to assist the people of Northern Ireland to achieve a less antagonistic way of living together, but it must be understood that there will never be any bargaining with those who in this democracy reinforce their arguments with bombs and bullets or the threat of violence.

I do not accept that Governments have recoiled from this problem. Successive Governments, in various ways, have given their best endeavours to resolving it, but I warmly agree that the political process must be reinvigorated because it is only through political dialogue between constitutional politicians that we shall achieve a political solution to political problems.

Mr. Andrew Hunter (Basingstoke): My right hon. and learned Friend will know that, the day after the murderous outrage in Belfast, the IRA brought its campaign of violence to Basingstoke. My constituents will now look in a different light on the nightmare that the people of Northern Ireland have endured for too long. I believe that they would wish me to put to the Secretary of State the point that the events of the weekend have shown once and for all the sham and fraud of Sinn Fein/IRA talk about peace, and there must be nothing to do with it.

Secondly, my constituents urge my right hon. and learned Friend to redouble his efforts to promote dialogue within the constitutional parties in the Province.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: The whole House is aware of the attack, fortunately frustrated, in my hon. Friend's constituency and of the one at Reading. We are grateful that those attacks were frustrated. Of course, this is the kind of thing from which the people of Northern Ireland have been suffering for 20 years, and more. I believe that we are directing all our endeavours to the search for the defeat and elimination of terrorism and for that political accommodation which will lead to a less antagonistic way of life in Northern Ireland.

I cannot therefore claim that we will redouble our efforts because I do not know how to redouble efforts which are exercising all our intellect and certainly all our determination. My hon. Friend the Member for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter) means that we must never give up, and we shall not.

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): May I associate my right hon. and hon. Friends with the condolences which the Secretary of State and the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) have extended to the relatives of those who were so cruelly murdered and maimed in Belfast at the weekend? May I also join the outright and unequivocal condemnation of the use of violence as a way of achieving political objectives?

Does the Secretary of State agree that perhaps the most devastatingly revealing comment to come from all this is the remark of Gerry Adams that, given certain circumstances, he could call off the IRA killers tomorrow? Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman agree that if he truly wants to see political progress and the opportunity for reconciliation and harmony in Northern Ireland, the prerequisite must be the ending of violence without any conditions attached?

Does the Secretary of State also agree with Colin Parry, who saw his own son so cruelly murdered in Warrington, who said at lunchtime today that there should be no revenge or tit-for-tat killings? Does not that prove the truth of the old saying that, when a man simply continues to take an eye for an eye, the entire world ends up going blind?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I very much agree with the hon. Gentleman. Next to the sickening quality of what was done to people in the Shankill on Saturday has been the sickening quality of the hyprocrisy of Mr. Adams. I think that that has been recognised and commented upon on a wider scale than I have ever known before. I very much agree with the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) about the point made by Mr. Parry. No one is better able to make the point—I met that wonderful man only a week or two ago in Warrington—that there must be no reprisals. Fortunately, I believe that the sense, dignity, courage and restraint of the people of Belfast make that warning unnecessary.

Mr. Peter Robinson (Belfast, East): May I join in the expression of outrage at the carnage on the Shankill road on Saturday and join in the sympathy expressed throughout the House to the bereaved and those who were injured? Did the Secretary of State see the comment in the *Irish News* that evil compounds evil, it does not overcome it? I trust that the Secretary of State will recognise that as a fact, and that he will recognise that evil must be overcome and that many people listening to his statement today will be aware that it was bereft of any security initiative capable of overcoming the evil men.

I urge the Secretary of State to present to the House a security package capable of defeating terrorism. I believe that the House would endorse such proposals which are necessary in Northern Ireland to stop the killing. In view of the remarks of the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) and of Gerry Adams of Sinn Fein, will the Secretary of State indicate whether he should respond quickly to a document or to ideas which they have put to him and say whether he is presently considering any ideas which have the fingerprint of the IRA upon them?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: The Chief Constable has operational independence in Northern Ireland and, under my responsibility for overall policy, is responsible for the security of Northern Ireland and for the conduct of the security forces there. My statement was not bereft of any reference to security. I said that the RUC would continue to have the fullest support in its task of protecting the people of the Province from others like those responsible for this offence. If the hon. Gentleman has specific proposals rather than a general request, the Chief Constable would be very interested to have them, and so would I.

It must be recognised that, in all the emotional dislike —the detestation—of what has happened and the absolutely natural and proper fury that has been

[Sir Patrick Mayhew]

engendered, the security forces themselves must always continue to act within the law. That they recognise, and they would have it no other way.

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): May I begin by underlining hon. Members' appeals that there should be no reprisal following the atrocity on Saturday? I am quite sure that one of the IRA's objects in placing the bomb was to provoke reprisals. I am also glad that reference has been made to the bombs at Basingstoke and Reading, particularly the latter, for if the Provos' plans had come to fruition, there would have been a death toll there as great as, if not greater than, that in Belfast.

Does the Secretary of State appreciate that the Shankill bomb, the Reading bomb and the offer this morning by Mr. Adams to ensure that there would be a ceasefire by the IRA are all linked, and that they are all part and parcel of the republican plan and the republican initiative which they are trying to advance and to which, unfortunately, the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) has allowed himself to be, wittingly or unwittingly, a party?

Does the Secretary of State appreciate that the best way of answering that initiative is to end the uncertainty by making it clear that the Government will not entertain or advance that initiative in any way whatsoever, and that the Government's response to the IRA Sinn Fein will be similar to that which this country gave to Nazi Germany during the war—that we are interested only in its unconditional surrender?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: There is only one message that I wish to hear from the Provisional IRA or from anybody else who resorts to terrorism or the justification of terrorism to obtain a political end, and that is that they have finished with it, without condition and for ever. That is what I want to hear. I am interested in no other message. If that message were to be yielded by the process in which the hon. Member for Foyle has been engaged, the whole House would be very pleased, I trust.

That is what we are about, and there is no uncertainty about the British Government's position on it. There will be no bargaining—there can be no bargaining—in this democracy with those who use force for a political purpose. Reason tells us that to do that would be only to undermine those constitutional politicians who have such a record to be proud of in Northern Ireland. Reason tells us that if we were to do that it would simply feed the appetite of the terrorists.

Mr. David Howell (Guildford): I fully share the feeling that was so well expressed by my right hon. and learned Friend, by Opposition Members and by hon. Members from Northern Ireland about the latest atrocity—the latest wound—against poor Northern Ireland. Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the countries which have been most successful in beating or weakening terrorism are those which have succeeded in capturing and convicting the terrorist leadership and the organising brains behind the atrocities in question? Given that some of those people are known to reside in the Republic, what proposals does my right hon. and learned Friend hope to hear or has he recently heard from the Dublin Government about ways in which these evil people can be more effectively and swiftly brought to account?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I am grateful for what my right hon. Friend said at the beginning of his question. I re-emphasise that co-operation between the Republic and ourselves and between the two police forces has never been higher, and it is very effective indeed. It is, of course, right that, if we can take out the leaders of that quite small and tightly knit band—I speak of the Provisional IRA in particular—we are a long way towards defeating and eliminating all that they perpetrate and what they stand for.

There is a substantial gap between knowing what people are in that category and being able to bring before a court of law the evidence necessary to secure their conviction. Very substantial successes are being achieved not only by the RUC but by the Garda in terms of finding weapons, armaments and munitions and also making arrests. We are persevering with that. Increasing success is being achieved and, slowly, progress is being made towards the elimination of those people. That is the overriding difficulty in circumstances of intimidation in bringing evidence before a court that is capable of securing the necessary convictions.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): The Government cannot talk to paramilitaries or those who excuse acts of violence, but they have difficulty in getting the talks with constitutional politicians going again. We hope that the talks will be developed. Should not the talks also be a continuation of the work that was done by the Opsahl commission, which started to talk to ordinary people in Northern Ireland? The Secretary of State said that those people will have to make the decisions about their future in the end.

The Government should talk to people in voluntary organisations and those who entirely reject violence within Northern Ireland but who are open to other ideas. The credentials of the Opsahl commission cannot be doubted. I am sorry that, during Friday's debate, the Secretary of State did not give more support to the recommendations as at least worthy of consideration.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I recognise and welcome what the hon. Gentleman said at the beginning. He will recall —I mentioned this in Friday's debate—that the Opsahl commission recommended that discussions with Sinn Fein should be entered into if the talks process were to fail. The talks process has not failed, and I trust that it will not fail.

I warmly agree with what the hon. Gentleman said about talking to the "ordinary people", as he described them, and encouraging them, as I never fail to do, to talk to their political leaders. I have no doubt whatever that the vast majority of people across the community in Northern Ireland insist that their politicians talk.

There is one other thing that I encourage people to do, and I hope that the House will endorse it. Whatever the fear of intimidation, and whatever the strength of traditions about not talking to the RUC if they come from a specific part of the community, they must do all they can to help the RUC with any information that they have about these evil people.

Lady Olga Maitland (Sutton and Cheam): I share totally the horror of the House about the appalling atrocities over the weekend. Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that it is not only the security forces but the local communities that we rely on in such circumstances? The terrorists have friends and relations in the community whom they live among and who know what

they are about to do. Surely we must put much more pressure on their responsibility to tell the security forces to save lives.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I very much agree with what my hon. Friend said; she takes a close interest in Northern Ireland. We have published and continue to show three television advertisements, for want of a better name. The purpose of the short programmes is to show people the evil quality of the things that terrorists do from whatever quarter, and to encouage people—this is my hon. Friend's point—to use the entirely confidential telephone to tell the RUC what they suspect and what relevant information they may have. Much success has come from that.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Is the Secretary of State aware that all of us share his view and that of my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull (Mr. McNamara) about the atrocity last weekend? Coming from a background where people have to scramble about in rubble to save people who have been killed and injured in the mines, I fully understand what they went through. But for the life of me I cannot understand why the Government, after more than 20 years, cannot find some method of getting involved in talks between the two contending sides with a view to finding a settlement when they are prepared to accept that Arafat has every right to negotiate with Rabin, Mandela and de Klerk can get their act together and the Government can negotiate with the Chinese Government, who were responsible for the Tiananmen square massacre a few years ago. Why cannot the Government go a stage further than they have in all those gloom-laden years to find some method of starting a new political initiative with a view to resolving this problem, as they have had to do in many parts of the world?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: With those who share the political ambitions and objectives of the Provisional IRA for a united Ireland, of course the Government have been participating in a process of dialogue. That was begun through the endless patience and perception of my right hon. Friend Member for the City of London and Westminster, South (Mr. Brooke), who is in his place on the Front Bench. That process must be continued.

The difference between the examples that the hon. Gentleman gave and that with which we must grapple is that Northern Ireland is part of a democracy in which anybody is entitled to put forward any political objective and everybody can vote. It is only those who know that they cannot succeed democratically who are resorting to violence.

As I endeavoured to explain a minute ago, if, in those circumstances, the British Government negotiate with such people before there is any disavowal of violence or of the justification for violence, one serves fatally to undermine those who are courageously—some are in front of me as I speak—pursuing the constitutional path of politics while sharing exactly the same nationalist ambition in the end.

Mr. Peter Temple-Morris (Leominster): Will my right hon. and learned Friend accept the complete condemnation of violence and murder from wherever it may come by all members of the British-Irish inter-parliamentary body, whether those members be British or Irish? Will he, in these difficult times, press on undaunted with the peace process on the basis that it proposes for the future, as it has in the past, the best way of isolating the IRA and other men of violence?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. He is right on the latter point. It is right that dialogue is not just the best way but the only way in which we can achieve a less antagonistic environment in which the people of Northern Ireland can live together. If that were to be achieved, it would serve to withdraw a great deal of the toleration for violence—there is very little support for it—that still exists in a number of areas of the Province.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Would it not be appropriate if both the British and Irish Governments seriously considered publicising extensively the atrocity which occurred on Saturday—as well as the other killings that have occurred on both sides—especially in various European countries and the United States, so that people can see what is involved?

Is the Secretary of State aware that it is important to emphasise that, when the Provisional IRA has stood in elections in the Republic, it has received less than 2 per cent. of the vote? Although it will claim that all the killings and injuries over the past 24 years have been in the name of the Irish people and in the name of 1798 and 1916, when it comes to the vote, the Irish people in the Republic have demonstrated that they want nothing to do with the Provisional IRA and that they totally reject the campaign of murders and atrocities. The IRA does not speak for the Irish people, and it knows that well enough.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I can add nothing to what the hon. Gentleman has eloquently expressed, save to say that, when I was in the United States in May talking to American-Irish bodies in Washington, Boston and New York, I found exactly the reaction that he describes when I told them of events. Our diplomatic posts have been doing excellent work there in that area, and we shall certainly take the advice of the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): Does the Secretary of State think that it is possible that the politicians are overlooking one important element? If the members of the Provisional IRA are rebels without a cause, is it possible that they can turn into rebels without any money? If it is a money-making exercise in which they attract funds from expatriate Irish all over the world, the IRA could not justify claiming money to pay for bombs and armaments if it did not continue to explode bombs. There must be a lot of members of the IRA who are unemployed but earn a good living out of attracting money from all over the world—they probably even get protection money from wealthy Irish people who live somewhere near the border who are not called on. Are not we overlooking the fact that Gerry Adams could never deliver peace because, to justify the income of funds, the IRA would have to keep exploding bombs?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: We certainly have not overlooked the fact that terrorism needs money as well as the oxygen of publicity and other things. My hon. Friend will be reassured to know that we have taken powers—Parliament has given them—to get into the fund-raising activities of those who support the IRA with money. We have made substantial changes, which are justified, to give greater power to those who seek to enforce the law and to cut off the supplies of money.

[Sir Patrick Mayhew]

In America, for example, there is no doubt that the approach to which the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) referred has secured a substantial reduction in the moneys coming from people who previously, perfectly genuinely, believed that they were supporting a patriotic organisation. My hon. Friend is absolutely right in the thrust of his question.

Mr. Peter Hain (Neath): In welcoming the statement by the Secretary of State, and his strong but sensitive responses to the questions, I especially applaud his statement that reason and not rage should inform our response to this evil atrocity. In that spirit, I salute the courage of the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) and I urge the Government to give the Hume-Adams talks a fair wind because, ultimately, if we are not continually to be involved in what are almost tragically ritual condemnations of terrorist outbreaks, we must pursue a political settlement and reach the constitutional settlement to which the Secretary of State has aspired. That requires courage on all sides and a determination to back those who are willing to put their lives on the line to achieve that settlement.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: The hon. Gentleman will have heard what I said about my approach to the initiative by the hon. Member for Foyle. I do not think that it was at all uncongenial and I do not wish to add to it, save simply to say that the hon. Member for Foyle has said that he has been acting on his own initiative and not as the emissary of anyone. I have told the House of my reaction if that process produced the only message in which I have an interest—that the violence and the justification for violence were finished and finished for good.

Mr. Nigel Evans (Ribble Valley): I have been into Irish pubs in New York and into Irish clubs in California, so I am delighted to hear that the money has dried up to some extent, although it is still coming in. If there is one clear message from the atrocities over the weekend in Northern Ireland, is it not a message to Irish-Americans that, if they wish to see an end to the violence and to the atrocities, they can play their part by stopping giving money to IRA groups and sympathisers in America?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: Of course that is right. I endorse what the hon. Member for Foyle said some time ago, which was referred to in our debate last Friday—that the IRA has killed more Catholics than anyone else has. Since that has come as news to many people who sympathise with the objectives of militant nationalism in Northern Ireland, it needs to be publicised even more widely. My hon. Friend is right: we shall do what we can to act on that.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): As I was a member of the Cabinet that sent in the troops in 1969, and as I note that more than 33,000 people have been killed and injured since, may I thank the Secretary of State for his tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) for the courage and integrity of his initiative? Will the Secretary of State remember that the Dublin Government also said that they believed that the initiative was constructive and creative? Will he take account of the fact that there are many people, probably the majority, in this country who believe that at some stage everybody must get round the table to find a peaceful way to avoid a repetition of the terrible deaths that occur daily, as has happened in so many other parts of the world?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I warmly agree with what the right hon. Gentleman has said. All constitutional politicians must get round the table, recognising that it is only those who disavow unequivocally the use of violence for political purposes in a democracy and the justifying of it who will be able to find a political solution to political problems. A propos his reference to 25 years ago, I think it will be congenial to the right hon. Gentleman, with his and his family's record, if I say that the price of defending democracy is always high, but it is always worth paying and we will continue to pay it for as long as may be necessary.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): I thank my right hon. and learned Friend for his firm but unequivocally just statement, which has helped us to channel our sense of collective grief and righteous indignation into appropriate and, I would hope, constructive responses. Can he tell us that he will not eschew new security measures, including perhaps the introduction of identity cards for all British nationals throughout the United Kingdom and the imposition of a requirement upon Irish nationals in this country to carry a passport?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his kind opening remarks. The bulk of what he suggested is at least as much—probably rather more—a matter for my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary than for me. I take careful heed of what is suggested by my security adviser in Northern Ireland, who is the Chief Constable. I assure my hon. Friend that I shall continue to do so.

BILL PRESENTED

Closed Churchyards (Wales)

Mr. Paul Flynn presented a Bill to amend the law relating to the maintenance of closed churchyards in the area subject to the Welsh Church Act 1914: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Thursday 4 November, and to be printed. [Bill 256.]

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(3) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

That the Income Support (General) Amendment No. 3 Regulations 1993 (S.I., 1993, No. 1679) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Conway.]*

Question agreed to.

Public Accounts

4.27 pm

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne): I beg to move,

That this House takes note of the 12th to 54th Reports of the Committee of Public Accounts of Session 1992-93, and of the Treasury Minutes and Northern Ireland Department of Finance and Personnel Memoranda on these Reports (Cm. 2145, 2175, 2186, 2199, 2226, 2257, 2279, 2310, 2341 and 2354) with particular reference to the following Reports:

Sixteenth, The sale of the twelve regional electricity companies; Twenty-sixth, The Chelsea and Westminster Hospital; Twenty-seventh, Quality of service: war pensions; mobility allowance; attendance allowance; invalid care allowance; Thirty-fourth, Ministry of Defence: prices paid for spare parts; Thirty-fifth, PSA Services account 1991-92; Forty-seventh, Welsh Development Agency accounts 1991-92; Fifty-second, Fire prevention in England and Wales.

Today we are discussing 43 reports—the same number as last year. I am sure that we shall mention many more in debate than the seven that are set down in front of us, but almost all of them would warrant a full-scale debate on their own.

I am grateful to all my right hon. and hon. Friends who are members of the Committee for their dedication. The Committee meets more often than any other Select Committee and a commensurate amount of effort is required. Each week the Committee's members have to digest the information that is given to them in a voluminous amount of paper, to maintain the accountability for which we stand.

As an example of just one of those matters which are not so likely to be dealt with in debate, I shall mention report No. 31, Her Majesty's Customs and Excise Account Matters—an uninteresting title. The report deals with control over common agricultural policy exports; it deals with refunds of £455 million; it deals with the single European market that came into being on 1 January 1993, which presents great problems to the Customs and Excise and to all who deal with them, and its many risks. It deals with the way in which Customs and Excise handle the VAT debts of small traders and it gives instances of irregularities; it deals with the issues of time to pay and with the problems of small traders in meeting some of the Customs and Excise requirements. The costs of the Department are rising.

I deliberately singled out what may appear to be one of the less interesting reports in order to show the importance of the matters that we have to consider. I intend to deal mainly with seven reports, but I shall refer to several others, describing some of the lessons that we have to learn and giving details of how we handle our responsibilities. It is a burdensome task for all the Committee members, but it is essential.

The important thing to remember is that we have the enormous advantage of tradition on our side. Here I pay tribute to one who has long since gone: Gladstone got it astonishingly right 130 years ago. He put the responsibility on the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee, who he said should be a Member of the Opposition. One would never get away with that today, but he had the standing to enable him to impose it on Parliament at the time, with the result that Government expenditure is monitored properly, adequately and—using the traditions that we have inherited—responsibly as well.

With the advent of the National Audit Act 1983, we have had to consider questions of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. On economy, we must ensure that whatever the Government buy is bought with due attention to getting the best possible price and deal for the taxpayer. The Committee also considers efficiency—to ensure that the best methods are used—and effectiveness, which covers wider activities.

Normally, the Committee takes evidence from the accounting officers, who are usually permanent secretaries. The Committee's contact with them is a big advantage because it enables us to understand some of the problems that face their Departments and to know some of the personalities involved, so that we can assess how well they are carrying out their functions. We can make comparisons and judge how they are doing. We see the strengths and weaknesses of Departments and of the people who run them.

We discover a number of very able civil servants, and their standards are a matter of great importance to us. A constant stream of overseas visitors come before me, and the Committee, to discover why we have a relatively incorrupt civil service. I always tell them that our main advantage is that we do not have, and are determined not to have, corruption in our civil service.

Fortunately, we do not have to spend much time dealing with fraud and corruption, because we do not have much of it, but when we do find it, everything has to stop—it comes before everything else. We must retain those standards. Of course we want to improve on them, but we must not allow them to weaken in any way.

In attempting to improve the standards of the civil service, we have the defence of the taxpayer in mind. That is what unites the Committee and it is one of our greatest advantages. Of course Committee members have enormous differences of opinion on policy—we are still politicians, and party politicians at that—but we are even able to deal with issues such as privatisation, on which our views differ greatly, because we do not consider policy. If something is the policy of the Government, we consider how they can achieve their objectives and how we can defend the taxpayers and the money that they have to raise. That is what gives us the power for such unanimous reforms.

During the past 10 years every one of more than 400 reports has been unanimous—not because they have been fudged in any way, but because the taxpayer is king as far as we are concerned and so we are able to produce the unanimous reports that are the foundation of the Committee's strength. When Departments study our reports they know that, however widely members may differ, we are united in defence of public money and the public interest.

The Committee is extremely fortunate in having a close and happy relationship with the Comptroller and Auditor General. The National Audit Act 1983 gave us the legislative right to propose matters to the National Audit Office for investigation. That is a very great help. Every year we go through the Comptroller and Auditor General's suggested programme, discuss it, consider matters that we may raise and come to an understanding on the areas of greatest interest.

Important though our discoveries are, our success does not merely lie with them but in what we can prevent from happening. The very fact that our presence is known and that the accounting officer is aware that matters will come

[Mr. Robert Sheldon]

before us has the consequence that the officer is very careful in dealing with certain matters that might not otherwise be given the attention that they deserve.

I pay tribute to Sir John Bourn and his staff, who never fail to excite the interest, enthusiasm and acceptance of the Committee. The staff have changed enormously. When I first became a member of the PAC in 1965, most of the staff came in from the executive class and were not much more than book-keepers. Today they are auditors. That makes an enormous difference because when they visit Departments they can ask the kind of questions that any top auditor in the City, or in a big public company or institution, can raise. They are accorded the respect and understanding that is important for proper auditing of our accounts, which is of enormous benefit to us.

The Comptroller and Auditor-General for Northern Ireland, Dr. Bill Jack, also does his work very well. Last year, I mentioned the new offices that were being planned. The Committee recommended that the independence of the Northern Ireland Audit Office would be more clearly demonstrated if its staff were housed in a headquarters building separate from the Government Departments that they audit. It is clearly wrong for them to occupy a building occupied by the Northern Ireland Office Department whose accounts they were auditing. The building that the auditors shared with the Northern Ireland Department of Finance and Personnel was also inadequate for their needs. The Comptroller and Auditor-General for Northern Ireland and his staff moved to new headquarters close to central Belfast at the end of July. We look forward to seeing the results in due course.

The number of cases that we have and the standards that we maintain have been extended because of the increase in the number of executive agencies and of non-departmental public bodies, of which there are about 1,000. It is an enormous growth industry, and it is difficult to maintain control and oversight.

I referred in my speech last year to those matters, and the Financial Secretary to the Treasury—whom I am pleased to see in his place—also expressed concern about them. Standards of public service become harder to maintain, let alone improve, when there must be oversight of so many such bodies. The number of cases perhaps means that we are not able to deal with them as thoroughly as we would wish. I shall say more about that later.

Dr. Kim Howells (Pontypridd): Does my right hon. Friend agree that there is a worrying trend of cases of irregularity and hints even of corruption in a couple of nominated quangos? Does not the duty fall heavily on Government Departments to monitor quangos, for which they have some responsibility? The people of Wales in particular look to the Government to clean up their act in respect of the Development Board for Rural Wales and the Welsh Development Agency. I hope that the Financial Secretary to the Treasury can assure the House that there will be no more such nonsense at the Welsh Office in Cathays park.

Mr. Sheldon: I shall deal with that matter and others raised by my hon. Friend at some length later.

Our great advantage is that we have a civil service that is one of the finest in the world. We should take pride in that. A number of years ago an attempt was made to belittle the role of the civil service. I am glad that that has now ceased and that people understand and respect those who enter the civil service because they believe in high standards of public service. So long as we need public servants, we must reassure them that we have their future and the standards that need to be maintained very much in mind. I will look very closely at those non-departmental public bodies, and so will the Committee. I will refer to them later.

The House should know how we go about our work. Basically, it is not a difficult task. A number of years ago we laid down that whenever a programme that will cost money is put before us, we ask the Department concerned what its objectives are—what it is trying to achieve with that expenditure—and we want it quantified. We also want the outcome quantified; we want the achievement recorded and compared with the objective. At the same time, we want the programme monitored, so that if something goes wrong the Department is able to bring it to a halt, or change it or modify it in some way. Only by comparing objectives with achievements are we able to bring Departments to account for any particular programme. That quantification has been improving in a number of cases.

The Committee has heard many horror stories. Although, luckily, some of the worst examples are in the past, unfortunately we have a few to deal with today. I need not go into those matters at the moment, but will deal with a number of other points.

First, and most important, is the proper conduct of public business—a matter raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Mr. Howells)—and I will have more to say on that later. Secondly, there is value for money and how we achieve it. Thirdly, there is performance, and how we judge whether a Department is meeting its obligations in the way that we expect.

The first of the Committee reports of the 1992-93 session that I wish to deal with is the 16th report, entitled "The Sale of the Twelve Regional Electricity Companies". In December 1990, the Government sold all their shares in the 12 regional electricity companies in England and Wales —which had a total asset value of £16·1 billion—for net proceeds of £7·7 billion, of which £4·9 billion was from the sale of equity and £2·8 billion from specially created debt.

Although there are differences between members of the Committee as to how far we want the privatisation to proceed, we are unanimous in our desire to ensure that we get the best value for the taxpayer. A question that we have put time and again is this: why do privatisations have to be carried out in one fell swoop? Why can they not be phased in? The Government do not sell a year's worth of gilts —£50 billion—in one go on 1 January; they have a very sophisticated broker who knows the market, studies it and releases amounts of gilts into it at relevant periods. Privatisation cannot proceed in quite the same way, but the priniciple is similar.

We have argued time and again that there should be a similar kind of phasing with privatisation—in two or three tranches, perhaps more, depending what it is—because if it goes wrong on the first tranche we can hope to get it right on the second or subsequent tranches.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): To quote the immortal words of the late Andrew Holmes on the sale of the regional electricity companies, "It was like selling a £100 suit with a £50 note sewn into the lining." If the Government deliberately underprice a sale in order to make

it go with a bang, there is an enormous advantage in retaining 40 per cent. or 25 per cent. or whatever of the shares, so that, if they zoom away afterwards to double their value at privatisation—a fairly common occurence with the main utilities—the Government and the taxpayer will get the benefit of that higher price at the sale of subsequent tranches. That was done with the generating companies but not with the electricity distribution companies, and the taxpayer has lost many hundreds of millions of pounds as a result.

Mr. Sheldon: My hon. Friend is right. I will deal with that point later.

In paragraph 12 of our 34th report of 1987-88 we dealt with the question of phased sales. That approach has been used on occasion, but in the event the Department decided that if it went for a partial sale it might be seen as a failure of the Government's nerve, which might have affected the climate of the sale and the proceeds. The Department judged that to be the most weighty argument against a partial sale.

That argument does not weigh heavily with me. The Government's argument is that over a period everyone would know that all the assets of these privatisation companies were to be sold off, and that therefore we would get a better sale. I suspect that a stronger argument—which was never put by the Treasury—is that at the beginning of a year the Treasury wants to know how much it will get from privatisation, and it gets a commitment from the Department as to what it will receive. Once the steam engine starts, it is hard to get it to stop. We cannot say, "Look here, things have not gone very well so we should delay the privatisation," because that would delay the receipts and therefore the objective of Government finance.

On the first day of trading, the Government decided that the privatisation was worth £5·2 billion. In the end, the market decided that it was worth £6·3 billion, and the difference was lost to the taxpayer. Such uncertainty should lead to tranches being examined more carefully and fully in the future. We have constantly asserted that to the Government, and we hope that they will accept it.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): In an earlier report of the Public Accounts Committee, on the sale of Forestry Commission assets, the Committee strongly took the view that a wholesale sell-off of the nation's assets would not only fail to achieve value for money for the public, but would have disruptive effects on land values. Those matters are now current once again and comparable threats are being uttered by Ministers in respect of Forestry Commission assets. The Government should take to heart the prudent words of the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) when they consider the future of forestry.

Mr. Sheldon: I do not feel that the Government have taken fully into account the need for phased sales in the Treasury minutes provided. They have done so in a number of cases; they have paid it lip service—which is of limited value—and in some cases they have accepted it, but I do not think that it has really struck them as being as important as the need for speed in the selling off of these publicly owned assets.

We see in the 16th report that the Government appointed 53 advisers to deal with the sale of the electricity companies, and 16 of them were appointed without competition. We feel very uneasy about some of those appointments. We feel that there should have been competition—we do not know why there was not—and we look forward to hearing what the Financial Secretary to the Treasury has to say about that.

There were 9 million shareholders on flotation; the number has now fallen to 3 million, so the objective of widening share ownership has not been very successful in that respect.

I now wish to comment on the 26th report of the Committee of Public Accounts, on the Chelsea and Westminster hospital. The Committee was dealing with a 665-bed hospital which was under construction on the site of the former St. Stephen's hospital at a total estimated cost of over £230 million. The regional health authority intended that the cost would ultimately be funded by receipts from the sale of four surplus sites. However, as things have turned out, there is now a gap of around £100 million between the total costs and the expected sales proceeds. As a result, 24 other major schemes in the region have been cancelled or delayed.

The report states the Committee's concern that the health authority assumed that planning agreement would be forthcoming and was therefore unprepared for the difficulty and delay that occurred, at a cost of £16 million. In paragraph 25, the report states that the Committee was surprised that the region should consider that the complex and important project would need only a part-time project development manager. The Committee shared the Treasury's doubts as to whether that role could be adequately discharged on the basis of one day a week. It is quite astonishing that the project was handled in that way. The manager was dealing with a £230 million hospital, and 24 other projects had to be dropped or postponed because so much more money was spent than was estimated.

The chief executive of the NHS management executive at that time, Mr. Duncan Nichol, gave evidence and was asked about the fact that the project development manager had been moved to another post within the national health service while continuing work on the project on a part-time basis. I asked him the following question:

"One of the biggest hospitals of its kind in the history of the National Health Service and the project development manager was moved somewhere else and managed this project on a part-time basis. Was this a sensible way to proceed?"

Was it sensible, in other words, that the project development manager had worked on something else while continuing to work for one day a week on the biggest development project of its kind in the NHS? The National Audit Office report stated that the work of the manager was increased to two days a week in February, but

"still failed to provide adequate control."

I said to Mr. Nichol:

"You presumably agreed that there was not adequate control."

Mr. Nichol replied "I agree with that". That really is a terrible story.

The report also points out that the Committee shared the Treasury's doubts as to whether the role of project development manager could be adequately discharged on that basis. We endorsed the management executive's final conclusion that in future project development managers should give full and undivided attention to the management of major schemes.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): The right hon. Gentleman is pointing out a worrying weakness in the way in which public services often operate. There seems to be an unwarranted belief that the number of people capable of

[Mr. Andrew Rowe]

doing important jobs is limited. In fact, when a worker is needed to work elsewhere, there is a tendency to try to stretch thinly the resources of those capable people. I believe that the public services are full of able people, many of whom have to wait far too long for recognition. Would it not be better if people were given the opportunity to do a full-time job when such a position arises?

Mr. Sheldon: I could not agree more with the hon. Gentleman. Too often we underestimate the potential of the people of this country. People who are provided with a certain amount of training, background and assistance can do all sorts of jobs in the community. They fail to do those jobs because of a lack of trust, not only in the people themselves, but in the methods that can be devised for dealing with and training them.

The memorandum from the Comptroller and Auditor General stated that there were 24 delayed schemes costing more than £1 million which had received approval in principle. Those included projects within the regional health authorities of Bedford, Luton, Watford, Barnet, Napsbury and other places. Those were viable schemes which had been recommended, and were then delayed and delayed because money had been spent unwisely on other projects. The Committee thought that that was wrong and stated its views clearly and firmly.

I will now deal with the 27th report of the Committee, "Quality of Service: War Pensions; Mobility Allowance; Attendance Allowance; Invalid Care Allowance." The report deals with the Department of Social Security and with the Benefits Agency, which was established as an executive agency in April 1991. Mr. Michael Bichard, chief executive of the agency, came before the Committee to explain his responsibility and how he had undertaken it. Sir Michael Partridge, who was and is the permanent secretary at the Department of Social Security, also gave evidence.

The Benefits Agency administers a number of schemes that provide help to people with disabilities and to those who care for them. In 1991-92, there were on average around 2 million people receiving a war pension, mobility allowance, attendance allowance or invalid care allowance. Expenditure on those four schemes in that year amounted to some £3·8 billion. From April 1992, disability living allowance replaced mobility allowance and attendance allowance for people becoming disabled before reaching the age of 65, and who claim before their 66th birthday.

The Committee saw clearly that the service had been deteriorating. War pensions—if I may deal with that matter first—are different from other schemes administered by the Department. They are not social security benefits, but state compensation, which is very different, paid in recognition of the fact that disability or death was suffered during service to the country.

The report states that the average time taken to clear war pensions disablement claims increased from less than six months in 1985 to between eight and nine months in 1990-91. Despite a 30 per cent. increase in productivity in 1991-92, and a further doubling of productivity in the first six months of the following year, the surge of claims resulted in the accumulation of even larger backlogs of work. The Department has estimated that the total number of war pensions claims in 1992-93 will reach 180,000. The report states that the Committee is concerned that the service to war pension claimants has been deteriorating, and also that it took the Department five years to recognise that and to take remedial action.

The report notes the progress now being made in securing improvements in the productivity of staff and the measures taken to deal with the large and unexpected growth in the number of claims in 1992-93. The Committee expects those claims to be pursued with vigour. That is important, because those people have earned their right to their pension in the strongest way possible and it is correct that we should deal with them in a proper, reasonable and efficient manner.

I turn now to disability living allowance and attendance allowance. One of the advantages that Committee members have is that they know the problems faced by those in such circumstances—not just from the voluminous and well-explained papers which they receive, but because of their constituency cases. Committee Members go to hearings with a fair understanding of the problems and are able on occasion to dispute some of the assertions made by those who are called before the Committee. We knew about the matters of which our constituents complained. For example, we all knew of the poor telephone service provided by the agency and about the frequency with which claims for disability living allowance or attendance allowance had been lost.

The agency acknowledged that there had been problems in locating the case papers. That was clearly wrong and showed that the kind of efficient operation that we might have expected was lacking. The agency could not provide even an indication of the number of lost disability living allowance or attendance allowance claim forms, as no statistics had been kept in connection with the problem.

We point out that we were concerned that an enormous backlog of 400,000 uncleared claims for disability living allowance and attendance allowance had built up by June 1992, as compared with the 130,000 that the agency had expected. The agency said that the situation had been caused by the surge of claims in the early months following the scheme's introduction. We were concerned to note that the Department believed that the implementation of disability living allowance had been rushed.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): The members of our Committee and especially its Chairman understandably try to avoid any political comment, but is it not right that people should be aware that what in fact emerged was that the surge in claims at that date had resulted from the high profile advertising campaign launched in the run-up to the election to draw claimants' attention to what was supposed to be a very generous new system? Lo and behold, that advertising was suspended at the time of the election and never recommenced once the election was over.

Mr. Sheldon: I am sure that my right hon. Friend would want to make that point. We noted that there had been a change in the advertising, and that had certainly resulted in more claims being made rather more quickly than had perhaps been expected.

In our conclusions, we say that we welcome the improvement in performance on invalid care allowance. I suppose that it may be some consolation to the agency —considering how critical we were of most of the rest of it—that we welcomed that improvement in performance and were pleased to note that the staff of the invalid care

allowance unit had received an award for one of the most improved performances in the civil service. We pay tribute to any success of that kind.

The 34th report of the Committee is entitled "Ministry of Defence: Prices Paid for Spare Parts", and concerns the £2 billion a year that the Ministry of Defence spends on spare parts—which are, of course, vital for the maintenance of defence equipment. The spares inventory comprises more than 2·7 million items. During the 1980s, the Department began to adopt a more commercial approach to defence procurement, and that included a number of initiatives relevant or specific to spares procurement. I should point out that the former chief of defence procurement, Sir Peter Levene, has now been replaced by Dr. Malcolm McIntosh.

We were pleased with one aspect of the work done in relation to spare parts—namely, spare parts labelling. We had been concerned that spare parts and control of the cost of spare parts had not been handled as well as they should have been. We were very much aware of what we had been told by a Congressman on our visit to the United States—that the one way to ensure that charges for spare parts were not excessive was to label them with their cost. That congressman would regularly hold up an ashtray and say, "This cost $1,000" or whatever. The cost was so absurd that everyone knew that the taxpayer had been ripped off. As a result of that discussion and our discussions with Sir Peter Levene, we decided to recommend price labelling so that someone going into the store could see the price marked on components.

Labelling is a highly effective way of ensuring that the customer—the taxpayer—is not overcharged. Many contractors to the Ministry of Defence did not like the idea because they felt that they were giving a much better service to the British Government than to Governments overseas and did not want those Governments to realise that they were having to pay rather more. We were somewhat sceptical of that point of view and persisted with our argument, which eventually carried the day. In due course, labelling was introduced.

The Committee is rightly very chary about giving praise. Our task is not to praise, but to ensure that the taxpayer gets value for money. In 1966, when Lord James said that he wanted to have the University Grants Committee examined by the PAC because he had a good story to tell, Sir John Boyd-Carpenter, the then Chairman of the Committee, told him, "If you've got a good story to tell, you won't tell it here."

Nowadays, things are a bit different. We are prepared to go a little further in our praise—although not much—and on one occasion I went so far as to say that I was "satisfied" with the work that Sir Peter Levene had done. When he left, however, I went even further, in a statement that I never expected to make again—although I should be delighted to do so—and said that I was "very satisfied", which is about as far as I ought to go in these matters.

The question of the cost of spare parts is an important one because is it something that everyone can understand. Even in very esoteric and technical matters, the public have a right to expect that their money will be handled properly. On matters that they can understand, however, it is even more necessary that they are given such assurances. It is the task of the PAC to provide assurances, and that is what we sought to do.

We identified a need to increase competition in spares procurement. The Department acknowledged that there was scope for a further increase in competition. Given the substantial savings that can be secured, we encouraged the Department to continue its drive to increase the level of competition. The question of competition is important. Competition is not always possible: for example, one cannot have large numbers of manufacturers or concerns providing nuclear submarines. What one can do, however—and what Sir Peter Levene showed could be done—was to have a number of sub-contractors bid for competitively. One can also encourage people to compete in areas in which competition is possible, by giving certain incentives and certain help. That is a positive gesture, which we welcome.

We say in our report:

"We commend the work carried out by the Purchase Research Units which has resulted in the generation of significant savings. However, whilst recognising the Department's plans for disseminating the techniques used by these Units, we note that at present the techniques are by no means widely applied throughout the Department."

In paragraph 16, we say:

"In the past, this Committee has commended the initiative to label spare parts showing the unit price charged thus making users more aware of the cost of the items concerned. We are therefore concerned that some contractors are still not complying with the requirements to place labels on spare parts. Moreover, in some cases where labels are provided these are attached to outer packaging and are therefore not always seen by the end user. Thus, the user is not aware of the price paid and is unable to challenge what might be an unduly high price."

That is the whole purpose of labelling, so we urged the Department to undertake to ensure that the requirement was fully met and our recommendations accepted.

Most of the recommendations of the Committee are accepted in the Treasury minute, and we welcome that. We have our differences from time to time, but we know that the Financial Secretary and the Treasury must also be concerned with securing value for money, which gives us a common theme and a common cause.

In one other aspect in relation to competitive contracts we note the Department's acknowledgement that one way of improving value for money lies in letting fewer and longer comptitive contracts with built-in incentives to ensure downward pressure on costs. Under a long-term contract, one can get a larger quantity at a cheaper price, which is clearly desirable. We are concerned that the Department does not have a system that flags up cases where there have been large increases between orders for the same item. There should be something that calls out for a fresh examination whenever a large increase in price is proposed for any article that it may want to purchase.

I shall now turn to the 35th report of the PSA Services Account 1991-92. I have had trouble over the years with the Property Services Agency and it has been a constant theme of the Committee. The report reads:

"In their Twenty-second Report of Session 1991-92 our predecessors concluded that it was a most serious matter that PSA services' financial systems should have broken down to such an extent that in 1990-91 they had been unable to recover £65·6 million owed by customer departments."

Our predecessor

"expected PSA services to keep their invoicing up to date."

It is not a difficult matter to keep one's invoicing up to date. Any business starting from scratch does that automatically. For our predecessor to have to make a recommendation of that kind is almost an insult. We pointed out:

[Mr. Sheldon]

"Further increasing difficulties in 1991-92 resulted in clients owing PSA Services £190 million when they closed their books in June 1992. Of this, £116·8 million related to works expenditure on behalf of Government departments."

One might have thought that Government Departments would be paying up if those invoices had been substantiated. We further pointed out:

"We regard it as unsatisfactory that PSA Services could not substantiate invoices"—

it was unable to prove that it had provided the goods or services totalling £12·8 million—

"and we find it most disturbing that some of these have been disputed for up to 10 years . . . We consider it unsatisfactory that PSA Services were unable to invoice the Ministry of Defence in time for them to pay £80·4 million in the 1991-92 year of account."

That is a sad record, and we felt unhappy about that.

We discussed the problem of the payment of contractors. In question 31, which was put to Sir Geoffrey Chipperfield, on behalf of PSA Services, he said that the department—the PSA—

"are moving over to a system which the Ministry of Defence have authorised for all their contractors, which is the so-called pay-when-paid system"—

one does not pay until one has been paid—

"whereby in the contract that we have with the contractor we shall be saying that we shall pay them when we get paid by our client. This will mean that as soon as the work has been validated there will be a change: we will not be paying the contractor until we are paid by the Ministry of Defence."

That struck us as strange. We knew that the Treasury had recommended that 30 days be the period.

The Treasury minute, which deals with the matter, says that the

"MOD have an existing obligation to pay promptly and this, taken together with the new arrangements adopted by the PSAS Building Management Businesses, should ensure that contractors will be paid within 30 days from validation."

I would like to hear from the Financial Secretary that this is now the rule. It was quite disgraceful. A number of small firms accepted work from the Property Services Agency and found that they were not in a position to know when they would get their money, as it was dependent on when the PSA got its money. As the Treasury advised that it should be 30 days, the Government Departments seem to be at odds with each other. I hope that that has now been resolved and I look forward to hearing from the Financial Secretary in due course.

A particularly serious matter is the Welsh Development Agency accounts for 1991-92. At the close of the investigation, I informed the witnesses that we would produce a strong report. That is what we produced. We discovered a number of serious failings during our investigation. Under the Welsh Development Agency Act 1991, the pensions were determined by the Secretary of State for Wales. Redundancy terms were settled by the agency. The total amount paid—about which the Welsh Office knew nothing—was £2·3 million with a £1·4 million loss.

Again it was not reported to the Welsh Office, as it should have been. The report says that senior officials had the free use of their cars for their own private use.

On the retirement settlement to the agency's international director, the report says:

"We note that tensions which had developed between Mr. Price and his superiors".

Mr. Price was given a retirement package of more than £228,000, with a confidentiality agreement. We are talking about an open Government and open Departments. What are those confidentiality agreements? In private industry, of course, one can undertake all sorts of things with one's own money. What is important with public money is public accountability. Expenditure of that money must be open. If there is a price to be paid for that openness, remember that it is not just in the taxpayer's interest, as that is obvious and essential, but it is also to ensure that we have a incorrupt and fraud-free—as far as is possible—civil service and public administration. That is the task. We dispute the use of confidentiality agreements with points buried away.

We heard also that a total of 48 staff had left the agency over the past 10 years on severance packages. Some of those may have been under acceptable confidential arrangements, but we suspect that many were not.

Following the unsatisfactory appointment of Mr. Carignan, the inward investment operations manager in the United States—when he finally left the WDA, he took away £53,288 of furniture for which he was paid $15,000 —the WDA decided to have a new director of marketing, a Mr. Neil Smith. This is what we said about it:

"We asked the Agency about the way Mr. Smith had been recruited. They accepted that in appointing Mr. Smith, they had been 'conned'".

That is an honest assessment and nobody can dispute that. We are dealing with a genuine 24-carat crook. There was no question that it had been conned, but it should not have been. It was so basic, simple and elementary. It had not complied with its own recruitment procedures. The WDA employed, in a senior position, a person who had previous criminal convictions for deception. The agency had not checked his credentials or references. Had it done so, it would have discovered that his credentials were bogus.

We asked about a number of payments that had been made. One of the more interesting payments was that made to a model agency. I shall now deal with question 19 of 14 December. Following the National Audit Office report, I was talking about the commissioning of Mr. Smith from Shapes model agency. I asked:

"This is an astonishing tale is it not? It refers to payments made to Shapes Model Agency who had at one time had a licence under the Employment Agency Act but this had lapsed so they did not any longer have it. It seemed there was a failure to find out about the status of the Model Agency. Mr. Smith, on a Sunday, had 11 girls from the Model Agency up to his hotel to interview them to see whether they would be suitable for an advertising promotion that he had in mind. What happens in private industry does not concern us but public money can never be used in this kind of way. Did you know anything about this beforehand?"

Mr. Head, of whom more subsequently, replied:

"No, I did not."

That is unbelievable. To behave in that way with public money is an affront. I suspect that many countries that send people to discover how our system operates may handle their matters in a not dissimilar way, but for us to have such records to deal with is not just unacceptable but disgraceful.

Before becoming chairman, Dr. Gwyn Jones, who is now retired, applied to the WDA for a rural conversion grant to convert premises to workshops, and received £16,895. Following his appointment it was clear that that might not be acceptable, but nothing was done. An agency employee just happened to make a routine visit and discovered that a change in use had not been reported, as it should have been under the requirements of the grant.

The conduct of the chairman of the WDA is a most serious matter. There should not have been any conflict of interest. We say in our conclusion:

"It is clearly important that persons in high public office should ensure that circumstances do not arise which can give cause to any allegations of abuse of position."

To be chairman of a body and receive funds from that body but not to fulfil properly the requirements of the grant is clearly wrong.

In Operation Wizard, £308,000 was spent on professional fees resulting from an inquiry into the possible privatisation of certain functions of the WDA. That cost was not approved by the board in formal minutes and its existence was not publicly reviewed. Some of the options identified by the consultants involved major restructuring of the agency with changes to its objectives and the possible reduction of a specific commitment to Wales. In our conclusion, we said:

"We are concerned that not only was Parliament denied information, but that this Committee would have remained unaware of the project's existence had it not been for unofficial revelations from within the industry."

Those are serious matters, and they led us to look at some other aspects.

The Treasury has said that more than £10 billion of public money is spent each year by non-departmental public bodies. We happened to investigate one. We recognise that such bodies are statutory bodies, deliberately at arm's length from Government, and therefore that Government Departments cannot control the affairs of the bodies in the same detail as they control their own financial affairs. The Treasury told us that it recognised that, but that did not reduce the importance of proper and clear arrangements for accountability and control.

The Welsh Office told us that it expected to be consulted by its NDPBs over unusual matters concerning irregularity of public expenditure. It should have been consulted on redundancy compensation and changes to the executive car scheme. Only as a result of current investigations have problems in the redundancy scheme been discovered. Those are not just important matters—they are central to how we spend moneys and account for them.

In our report, we say:

"We note that the Treasury have now issued guidance on the control of staff benefits in non-departmental public bodies. We recommend that they keep under review the terms under which non-departmental public bodies operate. Finally, we recommend that the Treasury and the Welsh Office take urgent steps to ensure that problems similar to those covered by this report do not recur, and that lessons which have been learnt are notified to and applied by all non-departmental public bodies."

That is a serious matter, but it is only one of many cases that may be occurring without our knowledge. With the growth of executive agencies, there may be other, different problems.

The proper conduct of public business is a matter of concern to all of us. Although not mentioned on the Order Paper, a number of those matters concerned us. First, in the 28th report on the Ministry of Defence we found irregular expenditure under the efficiency incentive award scheme. The proper conduct of public business was not clearly set out. Under the efficiency scheme, when the Department has made considerable savings certain sums of money could be spent on generally agreed aspects such as sports facilities and improvements in health provision.

Some £682,000 was spent on a coach and 56 minibuses, and money was spent on go-karts, golf club furnishings and a holiday caravan, while £79,000 was spent on a party attended by 1,000 people. It must have been some party. One does not go to many parties where that amount of money is spent.

Mr. Michael Shersby (Uxbridge): Will the right hon. Gentleman refresh the memory of those members of the Committee who are here today as to the cost of floodlighting that party? I seem to recall that it was about £28,000 for a non-night party.

Mr. Sheldon: My hon. Friend is just about right. We pay tribute to his work on the Committee, which is valuable. I thank him for that useful observation.

Public money should not be spent in such a way. We were uneasy about the way in which the spending of it had been authorised, which we thought was a most serious matter, and we dealt with it accordingly. In our conclusions, we say:

"We note the Department's view that the irregular expenditure arose as a result of an institutional failure and that it was not appropriate to take disciplinary action against individuals. We endorse the Accounting Officer's acknowledgement that he is ultimately responsible, and we regard such personal accountability as a cardinal principle of Parliament's controls over public expenditure."

That is one of the aspects that I feel that I should draw to the attention of the House.

Another aspect is the payment of £4,700 as part of the legal expenses incurred by the Chancellor, dealt with in the 25th report of the Committee. In paragraph 23, we say:

"Officials had considered that assistance towards meeting the Chancellor's expenditure in this case was justified on the grounds that:

—the scale and lurid nature of the press comments and the enormous consequential press interest derived from Mr. Lamont's position as Chancellor, and he incurred extra costs as a result;

—it was in the public interest to make the payment because the scale of the press attention, unless effectively handled, for example to avoid libel, was having an adverse effect on the Chancellor in his ministerial role and in the effective discharge of his official duties."

We took evidence from the Treasury and those concerned and made the following recommendations:

"There must always be the clearest possible distinction between the use of public funds or resources used to meet expenses incurred by Ministers and civil servants in the direct conduct of their official duties or arising directly from their official position and the use of such funds for other expenses incurred in relation to the activities of Ministers."

We go on to point out:

"There should always be a strong presumption that where there is doubt there will be no use of public funds or resources."

At the end we say:

"It is important that, in the interest of transparency and accountability, the circumstances and grounds for decisions should be made available to the Comptroller and Auditor General at the earliest occasion. We regret that they were not highlighted in this case."

There may be cases for giving Ministers money for special occasions, but the Comptroller and Auditor General must be notified. It is his task to decide whether a case requires further investigation, is acceptable or should be brought forward for examination. We have established that that is how we should proceed with such matters.

The 48th report deals with irregularities in the 1991-92 accounts of Forward civil service catering. There were control failures of between £500,000 and £1 million. Although there was a question of a police prosecution, we felt that standards were not so high as they should be in the

[Mr. Sheldon]

public service. We felt that the House should know that something went wrong and that money was made and squandered.

The 44th report, on police cell accommodation costs, deals with the cost of keeping prisoners in police cells. We point out:

"the Home Office's handling of payments to police authorities . . . was unsatisfactory. There was a serious breakdown in their authorisation and control of expenditure, in that they did not ensure that all claims were certified by police authority Treasurers in the way that they had themselves required . . . Uncertified claims should not have been made".

That is extremely important, because the size and make-up of claims varied widely, ranging from £89 a day for a prisoner in Surrey to £561 a day for a prisoner in Hertfordshire. We thought that that was very wrong.

In questioning Sir Clive Whitmore, I pointed out that the variation between places was surprising. I said:

"The average charge for mainly food is £1·53 per prisoner day in Northampton and £18·10 per prisoner day by the South Wales police."

People can understand such matters because they know how much food costs. When they see that food costs £1·53 in one place and £18·10 in another, they will ask what sort of meals prisoners receive for £18·10. One could have a good night out in a fancy restaurant in my constituency for that price. I asked what sort of meals prisoners were receiving for that sum, but we received little information on that. Payments are being made without a proper understanding of why some people are spending so much more than others.

We conclude:

"We regard it as unsatisfactory that for many years the Home Office have not been in a position to carry out the independent check . . . on the claims they authorised and paid. This was because these claims were not supported by a detailed breakdown of costs."

Payments are asked for and the money is received. That cannot be the right way to handle public money. I understand the problems experienced by the police, but certain rules should be followed and accepted.

As a result of many of those matters, particularly those that I have mentioned, the Committee is to produce a general report on the proper conduct of public business. It will deal with what should happen and how those matters should be handled. Most of what has happened should not have happened, because rules exist to prevent it. Those rules were set down many years ago, so we do not have to wait until now to establish them. However, so many exceptions have been made that we must see how we can highlight the problems and bring them to the attention of those concerned. We are dealing with a number of executive agencies and departmental public bodies where the proper conduct of public business is crucial. We have yet to receive the reports from the Wessex and West Midlands regional health authorities, which deal with important and serious matters, so it is right that we should look at the problem in a wider context.

Finally, the 52nd report deals with fire prevention in England and Wales. We have a sorry record for looking after our property. There have been two fires at Donnington. The one that we commented on cost us between £150 million and £170 million and we said how bad it was. Astonishingly, a few years later another fire took place—after our report.

The main problem is that Departments do not have insurance assessors. If someone's home is subject to fire risk or if someone has a factory that is storing goods, an assessor will first come round and say whether sprinklers or fire doors are needed and the insurance company will not insure the property unless those requirements are carried out. That is the strongest incentive to carrying out proper fire precautions. When that does not exist—it does not exist in Departments—the easy way out is taken and normal requirements are not met.

In 1990 the fire brigade was called to more than 400,000 fires in England and Wales, 700 people were killed and 12,000 injured. The Home Office has overall responsibility within central Government for the fire service and spends some £15 million a year. The bulk of fire prevention expenditure is incurred by the fire service on inspections and certifying buildings.

In paragraph 3 of the report we point out:

"over the last thirty years the number of fires, fire casualties and financial losses have all increased. There were 120,000 fires in 1960 compared to 401,000 in 1990; and over the same period deaths rose from 430 to 740 a year . . . The UK death rate is high compared with other developed countries. Insured losses were more than £1 billion in 1991."

We hope that the trend is downwards and some signs show that that might be so.

We have had the problems of the Windsor fire disaster and the serious backlog of certification work in Crown premises. Crown premises without an up-to-date certificate include the Palace of Westminster, where fire safety arrangements were found to be deficient in 1979. I hope that some improvements have been made since then, but the building was still without a certificate. We were told that the estimated date for completion of that work was mid-1994 and that the Home Office expected that a certificate would be issued soon after that. There have been several of those fires and the arrangements for dealing with them have been far from satisfactory. That matter greatly concerns us.

I look forward to the production of the report, on the proper conduct of public business, which will show how Departments should operate and how their responsibilities should be extended to cover the new areas in which that control seems to be weak. I look forward to a proper response by the Financial Secretary in due course.

5.38 pm

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): It has been a privilege to listen to the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon). I find it gratifying that there is at least one group of Back Benchers to whom the Executive listen effectively—a rare phenomenon in this place. I pay tribute to the right hon. Gentleman and to all right hon. and hon. Members who work with him.

I believe that the Public Accounts Committee is a model for the other Select Committees. It is essential that Parliament pursue the business of how the Executive spends money and performs its task. It is a great pity that there is not more liaison between the other Select Committees, the better to co-ordinate the pursuit of the Executive. I understand that the Liaison Committee itself meets primarily to discuss where the Select Committees will travel abroad; it might be useful if it met more often to discuss where they travel at home.

It would greatly strengthen the cause of the European Community if we ensured that the ways in which it spends our money were methodically and effectively monitored. I

am conscious of the fact that one of the consequences of the Maastricht treaty should be a much more effective auditing system for the EC—I very much hope that that will indeed be the outcome. But one of the reasons why the EC is much less popular than it deserves in principle to be is that there is far too little liaison between national Parliaments and EC organisations in the cause of pursuing the EC's executive. I should like much stronger Back-Bench interest in the effective pursuit of how the EC goes about its business.

I welcome the general report by the PAC, and I should like to ask the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne a question about it. Is it part of its purpose to extract lessons that could be applied to similar cases in other Departments or even within the same Departments? The right hon. Gentleman told us that he was awaiting a response from the Wessex regional health authority. I understand that that is about the purchase of information technology.

One of the besetting weaknesses of both public and private sectors concerns the mechanisms for choosing information technology. I went to a seminar in the summer, where it was explained to me by a learned professor that there are usually 20 per cent. of people in an organisation who, when asked what their jobs uniquely add to the value of the organisation, find it difficult to reply. These people are to be found in disproportionate numbers among those in the organisation who work with information technology.

As the purchase of information technology by health trusts and Government agencies constitutes a huge part of their budgets, this is an area in which it is easy to make terrible financial mistakes or to set up a system that does not work at all. I hope that the general report about which the right hon. Gentleman spoke will highlight lessons for present and future undertakings.

I should like to mention the report on the disability living allowance and similar allowances. I was interested to learn that the telephone system had been so lamentably inadequate—that was also my experience when trying to get through to the agencies in question. One of the most striking features of the newly privatised utilities is that, almost without exception, their telephone answering services have been hugely improved. People who ring the electricity supply companies often get an answer before they have even heard the phone ring.

Interestingly, rapid response of this sort is an expensive operation to mount, but I am told by the chief executive of one of the electricity supply companies that complaints to the company have fallen by 78 per cent. as a direct result of the fact that the public can get through so quickly and easily. That lesson could be profitably transferred to the public sector, where telephone response rates are often still lamentable.

Dr. Kim Howells: Will the hon. Gentleman acknowledge that there is a critical difference here? That difference is one of emphasis, but it is also a political—with a small "p"—problem. When health authorities attempt to evolve towards models that they may perceive as operating in, say, a privatised electricity company, our investigations show that they tend to favour the kind of sweetheart deals—management buy-outs and so on—that do not entail the disciplines of the private sector. Such ventures can end up disastrously, with £63 million going to waste in Wessex or £10 million in the west midlands. So it is a problem not merely of management discipline but of confusion of direction—about what management really wants a health authority to become.

Mr. Rowe: That is an interesting comment, although the hon. Gentleman is mistaken if he believes that that sort of confusion does not obtain in private sector companies, too. There is an element of truth in what he says, however.

One of the functions of management is to identify precisely what it is trying to achieve. Having identified that there needs to be an improvement in health service responsiveness to patients and their relatives, for instance, management must set up the sort of response service that will enormously reduce anxieties. Anyone in the health service will testify that anxiety is one of the greatest causes of the consumption of time. If anxious relatives can get through to health trusts swiftly and be put through to a person who can give them some sort of answer, those trusts will find, more often than not, that they are well regarded. Some have already achieved this; that is commendable. I was pleased to discover that the PAC draws attention to a failure of telephone communications as an important symptom of a Department or agency not working as well as it should.

Another interesting feature of the report is that self-assessment has begun to make a serious contribution to the effective working of agencies. Instead of having to go for a medical assessment, by filling in a form correctly the public can now claim the disability living allowance and have it paid simply to them—just by filling in the form well. There may be a difficulty, in that this system tends to favour those who are skilled at filling in forms. However, such a system is a promising development.

One of the most fruitful avenues for reducing the waste of money is to curb the attempt by agencies and others, often for good reasons or because the Treasury insists, to do more than they need to do. Those who are assessed as capable of managing their own affairs, and especially the severely disabled, could be allowed to make their own arrangements about spending money day by day and month by month. Such a devolution of detailed responsibility from the centre to the individual could make a tremendous contribution. It would also treat severely disabled people as adults who are capable of deciding how best to spend the public money that has been allocated to them.

The 15th report deals encouragingly with the BBC World Service. The Committee was told that there had been an increase in editorial independence. That is entirely appropriate and reassuring, because the BBC World Service is a huge asset for this country. At a fringe meeting during the Conservative party conference, I learned that, although it is impossible for the World Service to be sure, because it cannot set up auditing arrangements, it believes that it broadcasts to no fewer than 120 million Chinese. That is a formidable audience, but, as the BBC cannot audit the figure, it does not claim it in the listening figures.

As the Department of Trade and Industry knows, such an audience provides a tremendous basis for exporting British goods and British education—a subject in which I am particularly interested. It is because so many people all over the world have learnt English by way of the World Service that they develop an interest in obtaining qualifications which, increasingly, are also obtained through the World Service because of its links to, among

[Mr. Rowe]

other things, the Open university. I was pleased to note that, on the whole, the Committee was impressed by the World Service.

I shall conclude, because many hon. Members who are waiting to take part in the debate know far more about the work of the PAC than I do. I hope that other Select Committees will take a leaf out of the PAC book and will hound the Executive perhaps rather more consistently than some of them have done in the past.

5.53 pm

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): In all the years that I have been in the House, I have not had the privilege of serving on the Public Accounts Committee. However, I had the privilege of being there at the concpetion, if not the birth, of the Welsh Development Agency when I was a Minister in the Welsh Office in 1975. I represent a community in which life without the WDA would be strange and difficult to imagine. That is because of the central role, gradually acquired, that the agency has played in the regeneration and redevelopment of many of our communities.

The WDA has not been unique in carrying out such functions, because functions such as land reclamation were previously carried out successfully by the Welsh Office, for which Ministers are accountable to the House. I was a Minister responsible for the land reclamation unit created after the Aberfan disaster in the late 1960s. The broking and general co-ordinating roles of the agency are vital. The Merthyr east scheme, one of the largest reclamation schemes in Europe—it is being carried out in my constituency—demonstrates the agency's value and importance.

It is right to point to those factors, because the PAC and the National Audit Office have properly revealed a sorry story. Therefore, we should feel even angrier and more distressed to see exposed in the PAC reports poor behaviour, bad standards and maladministration in the agency. Since those exposures, some agency executives have paid the price by losing their jobs. The agency has a new chairman, and it is encouraging to note that he is to establish key priorities for the agency.

I have worked closely with the agency and followed its progress and should like to suggest some priorities. But before doing so, perhaps I may dwell on a general conclusion to be drawn from the experiences and revelations of the PAC. It was quite refreshing to hear the Secretary of State for Wales make a partial confession during his statement on the report. However, there were some errors, the chief of which was that he apparently sought to exonerate and absolve almost completely the board and its previous chairman and he argued that the report virtually did so as well.

In addition to the PAC report, we have also had the report of Sir John Caines, who established an internal audit on the agency's performance. That report anything but absolves the previous board or its chairman. I hope that the Financial Secretary has read that report as well as that of the PAC. Paragraphs 31, 33 and 34 of Sir John's report speak of the board, and not of the executives who have lost their jobs. There is more than a coded reference to the previous chairman when the report states:

> "Dealing effectively with conflicts of interest involves not only rules and procedures but also an attitude of mind and high personal integrity in the individuals involved."

That is not about the executives. Sir John is a former permanent secretary and was brought in to follow up revelations in the Public Accounts Committee.

His report continues:

> "We do not believe that the present policy and practice as regards the handling of conflicts of interest of Agency Board Members are adequate to ensure that the Agency maintains the reputation for integrity which it needs."

Those are powerful statements, and they are made not by politicians in conflict across the Floor of the House but by a review body that was rightly praised by the Secretary of State. As I have said, those are not references to the executives, the agency's paid officials.

Paragraph 71 of Sir John's report states:

> "When the top leadership is not perceived to attach importance to enforcing sound management, good practices are allowed to slip. Corners are cut and bad decisions are taken."

That is not just a reference to Mr. Head and company. The expression "top leadership" cannot just be about the executives who have lost their jobs: it must be about the board and its chairman. The Secretary of State was pressed by hon. Members about Dr. Gwyn Jones's place on other boards, such as the BBC and S4C. He should think again and should consider his position in the light not only of the PAC report but by the report by Sir John Caines.

Mr. Cynog Dafis (Ceredigion and Pembroke, North): The hon. Gentleman might be interested in the comments of John Osmond in today's *Western Mail.* On the role of Peter Walker and Gwyn Jones in Operation Wizard, he says:

> "There is no doubt that this"—

Operation Wizard—

> "was motivated by Peter Walker, hand-in-glove with Gwyn Jones. Proof can be seen in a file of memos and letters lodged in the office of the Agency's chief executive Philip Head who resigned last week, a fall guy if ever there was one."

Mr. Rowlands: That is additional information. However, I hope that I am resting my case not on press and public comment, but on the internal audit set up by the agency and chaired by a distinguished former permanent secretary.

Paragraph 73 of the report makes a more interesting point:

> "We believe that the prevailing culture was not one conducive to care over compliance matters and played a powerful part in bringing about the events with which we have been concerned."

I listened with fascination to the report of the enormous diligence and investigative qualities shown by the PAC and the Comptroller and Auditor General.

In reflecting on what has happened over the past few years, the one conclusion to be drawn is about the prevailing culture of the 1980s—a curious culture in respect of public life and public bodies. The Government have often slagged off the role of certain groups of public servants and officials, such as those in the DSS offices at the point of service delivery. However, at the higher level, in the appointment of people to quangos, there has been not only an explosion in numbers, but a significant explosion in salaries and emoluments. The Government have justified that by saying that it is necessary to appoint more commercially minded people with entrepreneurial skills.

I wonder just where a balance will be struck. When will commercial ability and responsibility run alongside a public sense of duty? It is a privilege to be the chairman of, for example, the Welsh Development Agency. It is one of

the most important agencies carrying out a very important function, so the post of chairman is one of the most important appointments that can be made. The job should not be simply about leasing cars or being paid £61,000 a year for a part-time job; it should be about the role that has to be filled. The salary is more than the Prime Minister gets.

S4C is currently advertising for a new controller. It should be a vocation. I am a great supporter of S4C, which does an excellent job. I accept that the job needs someone who is a good media controller—but at £106,000 a year? That is much more than the Prime Minister gets, even taking into account his house, car and other perks. A balance must be struck between public service—a commitment to being the chairman of S4C or the WDA—and reward.

I remind the Financial Secretary that the people at the point of service delivery in DSS offices or the officials in the WDA are to have their pay increase pegged at zero. Why do not the Government make a fresh start and halve the salary being offered to the controller of S4C? We should then discover whether committed, first-class people still want the job, as I believe they will. We want someone who is committed to the spirit of public service broadcasting.

Why do not the Government halve the salary for the chairman of the Welsh Development Agency? They should advertise the post at the lower salary and then see whether people of great quality still come forward. They would show their sense of public duty and service and they would be paid sensibly.

The second area of concern is one that my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) dealt with at some length—the relationship between quangos and Government and quangos and Parliament, and the degree of accountability. I have in my hand a secret internal Whitehall document that deals with that very issue. It suggests that some caution would be engendered by an organisation's responsibility to appear before the PAC when its accounts and the Comptroller and Auditor General's report of his audit of those accounts are before the Committee. It states:

"No doubt there would be reasonable tolerance of error and the PAC would realise that it is easy to be wise after the event, but the knowledge that there would be a post mortem examination would be bound to influence the"

organisation

"and induce a spirit of caution in approaching anything hitherto untried. Of course, the wider and vaguer the"

organisation's

"powers, the less scope for C and AG's criticism."

That quotation came from a secret, internal Whitehall document. Alas, it is not in the Rhodri Morgan class. In fact, it was written in 1934—nearly 60 years ago—on the eve of the creation of the forerunner to the WDA, the first Commission for Special or Distressed Areas. Sixty years later, we are debating the same issue—the balance that must be struck between the role of an agency and its accountability to Parliament.

I am interested in the phrase

"induce a spirit of caution".

I hope that, in one key respect, the work of the PAC—the investigation, the report and the revelations—do not, in fact, induce a spirit of caution in the WDA. I am referring to the fundamental function of the agency, which is to get on with the regeneration of our industrial and manufacturing base in communities such as mine. Let us have the inducement for caution and restraint when it comes to managing the internal affairs and carrying out the administration of the agency, but we do not want a consequence of the sad and sorry story that has been revealed to be an inducement of caution in regenerating industry.

Communities such as mine do not want a cautious, frightened agency; they want an agency that plays a central, fundamental role.

As I said earlier, I want to outline the key priority of the agency. It is my belief that, through the appointment of a new chief executive, we can send out a loud and clear message about what the agency's role should be. When it was established in the 1970s, its role—which I believe still holds today—was to develop the industrial, engineering and manufacturing base of communities such as the one that I represent. It was to generate jobs. There is great opportunity to do that.

People ask, "Where will the jobs come from?" They are already there in my area. Along the route of the M4 have grown up large assembly plants, such as Sony, National Panasonic and Bosch. They are large consumers of components and other manufacturing services. We need to get a greater percentage of indigenous, locally and regionally—or even United Kingdom-produced—goods because that will create jobs. One of the central functions of the WDA is to do that. The appointments that are about to be made should reflect that central priority.

There is a unit within the WDA called "Source Wales". I have pleaded for there also to be a "Source Valleys" so that we can tap into the jobs already coming to south Wales through the large assembly plants. The Source Wales team and people like Mr. David Harris currently appear to be on the margins of the agency's activities; if they are put at the heart of a revitalised agency, we can put behind us the sorry story that has been revealed in the PAC's report. We can then re-establish the spirit intended in 1975 and which has been carried forward by successive Governments—which is for an agency whose job is the regeneration of communities such as mine.

6.9 pm

Mr. Richard Page (Hertfordshire, South-West): I begin my contribution to this debate as I have begun my contributions to every Public Accounts Committee sitting in which I have spoken by paying tribute to the Chairman, the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon), who kindly guides us through our affairs and ensures that we speak with a united voice. If the Committee were divided, our reports and pronouncements would be much less effective. I also thank the National Audit Office for the thoroughness of its reports under the leadership of Sir John Bourn.

When I was appointed to the PAC about six or seven years ago, I remember reading a catalogue of horrors and thinking that Departments would surely realise their mistakes and learn from them and that the flow of disasters would gradually dry up. However, I then thought that the PAC had existed for more than 100 years and that the flow of disasters was unlikely to dry up merely because Richard Page had become a member. In the six or seven years that I have been a member of the PAC, the catalogue of disasters seems to have got worse, not better. I am confident that there will be a supply of raw material for the PAC for many years to come.

[Mr. Richard Page]

As the Committee's Chairman said, two critical themes emerge in the report, both directly related to the introduction of market discipline and the decentralisation of the public sector. Both will threaten the continuation of the process or even reverse it if they are not dealt with properly. Of course, the two themes existed before decentralisation, but decentralisation now enables the public spotlight to be focused on them more clearly and the cover-ups to be exposed. I shall deal with cover-ups a little later.

First, we have witnessed a serious breakdown in the strategic management of publicly financed projects. Departments appear to have relinquished not only day-to-day management, as was intended, but the oversight of activities contracted to agencies under their remit. That has led to a considerable loss of taxpayers' money.

Secondly, the chain of accountability between taxpayers and the activities that they finance has been needlessly broken. Major and costly mistakes and abuses have been unearthed by the NAO, but the individuals and organisations responsible have invariably escaped scot-free or the individuals have resigned, in some cases with six-figure golden handshakes. Some of the most costly examples are to be found in the regional health authorities. I therefore trust that the Secretary of State for Health will bear that message in mind when undertaking the reform of those authorities, which she announced last week.

I have selected just four examples, each of which vividly highlights these issues and outlines an individual twist that may be of interest to the House. Members of the PAC will be surprised to learn that the Westminster and Chelsea hospital will not appear on my list; the Chairman has already dealt with the errors that took place on that project, although I believe that he did so far too gently.

The first example is what happens when one publicly financed body rips off another and, as usual, the taxpayer picks up the tab. We have already heard about some of the costs of police cell accommodation. If someone were to ask an average member of the public what the police force should charge the prison service per night for such accommodation, he might say that Surrey's figure of £89 was a bit expensive but probably about right.

Some of Surrey's senior police officials must have travelled to other counties to find what they were charging, because Surrey increased its charges from £89 a night, which was at the bottom of the table of charges. One might suppose that £120 was enough, or £140, or £160, or £180. I have to report that the average is £234 a night for a prisoner held in police cells which, as Arthur Daley would say, is a nice little earner. However, the price does not stop at £234; it goes up and up.

One can almost imagine the menu card being hung behind the door in some prison cells, requesting the prisoner to fill it in—would he care for French bread or croissants in the morning, jam or marmalade, Weetabix or porridge, haddock or kippers, egg and bacon or black pudding, coffee or tea? One can imagine a kindly Dixon of Dock Green type policemen knocking on the door at 8.30 am asking, "Would sir care for breakfast now?" In Hertfordshire such accommodation costs £561 a night, and that is the sort of service that I would expect for such a sum. It is an appalling waste of public money, although I know that the Home Office is placing specified limits on certain items such as prisoners' food, as the Chairman said.

Despite the variations in the figures and despite the annual bill of about £100 million, the police authorities made little effort to check the bills. Indeed, about half the 41 police authorities did not even bother to use the standard form to submit their claims for reimbursement.

The second example is illustrated by the case of Wessex regional health authority in its attempt to introduce computerisation. Before I am called to order, Mr. Deputy Speaker, may I say that I am well aware that the PAC has not approved the final report, so I shall not mention the £43 million that was spent on a computer system, which has now been abandoned, or the £3·15 million spent on giving a soft landing to the 104 ex-employees of the health authority who, in fact, turned out to number only 60. However, I shall mention what can be described only as a cover-up, when section 30 of the Local Government Act 1992 was used to hide the red faces of public officials.

The Committee was originally to take evidence on 10 February, so it came as a surprise to read in *Computer Weekly* about a second secret report from the district auditor which was not drawn to our attention or made available. We made inquiries and found that the exposé in *Computer Weekly* was correct. The Chairman rightly deferred the meeting. We took evidence on 5 May when we were able to see the whole report.

On seeing the report, it became abundantly clear that the health authority and the management executive should have and could have acted sooner to end the expensive saga. To cap it all, one of the managers involved was able to retire with a pay-off of more than £100,000. My worry is that a report was kept secret when there was no reason for its not being in the public domain. It was made confidential simply to hide officials' embarrassment at the way in which the case was handled.

The third example, which has already been mentioned, involves the Welsh Development Agency. The right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne mentioned the necessity of the entrepreneurial spirit. Drive and efficiency are needed, but we must remember that the WDA deals with public money. The press has paid considerable attention to the fact that the WDA, for all its success in assisting the Welsh economy—I pay tribute to it for what it has achieved—has been less successful in its internal management.

The young and exuberant chairman, who was appointed in 1988 without references, has done much to stamp his personal identity on the agency, going far beyond the number plates on his fully fuelled, grace-and-favour Jaguar. The agency has been run not as an organisation funded by the taxpayer but as the personal business of its senior managers. Perks have been agreed, commercial deals have been made and staff have been hired and fired without regard to the standards of public sector accountability that we hold so dear.

It is perhaps symptomatic that a convicted fraudster was appointed as the agency's director of marketing. He was no doubt helping to cast off its public sector image when he decided to interview girls from a local, unlicensed model agency at the Celtic Bay hotel, somehow incurring a £450 bill in the process.

The agency's reputation has spread far and wide. It has done a tremendous job for Wales but, sadly, our standards of public accountability and principle, which are the envy

of the world, seem to have been abandoned. We need not only the flair of the entrepreneur but acceptance of the fact that public money and public office are involved.

The final example is of the failure to provide a product to original specification arose during the replacement of two auxiliary oilers by the Ministry of Defence. Given the sheer scale of the MOD budget, it is inevitable that it will regularly attract the Committee's attention. Management mistakes in the MOD can have costly long-term effects. The disappointing feature of the contract for the two oilers was that, although work on the second started a couple of years after the first, it succeeded in being commissioned a few weeks before the first.

The original specification provided that the oilers should have vertically launched Sea Wolf missiles to give protection against attack. During the Falklands conflict, we saw what happened when an auxiliary oiler was attacked. The stories and pictures of the Sir Galahad and the Sir Tristram will remain in our minds for ever. I learned then that a £100,000 missile can take out a £100 million ship just like that. It was a disgrace not to allow those oilers to have the Sea Wolf. It cost £300,000 to remove the parts of Sea Wolf that had already been fitted to the oilers when it was decided to abandon it.

The MOD has a habit of behaving in such a manner. I remember the saga of the advanced short-range air-to-air missile. The MOD delayed placing the order for years; it prevaricated, changed and negotiated. It emerged that the purpose of the Tornado, to which the ASRAAM should have been fitted, was to prevent a possible Soviet bomber attack and that the Russian equivalent to our present missile was superior. We would have been knowingly sending our Tornados—heaven forbid that it should have happened—into action against a superior weapon. The MOD delayed making a decision, not for weeks and months but for years.

It is clear from the Committee's report that decentralisation in public service must not lead to the abandonment of public sector standards. It can be achieved without stifling initiatives. We are seeing a progressive and positive improvement, but managers of executive agencies and decentralised services must continue to look for and receive clear central guidance. In addition, they must guarantee that the taxpayer will receive value for money and must ensure local and national accountability, enforced, as it would be in any enterprise, by firm disciplinary measures.

It has been far too easy to negotiate resignations using large sums of money rather than taking disciplinary action and accepting the publicity that it would attract. I hope that there will be more accountability and that there will be no repeat of a report being sumitted to us when a secret cover-up report is hidden in the background and not drawn to our attention.

6.25 pm

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): The hon. Member for Hertfordshire, South-West (Mr. Page) and a number of Opposition Members have rightly focused on the challenges to the Public Accounts Committee that have stemmed from the establishment of executive agencies. We should be no less rigorous in our scrutiny of our own role as a Committee of the House than we expect Departments and other agencies to be in their presentations to us.

I want to focus on one Department and one report about which the Public Accounts Committee has faced a baffling problem for many years. I refer to the Lord Chancellor's Department, whose representatives have appeared before our Committee a number of times and, candidly, have baffled us.

In the last Session, we were faced with an account of the Department's handling of legal aid that we found unsatisfactory. The Committee is not used to employing superlatives in our criticisms of Departments or public agencies; we choose our words with care. That does not diminish the impact of what we are saying, but superlatives alone will do do describe the cavalier approach of the Lord Chancellor's Department to the findings of the Committee and of its predecessors.

It is a joy perhaps surpassed only by the pleasure of watching "Yes, Minister" to read the evidence of Sir Thomas Legg, twice delivered to the Public Accounts Committee in his explanations of the Department's failures to monitor the growth of legal aid and of the uncertainties that the Department had in projecting the consequences for our citizens that flowed from the changes that the Department had made.

His evidence was the most ingenuous to which I had listened in many years of membership of the Committee. We must ask ourselves, arising from that study, whether the Lord Chancellor's Department is capable of doing its job.

I have read the Treasury minute supplied in response to the Committee's 46th report. The minute purports to deal with some of our criticisms about the Department's forecasting and monitoring of legal aid expenditure. The 46th report is not the first occasion when the PAC has considered the matter. A report in the 1986-87 Session expressed astonishment at the lack of control.

In the report that we are considering today, we found that the position was no better than it had been then. The Lord Chancellor's Department appeared to have made no significant improvements. Indeed, we stated that it was

"unsatisfactory"—

and what a modest word that is—

"that, given the improvements promised six years ago, the Department's forecasting and monitoring are no better today than they were then. It is still not possible to identify more precisely the causes of the increases in legal aid expenditure over the years."

Candidly, invincible ignorance from the Lord Chancellor's Department is no longer tolerable. It has taken no steps to make good the deficiencies, and the Treasury minute suggests that it has nothing in mind to deal with the problem.

Paragraph 100 of the Treasury minute states:

"The Lord Chancellor's Department . . . has gained in experience and is now more confident of its forecasts than it was able to be in 1986."

We discovered that, in 1991-92, the Department's estimate were £250 million more than the approved estimate of £698 million. That was an increase of 36 per cent. If the Department is prepared to rest on what it has done so far, that will not satisfy the Committee or the House.

The Department's invincible ignorance is outstripped only by its complacency. Even more horrific than the astonishing increase in expenditure—which the Lord Chancellor's Department has not explained—has been the Department's inability to explain or seek information

[Mr. Robert Maclennan]

about the direct and indirect effects of what the Government propose to do in respect of legal aid costs and the administration of justice.

I will never forget the evidence of Sir Thomas Legg in which he solemnly denied to the PAC that he had any recollection of a letter which his Department had received a few days before from the Lord Chief Justice and the Master of the Rolls in which the two top judges of the realm drew attention to their concerns that self-representation by litigants would flow from the Government's proposed changes to legal aid and, as a consequence, the costs of the legal system would increase substantially. That fear of the two top judges of the realm did not come to the mind of the permanent secretary when he gave evidence about the assessments. He stretched the credulity of the Committee.

Mr. Terry Davis (Birmingham, Hodge Hill): Does the hon. Gentleman accept that not only did it fail to come to the mind of Sir Thomas Legg, but it failed to come to the minds of a team of officials and advisers who were sitting behind him. It was the greatest act of collective amnesia that we have ever seen.

Mr. Maclennan: Yes, I remember that and I recall that the right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) described it as collective amnesia. If I recall correctly, when the right hon. Gentleman suggested that to Sir Thomas Legg, he said that it was not so much collective amnesia as a collective wrong categorisation. It was bumbledom at its worst, although I have a strong suspicion that the answer on the second occasion was very carefully considered.

What happened on that occasion is less important than what has happened since and what steps are to be taken by the Lord Chancellor's Department to deal with the Committee's criticisms after hearing Sir Thomas Legg twice. The Committee drew attention to the attitude of both branches of the legal profession about what was being done, and asked in its 46th report for the closest co-operation between the Lord Chancellor's Department and the two branches of the legal profession.

The Treasury minute is very unsatisfactory, to say the least, on that point. Paragraph 112 states:

"The Department is taking steps to implement the proposals put forward by the legal profession, though it continues to believe that in practice their effect on the overall cost of legal aid will be small."

The minute is thoroughly dismissive and shows that the Lord Chancellor's Department appears to have learnt nothing and to be determined to continue in its bad old ways.

The most disturbing aspect of the Department's response relates to the impact of the changes. The Committee found that the impact of those changes did not appear to have been fully researched or supported by thorough analysis of costs and benefits. The least that the Committee might have expected is that there should have been thorough analysis of the costs and benefits as a result of the proposed changes. However, not only has there been no such analysis: there will apparently be no analysis in future.

Paragraph 110 of the Treasury minute, in response to the recommendation that the emerging results of the changes in legal aid should be monitored, states:

"On the assessments it has made the Department has no doubt that the overall effect of the eligibility measures will be to reduce significantly over the next three years the level of public expenditure that would have occurred in the absence of these measures."

That is a statement of the obvious if ever there was one. However, there is no sign of an intention to monitor. According to paragraph 111,

"The Department will monitor the effect of the changes"—

but it does not say how.

"It will continue to look for ways of improving efficiency and effectiveness in the use of legal aid, the operation of the courts and the delivery of legal services. The Government is committed to ensuring that legal aid is directed at those whose need is greatest."

There is not a single word in answer to the Committee's specific inquiries about the impact on individuals who might, as a result of the changes in the rules on legal aid, not be able to afford representation or to have their case heard in court.

That this matter is significant, although locked up in these arcane documents, is testified to by the speech made yesterday by Lord Woolf on the future of our legal system. When asked whether the system is failing us, Lord Woolf said, in effect, yes. He said that we must now contemplate bringing in a second-class system of civil law under which disputes can be heard, without legal representation, by judges. There is evidently no way in which we can provide effective legal representation under the present arrangements.

The Public Accounts Committee deals with what has passed and how the Departments of State have handled public expenditure. Under the new national audit legislation, we look at the efficiency and effectiveness with which that public money is made available. We have repeatedly drawn attention to the shortcomings of one of the greatest Departments of State headed by the second most senior Cabinet Minister—second only to the Prime Minister—the Lord Chancellor himself, who has brought the system—I do not speak of him personally because it is not entirely the personal responsibility of the Lord Chancellor; the problem has obtained for many years—to such a pass that we now have to talk about second-class legal solutions, and Lords of Appeal and others are having to canvass such ideas.

There is a political remedy which runs far beyond the remit of the Public Accounts Committee to consider, but the time has long since passed when it was satisfactory for such matters to be presided over by a Minister who is permanently in the upper House, who presides over the debates of the upper House, who sits as a judge in the top court of the land and who serves many other archaic functions which, candidly, are not appropriate to a Minister of Justice. The time has come to have a Minister of Justice in this House who is prepared to take conrtrol of the totally inadequate administration of a Department which we have had cause to criticise on so many occasions.

6.41 pm

Mr. Michael Shersby (Uxbridge): I am pleased to follow the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan). He has made some important points about a matter which has caused the Public Accounts Committee the greatest possible concern.

One of the things that I dislike about public life today is the phrase that we read in so many reports, "The Department will continue to monitor the situation." When

I read those words I know that the Department concerned intends to do absolutely nothing about the situation. I hope, therefore, that the Public Accounts Committee will return to these matters, because, within our remit, it is possible to follow up some of the points that the hon. Gentleman made in his admirable contribution.

I join the Committee Chairman, the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon), in his tribute to Sir John Bourn and the staff of the National Audit Office and, indeed, the Comptroller and Auditor-General for Northern Ireland. The Committee is very well served by Sir John, by his opposite number in Northern Ireland and by all members of the National Audit Office. The whole House has cause to be grateful to them all.

Only a few days ago I was extremely interested to hear on the radio a report of the substantial sums which the Public Accounts Committee has saved the taxpayer as a result of our examinations of various Departments of State during the past 12 months. I do not think that many other public bodies can demonstrate such savings. I trust that my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary to the Treasury heard those figures and that they have given him and his colleagues in the Treasury some comfort in their difficult task.

The Public Accounts Committee is a remarkable body, as the Chairman has pointed out. It has 15 Members of Parliament drawn from all quarters of the House who meet twice a week and whose lives are virtually dedicated to ploughing through very long and complex documents, examining witnesses and subsequently approving reports —about 50 of them. It is a truly gigantic task. I am very pleased that several hon. Members who are not members of the Public Accounts Committee are present and that one of them has already contributed to the debate. I hope that other hon. Members will also do so.

I should like to pay another compliment, and that is to the radio programme "In Committee", which is broadcast at 11 pm on Sundays. Whenever I am asked by my constituents or by business men what the Public Accounts Committee is all about, I say, "I will invite you to attend a sitting so that you can hear what we are doing and I will send you reports that interest you, but I recommend that you listen to 'In Committee'." That programme informs the public not only about the work of the Public Accounts Committee but about the work of other Select Committees of the House.

We spend much of our time examining waste, mismanagement and incompetence. The waste, mismanagement and incompetence to which right hon. and hon. Members have referred should be the Treasury's top target if it wants to reduce public expenditure. A great wealth of information is available to the Treasury in dealing with such matters, and I look forward to some vigorous action being taken.

I am sorry that I have to refer to mismanagement by the Treasury itself. The first report that I wish to draw to the attention of the House is not one of those to which the motion specifically draws our attention, but it is particularly significant in the light of forthcoming events because it relates to the failure of no less a Department of State than Her Majesty's Treasury to exercise proper control over the purchasing procedures of an organisation for which it and it alone has direct responsibility.

That organisation is known as Forward—forward with what I am not quite clear. Forward with the people it might be, but I am not sure about that. However, to most hon. Members it is probably a somewhat shadowy organisation, and I doubt whether, if asked, many would be able to say what it does. Until a little time ago, it was known as the Civil Service Catering Organisation, for which the acronym is CISCO.

Forward, therefore, is part of the Treasury. It is supposed to operate on commercial lines with its own chief executive, finance personnel and operations directors. It runs, so we are told, or helps to run, about 175 restaurants in a wide range of Departments. Among other things, we discover that the Chancellor of the Exchequer is one of the largest restaurateurs in the country, which is also not widely known by hon. Members or the general public. Moreover, that organisation has a turnover of £30 million per annum. The Comptroller and Auditor General reported to the Public Accounts Committee on irregularities in the accounts of Forward for 1991-92 and qualified the audit certificate in the light of continuing uncertainties on key systems and controls and on the propriety and regularity of Forward receipts and expenditure.

That is a truly astonishing state of affairs, because those irregularities are the result of what the Treasury has acknowledged to be a serious breakdown in financial control. The estimated overall cost of failures in control at Forward is between £0·5 million and £1 million. Since our report to the House was published, the Treasury has agreed with the Inland Revenue that Forward's liability for unpaid tax and national insurance contributions is no less than £380,000. That, taken with £110,000 for the cost of work by Ernst and Young and up to £400,000 for cash and stock losses in the two years covered, suggests a total loss of up to £900,000.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary and my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, when he presents his Budget proposals to the House and no doubt talks to hon. Members about the stern measures that are necessary to deal with deficiency and to ensure that waste is rooted out in all Departments of State, will look to his own Department and realise that the problem of irregularities is not confined to organisations outside his own or, indeed, outside the Government. It is extraordinary that that failure of control occurred.

I shall say a few words about what happened. Fictitious employees were entered on the casual employee payroll so that the wages of real employees could be recorded as remaining below the pay-as-you-earn threshold. In other words, there was insufficient evidence to establish that the employees were genuine. That is an extraordinary state of affairs. It reminds me, and it may remind the Chairman of the Committee, of a remarkable speech in the House some years ago by the late Lord Ridley of Liddesdale when he was unearthing the irregularities in Fleet street. Workers were being paid in fictitious names such as Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck, which caused the Inland Revenue to tighten up on those irregularities.

In this case, we find an organisation directly under the control of the Treasury doing exactly the same thing. Payments to casual employees remained gross without deductions for PAYE and national insurance, records were destroyed at four locations, and so on.

The Treasury minutes that we received in response to the investigation of this sorry matter said

"A report on progress in settling the disciplinary cases will be sent to the Committee in the near future. Of the original 15 cases, 11 have been concluded. Of the remainder, 1 case awaits the completion of police investigations and official investigations are

[Mr. Michael Shersby]

still in progress on the other 3. There have been two further cases, one is still under consideration, and in the other the person involved is to be dismissed following a successful prosecution." I do not regard that as impressive in view of the serious nature of the matters involved. To pick up the Chairman on his use of vocabulary in dealing with these matters, I am dissatisfied with the result.

The second case on which I must comment concerns Chelsea and Westminster hospital, which is situated in the North-West Thames region—the region in which my constituency is situated. I have always had a high regard for the North-West Thames regional health authority and the outstanding leadership of its chairman. I am sad, therefore, that we have heard today about the lack of control over a substantial hospital construction project. It is extraordinary that such a public authority proceeded with the construction of a hospital of this size without being certain that all of the necessary planning consents were firmly in place. That must never happen again.

The hospital was built on the assumption that certain income would be available from the sale of land to defray the cost. With the fall in land prices, the income was not forthcoming. It is easy to be wise after the event, so perhaps one should not be as critical as one might otherwise have been. Nevertheless, it is terrible when we read that North-West Thames relied on loans of more than £56 million from other regions to finance the project and paid interest of some £4 million on those loans, thus increasing the cost of the project. As we have heard, the whole operation resulted in a huge cost overrun. That means that other desirable projects in the region will be short of money that might otherwise have been allocated to highly desirable projects. That must never be allowed to happen again.

Another matter to which the Chairman referred briefly is the difficult and sensitive matter referred to in the Committee's 25th report, which deals with the payment of legal expenses incurred by the former Chancellor of the Exchequer. That report has shown the Public Accounts Committee at its best. I have been a member of the Committee for 10 years, and I cannot remember a previous occasion when we have taken evidence from the head of the civil service, the present permanent secretary to the Treasury and his predecessor.

The proceedings were carried out with great dignity, and the Committee investigated these matters in the greatest possible depth. I am pleased that a number of things have been made clear: first, the expenditure of public money was confined principally to the handling of the necessary press relations that resulted from the incident and, secondly, as a result of the Committee's investigation, the Cabinet Office has produced a good code of practice so that, if such events occur in the future—we all know that events of this sort can occur in public life—new guidelines lay down clearly where the division lies between personal and public duties and expenses, and private and party political activities. That must be commended.

I hope that members of the public and those who are interested in the incident will be reassured by the fact that, as a result of the work of the Committee, we now have clear and explicit guidelines which demand that, when there is any doubt, the accounting officer must be informed and the advice of the Comptroller and Auditor General should be taken. That is a satisfactory conclusion to an investigation that was carried out with dignity and swiftly, and involved taking evidence from the highest officials in the civil service.

I cannot conclude my remarks without mentioning briefly the Welsh Development Agency. My colleagues have spoken about it and I do not wish to say a great deal more, except that it is one of the worst cases that has ever come before the Committee in my 10 years of membership. I was especially glad to hear the statement of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales in the House last week in which he made it clear that the report showed that his predecessors were to blame. He accepted responsibility for the actions of politicians in his Department but at the same time drew a fair balance between the responsibilities of the political heads of the Department and its chief officers.

I was impressed by reading the remarks of the hon. Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) in questioning my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. I hope that the Committee's examination of the entire matter and the active steps that are being taken by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales will bring the sorry tale to a conclusion. I certainly share the sentiments expressed by the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) that the time has come to get on with the work that needs to be done in Wales and that the errors of the past should not in any way be allowed to prevent useful and important action being taken by the Welsh Development Agency to stimulate investment, growth and employment in the Principality.

As a Committee, we can justifiably claim that it has served the House diligently and that it has a good record of savings. I hope very much—I say this every year—that more hon. Members who are not on the Committee will be persuaded to read the reports, to attend the debates and to speak. I have ensured that local business men, people in local government, clergymen and constituents who are interested in certain aspects of public life receive and read the Committee's reports so that they know that their interests are being protected and that we are determined to get value for money and to concentrate on effectiveness and economy in the conduct of the public service in Britain.

7.1 pm

Mr. Terry Davis (Birmingham, Hodge Hill): I join the hon. Members for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) and for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones) in paying tribute to my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) for the way in which he has continued to chair the Public Accounts Select Committee during the past year. The Committee is indebted to my right hon. Friend for the skill and sensitivity with which he has guided our deliberation. I am sure that the work of the Committee has been greatly enhanced by his chairmanship and for that we are all grateful.

I also join the hon. Member for Uxbridge in paying tribute to the work in the past year of Sir John Bourn and Dr. Jack, his colleague from Northern Ireland, and their respective National Audit Offices. If I do not refer in detail to any reports published by Dr. Jack, it is only because the scandals that we have witnessed in connection with England and Wales have been much greater in scale at least than those in Northern Ireland.

I pay especial tribute to the staff at the National Audit Office and to those who do the less glamorous work at the Certification Office, who have produced more and more reports in the past year. The reports attached to the accounts have arisen not from the value-for-money studies but from the straightforward certification audits and have given rise, in many cases, to our hearings. There has been a definite increase in the number of occasions on which we have taken evidence from those reports compared with previous years and the staff who work on that aspect of the National Audit Office deserve congratulation.

We need reports from the National Audit Office more quickly. The preparation of the value-for-money reports are sometimes delayed by the protracted negotiations between the National Audit Office and the Departments involved. The delay is much less in the production of reports in connection with the certified accounts and I suspect that is because of the pressure to publish those accounts. That pressure limits the amount of time that we spend talking with the Departments. The Departments appear sometimes to be procrastinating to draw out the discussion and dilute the reports of the National Audit Office.

If I were to make one point of constructive criticism of the NAO, it would be that it should take a tougher line in standing up to the Departments and refusing to dilute its reports. Of course, as is proper, it should record the comments and reaction of the Departments to the criticisms made by the NAO, but it should stand by those criticisms and not seek agreement at all cost. On one or two occasions in connection with the value-for-money reports, I suspected that the influence exerted by the Department over the NAO in its anxiety to publish the report was greater than we would have wished.

We need quicker reports and more rough and ready reports—which would help the speed of production. Sometimes it is important to take evidence on something that has happened before too many months or even years have passed. Far too often, the Public Accounts Committee finds itself discussing a problem not with the accounting officer who was responsible at the time but with his successor. A perfect excuse and defence which arises time after time, sometimes gently and sometimes all too obviously, is that the accounting officer was not in office at the time of the scandal under discussion. Many members of the PAC have noticed that feature.

The way to stop that failing is to have reports brought before us more quickly. The NAO should not strive too energetically to obtain agreement with a Department, and in that way we might speed up our work, hasten our deliberations and have the opportunity to talk about what went wrong with the person on the spot at the time, rather than the person promoted to the job and left holding the baby.

The hon. Member for Hertfordshire, West referred to cover-ups—especially in the case of Wessex regional health authority, which is not before us for debate today. The hon. Gentleman said that he thought that sometimes things were kept confidential to save the red faces of officials. I am sure that he is absolutely right.

All members of the Committee are conscious of the fact that that has happened far too often in the past in connection with defence scandals where there has been a colossal waste of money and delay in defence programmes. The present head of the Defence Procurement Agency is much more open than his predecessor and things have improved. Dr. McIntosh is more appreciative of that desire for openness—perhaps because he comes from Australia—and is more open, not only with us but with the public; he does not try to keep secret matters that were probably known to the Russian Government long before they were known to the Public Accounts Select Committee. The desire to preserve confidentiality and to avoid embarrassment has often been the driving factor, not the need for secrecy to protect our services.

We have witnessed such unnecessary secrecy in other cases, most notably that of the Chelsea and Westminster hospital, mentioned by the hon. Members for Uxbridge and for Hertfordshire, West whose constituents are in the North West Thames region. There were two issues involved. One was the amount of money, the overrun of costs in the building of that hospital, and the other was the delay in completing its construction. That second issue has not been mentioned. I emphasise that that delay was an excellent example of an attempt to suppress information.

The information was in a report that came before us, but Sir Duncan Nichol, the chief executive of the national health service management executive contacted the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee and asked that the table that showed the delays be kept secret, and that we ask questions only in a secret session and that the details be not made known to the public—the people who lived in the North West Thames region who were suffering from the postponement and even permanent deferment of the much needed schemes, as the hon. Member for Uxbridge mentioned, and who were to benefit from the much-awaited hospital and were made to wait much longer than they should have.

That information was to be suppressed,but it has not been, because the Chairman of the PAC, supported by the Committee, insisted that there was no reason for keeping that information confidential and that it should be published. The people who live in the region are entitled to that information, just as the taxpayer is entitled to know the way in which the Ministry of Defence has failed to get a delivery of weapons programmes on time. People should not be in fear of information becoming public knowledge, but they are because they want to save themselves from embarrassment.

Of course, the greatest embarrassment of the past year's cases, which has been mentioned by every speaker in the debate, is the case of the Welsh Development Agency. My hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) was right on the mark when, quoting from another report, he said that the real cause of the problem was the prevailing and pervasive culture that has permeated far too many public bodies in the past 14 years. It is the same culture that has affected and afflicted the West Midlands regional health authority and the Wessex regional health authority, as we shall see when we come to next year's debate on the basis of the report that is shortly to be published. I shall say no more about that now, except that it raises the same issue.

Another special feature of the Welsh Development Agency is precisely that it is Welsh, or rather that it is sponsored by the Welsh Office. In the past few years—I emphasise that because it has not always been the case—the Welsh Office has become a byword for waste, inefficiency and mismanagement and for its inability to control non-departmental public bodies. To be fair to the

[Mr. Terry Davis]

Welsh Office, it is not the only body to have that problem. The problem seems especially to afflict non-departmental public bodies administered under this Government.

We had a similar problem with the University college of Cardiff. The matter did not involve the Welsh Office, but it was a similar problem with a public body in south Wales in which many of us felt that there were political overtones. There were problems with the Development Board for Rural Wales which were very similar to the problems with the Welsh Development Agency, which did involve the Welsh Office.

There is another body that many of us tend to confuse because it is headed by one of the previous Secretaries of State for Wales—Lord Crickhowell. That body is the National Rivers Authority. The NRA is not based in Wales, but it is headed by a man who was Secretary of State for Wales and, during his chairmanship, the PAC produced a very critical report which mentioned many features that were the same as those of the Development Board for Rural Wales and of the Welsh Development Agency. The problem seems to afflict the group of Conservatives who come from Wales, and seems to feature far too often under this Government.

I was very concerned about the way in which the Secretary of State for Wales evaded a question I put to him last week. I drew his attention to the fact that the Welsh Development Agency scandal was only the latest in a series of scandals. I then asked him whether there were any more scandals to come and he said that of course he could not guarantee that there would be no scandals in future. That was not the question. He may have misunderstood the question or have simply been evading it. The question is, how many more scandals which originated before the changes were made have yet to come before the PAC? In other words, how many skeletons are still in the closet waiting to come out? The question is not how many bodies will be put in the closet in future. Some of us are concerned about whether we have seen the end of the series of reports on Welsh bodies under this Government.

The hon. Member for Uxbridge has said that all the reports that come before us are a catalogue of waste, incompetence and mismanagement. He is right. My right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne has pointed out that there are some very able civil servants. It is good to remind ourselves of that fact. We do not tend to see able civil servants; we tend to look at reports that are highly critical of what has happened and of what has been done by civil servants in implementing Ministers' policy decisions.

We have seen a series of examples of incompetence during the past 12 months. I have been concerned with the way in which many of the accounting officers have performed in front of the PAC. The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) drew justifiable attention to the dismal—that is a mild word for it—performance of Sir Thomas Legg who is, after all, a permanent secretary at the Lord Chancellor's Department. He is not the only example to come before us in the past 12 months.

We had, for example, the permanent secretary to the Department of National Heritage, who came before us to talk about the scheduling of ancient monuments in England. There are 60,000 ancient monuments in England and most of them are supposed to be scheduled. The scheduling work began in 1882. By 1984, the succeeding section, for which the accounting officer is still responsible, had managed to schedule 13,000. That figure must be seen against the background figure of 60,000. Between 1984 and 1992, another 800 were scheduled.

When the accounting officer was asked a direct question by the Chairman of the PAC about when he expected to finish the job, he said that he thought that 70 to 80 per cent. would be scheduled by 2003. *[Laughter.]* I hear one or two of my hon. Friends snorting at that estimate. They should not underestimate the pace at which the Department of National Heritage is now going to get on with the job. The figure of 70 to 80 per cent. out of a total of 60,000 works out at about 42,000. That means that there are still about 30,000 ancient monuments to be scheduled over 10 years, and that means 3,000 a year. When we put that figure to the permanent secretary in Committee, he was not able to disagree with it.

In a subsequent memorandum, the permanent secretary said that the numbers would be slightly lower. We asked him how he intended to increase the figure to 3,000 a year when previously the figure had been only 80 a year. He said that he was not really sure and that it depended on resources, but that he was sure that he would get there. He did not really have a clue. He did not have a plan or a programme, and he could not tell us how many monuments would be scheduled this year, next year or the year after. The figures had all the appearance of having been plucked out of the air. Fortuitously, the target date of 2003 is a year after the permanent secretary is due to retire. We have since had a supplementary memorandum giving us his programme over the next few years before his retirement. The Committee will want to return to that matter before he leaves his employment in the civil service.

We must not be too unfair to the permanent secretary to the Department of National Heritage. The permanent secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food was not exactly clear about his programme when he came before us to discuss coastal defences in England. We pointed out that he had received a report to the effect that 16 per cent. of coastal defence works needed to be replaced over five years. We asked him—I felt that it was a fair question—how much it would cost to replace that 16 per cent. of coastal defence works so that we should then know how much we should ask the Government to spend over five years. Unfortunately, that was beyond the permanent secretary, although the Ministry has responsibility, in one guise or another, for defences against the sea. It has had that responsibility almost as long as the Department of National Heritage and its predecessors have had responsibility for scheduling ancient monuments.

We pointed out that the National Audit Office report showed that two years ago a survey said that various proportions of the National Rivers Authority defences, of local authority defences and of private or corporate owners' defences needed "significant work" which should be carried out as soon as possible. The survey came out two years ago, so it seemed reasonable to ask the permanent secretary how many miles or kilometres of sea defences were involved. He did not know that either. We asked him whether, in that case, he knew that the work had all been done, because that would have been a good reason for not knowing the figures; they would have been an unnecessary detail. He did not know whether any of the work had been done in the previous two years.

We were talking about coastal defences that needed significant work if they were to stop flooding. As we all know, flooding can cause people to lose their lives. It was a serious matter, yet the permanent secretary did not know what was involved. I did not have much confidence in his competence to protect us against the sea.

The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland has already referred to the permanent secretary to the Lord Chancellor's Department. The Department, apart from anything else, sets the criteria to be used in granting legal aid. It decides the criteria and gives them to the Legal Aid Board. Yet when the permanent secretary was asked how much income and how much in savings one had to have to become ineligible for legal aid, he did not know. That was during questioning about legal aid.

If we had been discussing something else—the administration of justice generally or something to do with the courts—that might have been reasonable, but we were there to talk about legal aid and he did not have the foggiest idea of how much money one had to earn or receive or how much one needed to have in savings to lose all eligibility for legal aid. We were not asking detailed questions about the table, just what was the limit at which one forfeited all legal aid. He had no idea.

Then there is the Home Office. The hon. Member for Hertfordshire, West referred to the way in which the Hertfordshire police authority was "ripping off"—I think it was his expression—public money by charging excessive bills for accommodating prisoners in police cells. The criticisms were justified. We had to ask, why was that happening anyway? How did it happen that prisoners were kept in police cells instead of in prison? Why were we using police officers instead of prison officers to look after prisoners? The answer was that there were not enough places in the prisons. We all know that.

It emerged through questioning that there were 45,000 prisoners at the peak in 1990-91. We were considering the next year. The peak in the next year was 48,000 people, so the number of prisoners increased by 3,000. The permanent secretary told us that that exceeded the forecast. By how much did it exceed the forecast? The forecast was originally 44,000. The Home Office projected a reduction in the number of prisoners and then, to be fair to it, revised the forecast back to the level of the previous year. There was an increase, however, so the forecast was very inaccurate.

We can understand all that, but I found it difficult to accept it when the permanent secretary to the Home Office said that he did not know why the increase had taken place. It is one thing to make an estimate and get the forecast wrong, but it is quite another not to have any theories as to why the actual figures exceeded the predicted figures. That seemed to me to be incompetent.

There were two possible theories: either the courts were sending proportionately more offenders to prison or more people were being brought before the courts and the courts were sentencing the same, or a smaller, proportion of people to prison. The permanent secretary at the Home Office had no idea. He did not know the cause. Unless one knows why increases occur, one will not be good at predicting the future. That is obvious.

The chairman of Customs and Excise came before us to talk about VAT avoidance. A report from the National Audit Office described nine cases in which allegations of VAT avoidance had appeared before the High Court. The chairman agreed that all nine cases were typical. Of those nine cases, one was still sub judice so he could not discuss it. Of the other eight, Customs and Excise won one and lost seven: one to Customs and Excise, seven to the avoiders. The only case that Customs and Excise won was a case involving a publican's wife serving sandwiches. That was worth £1,200 a year. My hon. Friends will not be surprised to know that every case that Customs and Excise lost involved sums many times that amount, running into millions of pounds a year. It seemed to me that the conclusion to draw from that was that Customs and Excise is good at dealing with publicans' wives but not at dealing with big companies and banks. It is not in the same league as the banks and big corporations of this country.

The chairman said that those cases were not typical examples anyway—having previously agreed that they were typical. He gave us figures to prove that he was right and that the record of the Customs and Excise was much better. When we examined the figures that he gave us, we found another classic exercise in wool-pulling. He told us that 49 cases were lodged with the High Court during the year in question. Of the cases that were heard by the High Court during the year, Customs and Excise won seven and lost four.

On the face of it, that left 38 others, but just a minute—those that were heard were unlikely to be those that were lodged, because a hearing takes a long time in the High Court. There was a clear opportunity, in the supplementary memorandum, for us all to read about an attempt by the chairman of Customs and Excise—he has now gone, and we shall not see him again—to pull the wool over our eyes. He promised to provide those figures to justify his assertion that the report gave a misleading impression.

That was not the only occasion. We found out, when talking to the chairman of Customs and Excise about the failure to clear arrears of VAT, that Customs and Excise does not produce an age profile of VAT arrears. That is an elementary management tool. Customs and Excise must be the only business-type organisation in the country that does not produce an age profile of its debts to know whether it is collecting them efficiently; that is essential. Instead, Customs and Excise does a special exercise every couple of years. When we asked the chairman by how much the arrears had decreased, we found that they had increased. In the two years that we were considering, what are called remissions increased by a quarter—no less than £115 million.

In the very month in which we were discussing the inability of Customs and Excise to recover £115 million in VAT arrears, the newspapers were full of stories about how the Benefits Agency had failed to recover £21 million in loans to the poorest people in society from the social fund. It appears that more than five times that amount went in remissions. We asked, "Are you sure?" and "How much of that was written off and how much was collected?" But the Chairman did not know. We know, however, that more and more people enjoyed those remissions, and I do not think that they were publicans' wives.

My biggest criticism is that too often, when considering the affairs that have come before us during the past few years, we have observed a gradual shading of the role of the civil servant. Accounting officers and permanent secretaries are the same thing—some of the accounting officers are the heads of non-governmental public bodies. Increasingly, they appear before us in the role of politicians, rather than that of civil servants. Imperceptibly, the civil service is being politicised.

[Mr. Terry Davis]

Perhaps the clearest example during the past year came from the Benefits Agency. It was mentioned by my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne—the example of the way in which the introduction of disability living allowance was rushed. There was a flood of publicity up until, but not after, the general election of 1992. When we asked why it was rushed, it became clear that it happened so that the Conservatives could boast in the pre-election period about what they were doing for people with disabilities. The resources to cope with that "surge of claims"—the phrase used by those civil servants —were not put in place.

When we asked why the resources were not provided to cope with those claims from people with disabilities, and why people were not employed so that those claimants could have the benefits to which most of them were entitled, we could not get the facts, because people were acting more politically than as civil servants before the Public Accounts Committee.

Mr. Morgan: Was that the Government equivalent of the Hoover free flights offer? In good public relations terms, one can provide what is called "feel good" advertising, followed by a "feel suicidal" performance by the agency that makes the offer to the public, in the hope that there are so many obstacles to getting the benefits that are advertised as available that people will not follow through and make a fuss about it. The agency gets the public relations credit for having made it seem that milk and honey and free offers are available, although they are not, but it does not intend to put the staff in to respond in a reasonable time to the demands that will result from the advertising campaign.

Mr. Davis: I thought that it was closer to the case of the Central Office of Information, which came before the Public Accounts Committee a few years ago, when we considered its expenditure. The variations were remarkable and there were clearly peaks and troughs. If I remind the House that expenditure on so-called information—much of which is television advertising—peaked in 1982, followed by a trough in 1984, and that it bumped alone in 1985 and again peaked in 1986, only to decline in 1988, I think that hon. Members will understand the significance of those dates.

Mr. Ron Davies (Caerphilly): No, tell us.

Mr. Davis: The shadow Secretary of State for Wales wants to be told. I do not think that he is that naive, but the accounting officer for the COI needed to be told. Although his job is to give out information and to explain the facts of political life here to people in other countries, he did not know the dates of general elections during the past decade. We all realise what that expenditure was about and most Opposition Members recognise that the advertising for disability living allowance was in the same category.

Although I may be wrong, I think that the hon. Member for Uxbridge said that more people should attend these debates. I do not think that we need more debates on the work of the Public Accounts Committee, but the debates need to be more focused.

One of the problems in holding a debate like this at fairly short notice—we only knew about it last Thursday —is that a pile of 50 PAC reports is indigestible. It is impossible to read all of them during the weekend and I can well understand that many colleagues might have more pressing duties, or more pleasurable activities. It is unreasonable to expect people to take part in these debates at such short notice.

As we believe that the work of the PAC is important, it would be easier to get greater participation and to have a better debate if we focused on a few reports only, perhaps those affecting linked Departments. For example, we could debate reports affecting the Inland Revenue, Customs and Excise and other tax-related Departments, or the Home Office and Environment. The details could be worked out through the usual channels, but we ought to be able to have more focused, sharper and better debates. That is important.

I think that the hon. Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) said that there should be more liaison with other Select Committees; I agree, but the way to achieve it is by involving members of other Committees in debates on PAC reports on such subjects as the Chelsea and Westminster hospital, which has been mentioned so often this evening. On that constructive note, I conclude my remarks.

7.32 pm

Mr. Cynog Dafis (Ceredigion and Pembroke, North): I shall speak briefly about the Public Accounts Committee report on the Welsh Development Agency. I welcome the fact that the irregularities in that agency's behaviour have been brought to light by the report, and I warmly congratulate those hon. Members who have been instrumental in bringing that about, especially members of the Committee.

The hon. Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) also deserves a special mention. The fact that his finger was pointing in the wrong direction when he spoke about the irregularities does not minimise the importance of his contribution to the revelations about the WDA's misdemeanours.

I entirely concur with the strength of condemnation that we have heard tonight. Having said that, however, I also agree with the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) that what happened must not be used as an excuse for damaging the work that the agency can and must continue to do for Wales. An all-Wales agency, capable of taking an overview of our economy, of developing strategies to create a prosperous and sustainable Wales, and of marshalling resources to support those strategies, is essential, and would be essential, even within the framework of a democratic, self-governing Wales of the type that we want to be established.

The strategies pursued by the agency have been criticised and it has been suggested that there has perhaps been an over-emphasis on providing factory space and physical infrastructure, important though they are. I am told that in recent years, Mr. Philip Head, the chief executive, has been influential in bringing about the new and welcome emphasis on encouraging existing enterprises within Wales, through the business services and skills development sections of the agency. New attention has been paid to local, small and medium-sized enterprises and the promotion of the use of new technology among them.

The hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney mentioned Source Wales—an initiative centring on the creation of linkages between large multinationals and local

suppliers, strengthening the multiplier effect of inward investment. Such development of the indigenous industrial sector is vital. Its results are likely to be more long-term, less dramatically visible and not as easy to trumpet as Welsh Office successes as are other results, and perhaps not so amenable to photo-opportunities and statements at meetings of the Welsh Grand Committee. In many ways, however, that is the way forward as a strategy for industrial development in Wales.

The WDA has been able to develop that more subtle and complex strategy—a strategy which, in many ways, is more in tune with the social and cultural needs of the Welsh community as well its purely economic needs—because it has had the freedom to do so. It is essential for the agency to be able to retain the power of initiative in that way and it is essential that its budget be sufficient to enable it to use that power effectively.

The fact that there has been improper conduct in financial matters—travelling expenses, redundancy payments and so forth—is no reason for eroding the power of independent decision making on strategy, policy development and entrepreneurial initiative.

Secondly, I must refer to the recommendations of Sir John Caines's inquiry, which was set up by Mr. Rowe Beddoes, the new chairman. I shall read three of the recommendations, as reported in the *Western Mail*, which, put together, cause me some concern. The first is:

"Board members should disclose all interests in contracts",

which should go without saying. The fact that it needs to be said at all seems serious. The second recommendation is:

"Conflict of interest rules should be tightened to cover employees' families and close friends".

The rules should have encompassed that in the first place.

The third recommendation, taken together with the first two, worries me considerably, as it states:

"Greater efforts should be made to find board members from outside Wales, even if it means diluting the proportion of Welsh men and women."

I ask you, Madam Deputy Speaker! That is a recommendation of breathtaking impertinence. I can just imagine what the Secretary of State for Social Security would say if it were suggested that irregularities or corruption in England should be dealt with by importing people from France, Spain or Italy to deal with them.

If one puts those three recommendations together—they are juxtaposed in the report—one begins to get the picture. They portray an image of an inbred province, riddled with corruption, which has to be rescued from itself by the intervention of impeccably rigorously ethical representatives of the metropolitan power. That is what it seems to be saying to me. It is the voice of the English colonial mentality in its glory—whatever is to be done about Wales and the situation there, it certainly cannot be left to the natives. To say that I find that offensive would be the understatement of the year.

To avoid any misunderstanding, I may say that I recognise entirely—as do all sensible, enlightened and progressive people—the contribution that English people make to the life of Wales. They have done so in the past and will do so in future. Not just English people are capable of showing an understanding of our national life, culture and aspirations and of making an important contribution. However, it requires empathy, research and dialogue to gain an understanding of what kind of place Wales is—and it is a complex place.

The Welsh Development Agency's deficiencies spring not from the fact that it is too Welsh but that it does not properly reflect the whole spectrum of Welsh life. Neither is it directly accountable to the people of Wales—and that is true of many other non-departmental bodies. I recommend the analysis made by Sir John Caines from which I quoted earlier.

The WDA's problem is that its members are determined according to their acceptability to the Secretary of State for Wales. The agency needs not more colonialism but democracy, accountability and development policies that enhance the distinctive social and cultural traditions of Wales. We will only get that package together when Wales stops being a province, stops allowing itself to be treated as a province, and has the democratic Parliament that more and more people in Wales acknowledge as a fundamental necessity.

7.41 pm

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): I join the congratulations to my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon), Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee. He is in the difficult position of chairing a Committee that, after a long period of one Government in office, is inevitably looking at problems that have arisen during the life of that Government. It is to my right hon. Friend's credit that he has created a consensus within the Committee that enables it to present unanimous reports and to enjoy an identity of interest in the way that it approaches problems.

My right hon. Friend is a man of singularly generous disposition, so criticism from him usually means being close to a situation that would cause others of us to explode. In the absence of my right hon. Friend, I may say that I do not go along entirely with his belief that there has been no lowering of standards in public life.

Last week, a newspaper reported that a former permanent secretary in the Home Office is running courses for civil servants on how to deal with the Public Accounts Committee. I found that amusing, but wondered why such courses are necessary. What is their purpose? If a civil servant is only appearing before the Committee to answer questions about a report agreed with his Department, why does he need coaching?

I believe that there has been a lowering of standards in public life in terms of propriety, honesty and attitude. As my right hon. Friend said, when we see such changes it angers us that rarely does a witness come before us who is actually responsible for the situation that he is there to defend—and rarely do we hear of anyone, no matter how grave their misjudgment, suffering any punishment or disadvantage.

Two elements are contributing to that decline. One is the proliferation of quangos, which inevitably—especially in the Welsh context—consist of ministerial placemen. Immunity is created because in criticising an appointee, a Minister would be criticising himself for making that appointment. When one considers the political background of the chairmen of the West Midlands and Wessex regional health authorities, and of those appointed to quangos in Wales, one can understand why they feel secure and enjoy a form of political protection.

An insidious, if unintended, consequence of the proliferation of quangos, which one would be foolish to ignore, is an unplanned and undesirable change in the

[Mr. Alan Williams]

nature of the next steps agency, which is viewed by virtually everyone within it as the first step to privatisation. That produces a perhaps intentional awareness of the profit motive, but also the sublimation of a sense of public service. A consequence of that philosophical adjustment is an awareness of the opportunities of the new situation in which the management find themselves.

It is significant that the management buy-out is a major element in the privatisation that follows from quangos. I hoped to demonstrate that the advantages enjoyed by the in-house team may be an element in one appalling case. The in-house people know the warts, what is hidden, what is wrong, what fat can be cut away, and what could be a realistic bid. They have an incentive to conceal reality from those who might counter-bid.

In the West Midlands regional health authority case, the software function was being hived off and the chairman said, "We told them that if they got the contract and were successful in becoming privatised, they could have a £1·9 million annual contract for the next three years to give a soft landing to the people who worked there." Strangely enough, the two other bidders were not successful. They were not told about the £1·9 million contract. The chairman could not see that there was something unacceptable about telling one bidder in a privatisation process that it had a contract for £2 million in its pocket and not letting the other bidders know.

Intrinsic to the privatisation-via-agency route is the temptation to make the megabuck very quickly. It is the one chance that someone working in the public sector has to make it financially big—*[Interruption.]* That matter is, of course, of great lack of interest to members of the Treasury Bench. The Financial Secretary to the Treasury cannot be bothered to listen, and the Whip is too busy engaged in conversation with him to allow him to listen. On the one day of the year that we have such a debate, we should at least be able to expect that the Treasury Minister present would have the courtesy to put up with those of us who attended every meeting of the PAC throughout the year to produce reports—which then receive disdainful replies in the form of Treasury minutes, as I hope to demonstrate.

There is an increasing reluctance to recognise the importance of accountability to the House. Such reluctance goes back, philosophically and politically, to one particular lady, whose contempt for the House dominated political thinking for over a decade. That contempt for the House is now implicit in Ministers who have never been in opposition.

There are Opposition Members who have never been in government, and there are Conservative Members who have never been in opposition. I know that the Government Chief Whip will not be reassured, but one advantage of being in opposition is that one learns how dangerous it is to allow a Government to become arrogant and to think that they can treat the House as they wish. The arrogance at the top has spread down through the political middle, and has now begun to feed into the executive machine.

There are people in the civil service who, for the past 14 years, have served one political philosophy. I am not making a party political point—the same would apply if we had been in government for the past 14 years—but, in a way, the swinging to and fro of Governments in the past helped to sustain the impartiality implicit within the civil service.

Those of us who have served in government have made friends with civil servants while working with them. We knew that while they were briefing us at the Dispatch Box, they were aware that within a short period they might be working for Members on the other side of the House.

The result of the past 14 years has been that those in the quangos feel immune because Ministers and the Government have been there for so long. Those in the civil service have become attuned to the philosophy that has prevailed in the Government for so long, and have begun to adjust to it. We are seeing a lowering of standards, which was not intended, but is inevitable. A corruption of attitude has also taken place, starting from the top and working down.

We in the Public Accounts Committee must consider whether we should call not only the present accounting officer, but the person who held office at the time when the issues that we are discussing took place. It is no good officials thinking that all they have to do is switch jobs or take an early retirement when their misdemeanours are being discussed by the Public Accounts Committee. They should not think that they can shrug, draw their earnings-related pension, take an outside job with companies with whom they dealt while in government, and earn more money with their combined pension and outside job than they earned as civil servants.

The Welsh Development Agency is an organisation in which people felt that they were protected by the Minister because they were protected by the Minister. Operation Wizard referred to a covert privatisation operation. In a written answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones), the then Secretary of State, now Lord Walker, denied that there were any plans to privatise, while at the same time, according to the evidence given to the Committee, the operation was going on with the express approval of that Secretary of State.

After the National Audit Office report was issued, and after we had had that appalling hearing in February—anyone who watched it must have been embarrassed for the witnesses because of what came out—Lord Walker's successor, the present Secretary of State for Employment, promptly reappointed the chairman. Indeed, he appointed him head of S4C, which carries with it automatic governorship of the BBC.

Mr. Morgan: It is the other way round.

Mr. Williams: Whatever way round it is, he has got both jobs.

One of the worrying features about the WDA is that, good as the work of the National Audit Office was, it did not discover what was going on at the WDA. It found out about the cars and the pensions, but it was whistle-blowers who contacted my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan), who put them in touch with my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells) and myself as members of the Public Accounts Committee. People within the WDA were so incensed at the dishonesty, concealment and arrogance of the people now in control of this important quango that they felt they had to talk to us and tell us what was going on, even at the risk of losing their jobs.

Even the massive machine of the National Audit Office and the prestige of the Comprtoller and Auditor General was not enough to squeeze out of this protected semi-political operation what was going on in that quango —and what was going on was endorsed by a senior Minister.

I take exception to the reply from the Treasury in its minute. The sole reference to Wizard is to say that the Comptroller and Auditor General did not complain that it was improper in accounting terms. That is to miss the whole point. Yes, the money was there, it was accounted for—the £320,000 was not put in pockets and run away with—but nowhere was the word "Wizard" used; nowhere was anyone told that Wizard existed; even the board, when it took reports, did not minute the report on Wizard.

The money was deliberately spread between accounts so that the three operations would not be related in any outsider's mind, and to ensure that the House, the Comptroller and Auditor General and the National Audit Office never discovered that, at the heart of the WDA, was a group of men conspiring to distort its role to enable them to take over the profits from its property and its consultancy work.

Yet those men were and are protected. As I have said, we had the evidence in February, but only last week did we have a statement from the Government. As has been pointed out, nowhere has there been any criticism of the board or Ministers—that goes without saying. Instead, we were told that the previous chief executive, Mr. Waterstone —who was very much involved—and various other people have gone scot free. The members of the board are appointees of the Minister, and he could dismiss them immediately should he wish to do so, but they are still there —and some of them are on a number of Welsh quangos —and still holding those posts, despite what has been revealed in relation to the WDA.

We had as chairman of the Welsh Development Agency a man who had to have his arm twisted for the major part of a year before he could be persuaded to pay back the grants that he had received under the rural conversion scheme for a property in north Wales. As chairman, we had a man who benefited from the private car usage scheme, and who flew by Concorde and by helicopter so he could more quickly make the appointment with the wrong man in the United States. That wrong man eventually walked off with the funds for furniture and office equipment which had been left in the office petty cash.

No one checked the references of the chairman. The fact that he had a million was enough to impress the Lord Walker. We understand why Lord Walker was impressed, but no one asked why ICL asked the chairman to leave. No one asked why the company to which he sold his business to make his millions almost immediately went into desperate financial difficulties when it tried to use what it bought. No one asked those questions. He is still there, waving to us from the top of a hill in the sunset, and enjoying his governorship of the BBC. He should be banned from public office.

A similar situation exists with Forward Catering, the company referred to by the hon. Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby). The company has been demoralised by the fact that it has been expecting privatisation for so long, and the privatisation has been deferred and deferred. The situation in this case is that a chief executive has set up a private company incorporating the name "Forward" in the names of his wife and his deputy, who is his daughter.

Forward Catering did not cook the books, but literally burned the books, although I do not blame the chief executive for that. The accounts were destroyed on four occasions, and ghost workers were employed. One section of the Treasury—Forward Catering—was defrauding the Inland Revenue and the Department of Social Security. Hon. Members can imagine what would happen if one of our constituents had defrauded the Department of Social Security of even £5. The full force of the law would come into play in that instance.

But what have we had here? There has been virtually no punishment for anyone. One little girl who, in fairness, deserved to be dismissed was summarily dismissed. I believe that one regional director was downgraded and one official was reprimanded. However, that is all the punishment that has resulted from an attempt to defraud the Inland Revenue and the Department of over one third of a million pounds, and from the loss of £400,000 of stock. That is £8,000 of stock a week that just walked. Recommendations—made as far back as 1983—that a proper accounting system be set up were ignored, yet the Treasury has still done virtually nothing.

Switching to a different level, it is not surprising to see the effect of Government cuts on people's thinking. My right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne referred to fire prevention reports. Here again was a staggering situation, although staggering for different reasons. The situation shows the danger of combining the imposition of cuts with the protection of Crown immunity. The people responsible for 8,000 Government buildings should have had an inspectorate of 38 to ensure that the buildings were adequately protected against fire. Instead, only two of the anticipated 38 were employed. The two who were employed spent half their time dealing with administrative work, and so were able to carry out virtually no inspections.

Successive Governments in their wisdom have decided that they will not insure public buildings, but will recognise that what they save on insurance will be used to meet the costs when a building gets burned. In the case of Hampton Court, £5 million of fire damage was done six years ago, but still no fire certificate exists for the building. In the case of Windsor, people were beginning to get a bit nervous about the system, and there was a public appeal to provide the money for repairs. The money that has been saved over the previous years from not insuring buildings has not been used in those cases.

The fact that buildings are not insured presents disciplinary problems, and I use discipline in the intellectual sense. As all hon. Members will know from insuring their homes, if one wants to insure a building one must meet certain standards which are laid down by the insurers. One of the problems of not insuring Government buildings is there is no outside monitoring pressure to apply standards in the Government sector that would apply elsewhere.

For example, the administrative wing of a hospital needs a fire certificate, but the area for the poor patients does not. Her Majesty's prisons—where people are locked in—need no fire certificates at all. Those are some of the matters that the Committee has come across in its deliberations this year.

One of the worst of those matters, and one which was referred to by my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne earlier, was the privatisation of the 12 regional electricity companies.

[Mr. Williams]

I will not take long, and I will conclude with these comments. In this case, the public have been robbed twice. First, £16 billion of public assets—that was their replacement value—were sold off, not for the £8 billion which the Government claimed to have received, but for £5 billion from the shareholders. Secondly, the other £3 billion which the Government said that they had obtained from privatising electricity did not come from the shareholders at all. It came in the form of a notionally created and non-existent debt which was imposed on the day of privatisation. The money came from the people from whom the electricity industry was taken. The debt had to be paid back, but no one ever had any money for it. The money came from the consumers, and that became clear in the evidence that the Committee received.

Some £1·8 billion of the £2·8 billion has been paid by consumers. For example, in London the average consumer has already paid £141 for the privilege of someone else owning what had been his or her electricity industry. In the midlands, the figure is £24. In the northern area, it is £69, and in the southern area, it is £49. Those prices have been already paid by consumers towards what the Government call the receipts from the privatisation of the electricity industry.

Interestingly, at a time when there is a public outcry about the possible imposition of VAT on fuel, the public do not realise that they are already paying a privatisation tax on electricity. [HON. MEMBERS: "Why is the Minister laughing?"] That is what I called the arrogance of continuous government.

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Stephen Dorrell): I do not wish the right hon. Gentleman to conclude that I am arrogant. Will he simply explain to the House by how much the real price of electricity has fallen to the consumer since privatisation?

Mr. Williams: If the Financial Secretary cares to look back, he will discover that his Government bumped up electricity prices before privatisation. Before he says anything about gas, may I remind him that, for three years running, his Government imposed a 10 per cent. price increase—over and above VAT—on the gas industry, adding 33 per cent. to the price of gas, and now turn round and say, "Ah yes, but gas prices have not increased as rapidly since privatisation." They fatten industries up and after they have fattened them up they privatise them. Then they turn round and say, "There we are. Things are looking much better now than they were before."

Mr. Morgan: I am sure that what the Financial Secretary really wants my right hon. Friend to tell the House is that, in the five years from the commencement of the privatisation process—the publication of the White Paper by Lord Parkinson, the then Secretary of State for Energy, in February 1988—the price of electricity to domestic consumers in the United Kingdom rose by an average of 44 per cent., whereas in most European countries, it rose by between nil and 10 per cent. In other words, the cost of privatisation to the United Kingdom domestic consumer from the beginning of the process to the end was very high indeed.

Mr. Williams: I thank my hon. Friend. That was just the point that I intended to make and he has explained the position far more clearly than I could have done.

I conclude with my one regret—which I am sure the Chairman of the Committee will share. The Committee has suffered a great loss: in the coming Session, we shall no longer see the man whom I call the Sylvester Stallone of Whitehall because he has appeared before us so often. We shall no longer have as a witness Duncan Nichol, the head of the National Health Service Management Executive, who is now moving into the academic world. Let me offer a word of advice to his future employers: by all means take full advantage of the experience that he brings, but please, please, please do not let him buy a computer.

8.11 pm

Dr. Kim Howells (Pontypridd): I, too, congratulate the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon), who has conducted the affairs of the Public Accounts Committee in a terrific fashion throughout. The consensus that has emerged has been most important.

I also thank Sir John Bourn, the Comptroller and Auditor General, and his magnificent staff. I was lucky enough to be invited to the newly consecrated Cardiff office. I was given a tour of the place and an explanation of how it works. I must say that the staff there are the very antithesis of many of those whom they are paid to investigate. The office is about as far away from the Athenaeum as it is possible to get. There is none of that imperial air about them which has unfortunately cursed those occupying some key positions in this great civil service of ours—some of whom are still there, although that is another matter.

There are some worrying trends in public administration—some of them mentioned tonight—which are likely to accumulate rather than decrease. They are the result not only of privatisations and of the creation of next steps agencies but of the growth of hospital trusts and opted-out schools. All those bodies will require proper auditing, accounting and monitoring. I know from my private conversations with those in the Comptroller and Auditor General's office and other agencies that there are great worries that there will not be the staff to carry out such audits. I am afraid that in some cases there will be almost a typescript for corruption.

We must be very careful. It has already been stated tonight that our civil service—warts and all—is one of our national treasures, and the service's lack of corruption has been one of its greatest virtues. I am lucky enough to have travelled quite extensively in Italy and the last thing that I should want to see is a slide towards what one might call the Italian mode of public administration. It seems to me that that is all too possible, given the new scenario.

We must construct new ways of ensuring that there is proper accountability. In that respect, I hope that the rumours that we heard a couple of years ago to the effect that the office of the CAG was to be split among the other Select Committees and its power diluted were not true and will not re-emerge. I know that the Chairman of the Committee fought tooth and nail to prevent any such slide. It is vital that the PAC should retain its historic role and that, in seeking ammunition, it should have the full armoury of the CAG's office at its disposal.

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): Does my hon. Friend accept that it is important to get the structures right not

merely in terms of parliamentary and civil service accountability but in terms of the accountability of the Ministers who run the Departments and who are ultimately responsible? Does my hon. Friend agree that the present Secretary of State for Wales has washed his hands absolutely of what is going on in an agency for which he is directly responsible? Nor have such occurrences been restricted to recent times. The Chairman of the PAC will recall that, some seven or eight years ago, when I was a member of the Committee, millions of pounds that went to the Parrott Corporation were never properly accounted for. There has been a history of non-accountability among politicians.

At one time Ministers would resign if something went wrong in their Department, as happened in the case of the Crichel Down episode, but the present Secretary of State for Wales does not want to know: he claims all the credit but never the blame when things go wrong.

Dr. Howells: My hon. Friend has made an important point and one which leads me neatly to the argument that I was about to advance. I have said some hard things about the Welsh Office in the past few weeks. I think that my criticisms are deserved and that there is a real problem with the Welsh Office. For whatever reason, the Welsh Office has not been properly managed and has not fulfilled the functions that are central to its existence, which include the monitoring and proper management of quangos that run and administer Wales from day to day.

I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) that there is only one person who carries the can for the administration of the Welsh Office, and that is the Secretary of State for Wales. It ill becomes the previous Secretary of State to sit smugly through the statement that the present Secretary of State made on the débâcle of the Welsh Development Agency as though it had nothing to do with him.

It ill becomes the Treasury, too, to try to pretend that it knew all along what was going on within Operation Wizard. That is one part of the Treasury minute that really irks us. It is somehow assumed that it is all right if money is secreted away in another vote or category—if it works, that is fine, and if it does not the experiment has failed but no one will really carry the blame for it.

We had a taste of that attitude during the extraordinary period of legal aid for the former Chancellor, who ran into some personal difficulty which he had to resolve rather quickly on a Saturday night and hired London's most expensive lawyer to help him out. We discovered that little anomaly only as a result of a whistleblower, not as a result of acute and observant administration by the permanent secretary's office. It is a real shame that in such cases we have to depend on whistleblowers, which reinforces my earlier point that the Comptroller and Auditor General's department must be strengthened rather than weakened as we head further into this new era of administration.

We came across the most extraordinary examples of desperate incompetence. Under the chairmanship of Sir James Ackers, we have seen perhaps £10 million or £15 million of the West Midlands health authority's money go down the drain; under the chairmanship of Sir Robert Buchanan, we have seen perhaps £50 million or £60 million of the Wessex health authority's money go down the drain, which is the price of a district general hospital. That money has gone as a result of some sweetheart management buy-out in an IT department that failed miserably and continues to fail miserably. Are those responsible being punished?

My right hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) pointed out one case where an employee on the shop floor was disciplined for serious wrongdoing. In the case of Wessex health authority, Sir Robert Buchanan, who was its chairman, is now the deputy director of supplies for the whole of the NHS. We look at that with a degree of incomprehension. It makes no sense whatever. We heard about Dr. Gwyn Jones, the former chairman of the Welsh Development Agency. One wonders what on earth the Welsh Office thinks it is up to in that respect.

The hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Dafis), argued that English administrators have no place in Wales, which seems a particularly extraordinary and arrogant thing to say. I should hate to think that we from Wales could have no part to play in the administration of England or any other part of Great Britain. Albeit reluctantly and with great reservations, I voted for Maastricht.

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): Shame.

Dr. Howells: Some people may shout, "Shame."

One of the things that it meant was that, if somebody showed talent, whether he be German, Italian, French or Belgian, he would play a part in reconstructing the life of Europe.

Such awful parochialism is a poison that infects Parliaments when they are overridden with nationalist nonsense. We must be careful about that. After all, it was Welsh administrators—even Welsh-speaking administrators—who created the chaos at the WDA through their incompetence and questionable objectives. With precious public funds, what counts is talent, honesty and flair. I do not care where the people come from so long as they know the proper way to deal with precious public funds.

My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis) referred in his wonderful summing up to the almost farcical hearing that we had when we discussed coastal defences. I was hoping that he would make the next point, but he did not, so I shall make it now. We saw in many of those hearings that the permanent secretary sometimes arrived with the chief executive and a dozen or 15—I once counted 18—advisers from the Department. One wonders who ran the Department when the public accounts hearing was on.

When my hon. Friend asked the permanent secretary to tell us where exactly the sea defences were likely to collapse and land be flooded, the permanent secretary turned to his helpers on the seats behind, and not one of them could name a single mile of coastline where that danger existed. There was a feverish searching through of books. Nobody could name a single stretch of coast. It did not give me a great deal of confidence in the competence of those officials during that hearing.

It has already been stated—with a degree of frivolity—that courses are now held, or mock runs, before officials come before the Public Accounts Committee. They are told, "This is how you are likely to be questioned." They did not do much of a job on the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. It was absolutely appalling.

Another important problem that has not been mentioned so far this evening is language—almost semantics. With the next steps agencies we get a different language. I know

[Dr. Howells]

that we have got used to calling patients in hospitals "customers". Even taxpayers are customers now, although they are sometimes called punters—usually if they are about to go to gaol.

Another problem is the curse of the consultants. We are constantly being told that matters got out of hand because bad advice was received from consultants. There is a curse of consultants so far as quangos, next steps agencies and the Welsh Ofice are concerned. I remember we had a case during the hearing that was as dramatic a scandal as that surrounding the WDA. It concerned the Development Board for Rural Wales. My right hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, West, as though he were skinning an onion, peeled down to the extraordinary truth behind Mr. Ian Skewis's redundancy package. We were told that the outgoing chief executive, Mr. Skewis, had been promised guaranteed consultancy work as part of his redundancy package. It was worth a large amount of money. When we asked what the consultancy work was, no one could tell us. We were told, "We'll make up some consultancy work for him." The permanent secretary said that it would be about rural affairs. We pressed him on that and asked whether it would be about milking cows. "Possibly," he said, "but it would have been about rural affairs".

It is like a sick joke. One does not know what consultancies are going to be about. They are about keeping people on board, protecting old friends and ensuring that the bump is not too hard when one hits the ground. I fear that one of the reasons why the Secretary of State for Wales has not had the courage to take action over the former chairman of the WDA is precisely because the chairman was appointed by a Secretary of State for Wales and defended by his successor as part of the great spirit of Thatcherism which was transforming the Welsh economy. To admit that that guy had made a mess and should be taken off such an important body is far too much for them to do. They should get off their high horses and act on behalf of the people of Wales.

Finally, before I forget, I meant to say from the start that, in gracing our first session almost a year ago, the Minister did the Committee a great service. He sat patiently throughout. We appreciated that. One sometimes gets the feeling that the departmental officials are sent along to carry the can, so it was nice to see the Minister play an active role in the deliberations of the Committee.

I draw the Minister's attention to something of which I am sure he is all too well aware, because it has such a vast budget. Our 46th report deals with the administration of legal aid. For those who are not aware of it, I will spell out how big the budget is. This year, it is no less than £1·1 billion of public expenditure, and by 1995-96, even after the changes in the administration of legal aid, it will be £1·5 billion. There is no question but that those are huge sums of money. I understand that in 1993-94, 120,000 fewer civil legal aid certificates will be issued than would have been issued if the changes outlined in the report had not been instigated.

I hope that the Treasury understands that the Committee feels strongly about the disgraceful lack of information during our hearings on that investigation. The Department should have been ashamed of itself. The Lord Chancellor's Department had worked with the Bar Council and the Law Society, but representatives of both those bodies made it clear to us in conversations that they were appalled by the lack of consultation before those enormously important changes were introduced. Despite all our reservations about lawyers and the old stories about licences to print money, both are eminently sensible organisations and the Public Accounts Committee values the material that they gave us when we were investigating legal aid.

We must destroy the myths about the huge profits that can be made by law firms from legal aid. That is not the case. We came across hints of some improprieties and I am glad to see that the Treasury has responded quite positively to them. I notice that it is to investigate all reports of fraud by clients.

We have to reaffirm that justice cannot be bought cheaply. It costs a lot of money. The budget is enormous, and the statistical database on which important decisions about huge expenses are made is simply not good enough. It is scandalously underfunded in that respect. Much more work must be done. Attention must be paid to the justifiable complaints by the Law Society and the Bar Council about the way in which courts are run. There are many inefficiencies in that system. Savings are being posited, but they could be disastrous. Courts will close, there will be longer waiting lists for trials and I fear that that is the other side of the coin of the proposed cuts in legal aid. Those are not cuts in the real sense, but they are cuts in the number of people who qualify for legal aid.

The reason for the rise in costs is still a mystery. The Committee's conclusion was:

> "We remain concerned, however, that in real terms cases are much more costly today that they were ten years ago. We therefore recommend that the Department should urgently set in hand further research to seek to identify the causes of these increases; to establish whether or not they are justified; to take necessary action to reinforce effective control over the assessment and payment of costs; and to eliminate additional costs arising from delays and shortcomings within the systems of civil and criminal justice."

Has the Treasury minute been acted upon? It says:

> "In the coming months, the Lord Chancellor's Department intends to issue a public consultation document setting out proposals for a less formal (and cheaper) method than trial in open court for handling smaller personal injury claims. There will also be proposals for a concurrent increase in the small claims jurisdiction."

Has that consultation document gone out? What is its status? What are the early reports, if any, on its progress? It is important that we should be told that tonight.

Treasury response No. 122 says:

> "The results of the National Audit Office Study of the administration of the Crown Court are expected soon."

Has that been published? Can we know what it contains? It also says:

> "The Department is committed to working with other agencies in the criminal justice system to identify and reduce areas of delay and cost in the passage of cases through the courts."

I have not seen any evidence that real work is being done on that. I am glad that the Financial Secretary has sent a colleague over to find out. I am sure that we all want to know.

I know that many others wish to speak. My hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) probably wants to speak about a subject that has interested him for a long time. I hope that the Minister will realise that our concerns stretch across all the reports. We all congratulate the civil service on the magnificent work that it does and we stand by it and desire to strengthen the ethos of its

work. We must also register that there are grave disquiets about many of the tendencies and trends that we have witnessed over the past year.

8.36 pm

Mr. John Horam (Orpington): I pay tribute to the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon), the Chairman of the Committee. He has been relentless in his vigilance in this respect and we all know of the conscientious way in which he approaches his task. The officials of the National Audit Office, under the Comptroller and Auditor General, produced some excellent reports in the course of the last long Session of Parliament. It is a pity that we do not have sufficient time fully to digest all the reports. Because there were so many of them, some have had to be dealt with rather quickly. Nevertheless, they have done a good job.

The members of the Public Accounts Committee have been through many of the reports. We have talked to the officials about the problems that they encountered in compiling the reports and then had two-hour sessions with the permanent secretary, the ineffable Sir Duncan Nichol, or whoever, flanked by 15 or 20 civil servants, no doubt learning how to deal with irritating Members of Parliament. We have read the draft reports containing the Committee's final recommendations. Lastly, we have come to the words of the Financial Secretary in reply to our mammoth effort.

What strikes me about the words of the Financial Secretary is that they are brief—terse and economical are other words that spring to mind. I am not against brevity. There is enough prolixity in this place to allow us to welcome any brevity. However, that otherwise admirable quality is carried to extraordinary lengths.

Let us take a typical report, which happens to come to hand, of no fewer than 44 pages of dense text on A4. The Treasury's reply is only three and a quarter pages long, most of which consists of quotations from the report, with a large margin and lots of space in between. That is carrying what I would otherwise regard as a great virtue to an absurd length. The report's brevity means that few of the substantial charges made by the Committee are covered comprehensively. Moreover, the remarks that are made are not relevant to the strength of the case made by the Committee.

One example is the Committee's 26th report into the Chelsea and Westminster hospital. Committee members will remember the background to that issue, which I still regard as a staggering example of a major Government mistake. In London there are far too many hospital beds, and far too many expensive hospital beds. The cost of treating people in London is estimated at twice or two and a half times the cost in a suburb or further afield. Many specialist units in London do a unique job and I am not discussing those. I am talking about an average hospital case in London.

Despite that background, it was decided as recently as 1987 or 1988 to build a brand-new hospital costing well over £200 million in an area with an excessive number of beds already. Moreover, it was decided to build that hospital in the most expensive part of the capital. Chelsea and Westminster is probably the most expensive location in the entire country to build a hospital. So, in a city with too many expensive beds already, we build an even more grandiose and expensive hospital only some three miles from one of the newest hospitals at Charing Cross, which is only 25 or 30 years old.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health has not been helped by that decision, which was made only five years ago. As she has said, the position in London has not come upon us out of the blue. How many reports have been issued on the hospital situation in London since the turn of the century? I cannot remember whether it is 11 or 21, but it is a substantial number. They have all come to the same conclusion as my right hon. Friend—there are too many hospital beds. Nevertheless, the Chelsea and Westminster hospital was built.

We then asked the Treasury to comment on that decision. The PAC concluded:

"In view of the very high costs of building in London and . . . that surplus beds were increasing in the capital, we are surprised that the Management Executive, in deciding to build this hospital, did not have regard to the wider pattern of hospital[s] . . . in London and the . . . Home Counties".

The Treasury's response was:

"The Department took account of the effect of the project on hospitals within the North West Thames Regional Health Authority (the health authority) and in other Thames Regions before approving the project in December 1988. The project was approved because it would achieve improved quality of care, together with a reduction of beds in line with the Region's strategy, and would lead to significant revenue savings."

My complaint about that response is that it is extraordinarily brief and does not deal with the full burden of the case put by the Committee. Furthermore, it does not deal with the PAC's point that the project should have been viewed in a wider context, not merely of the authority in question but of all the hospital provision in London and the home counties. The response does not take on board that broad picture.

The PAC's second conclusion—that

"the project should be considered in the broadest geographical and organisational context and not limited to narrow local factors, however attractive the proposals may be to local interests"—

makes substantially the same point. It asks the Treasury to lift its eyes from the specific, look more broadly at the regional scene and see whether the decision was right. The Treasury's response was:

"The Government already recognises the importance of this"—

the broader scene.

"Treasury guidance on project appraisal makes it clear that projects should be evaluated in this way."

There is no recognition of the fact that the project clearly was not evaluated in that way but was simply a restatement of a generalised Government position, which seems to have been totally ignored in that respect.

The PAC noted that a consequence of spending all that money in one place was that other valuable projects in the north-west had to be delayed. No fewer than 24 different projects of varying sizes worth £120 million had to be delayed because all the money was being shovelled into building the Chelsea and Westminster hospital. So we concluded:

"We note that the North West Thames Region relied on loans of over £56 million from other regions to finance the project"—

not only did it have its own money but it had to draw on other regions, which therefore suffered delays in their projects—

"and paid interest of some £4 million on the loans, thus increasing the cost of the project."

The Treasury replied in one sentence:

[Mr. John Horam]

"These loans incurred no extra cost for the NHS as a whole, and this practice is an appropriate way to make best use of available capital monies."

Was it an appropriate way to make best use of capital moneys to take £56 million from all the other regions and shovel it into a hole when the project was vastly over-expensive, not needed and of dubious long-term value, although I am sure that it is a splendid hospital? That is being economical with the truth in a big way. Technically, the Treasury was right. With its usual skill, it seized on a technical point but ignored the wider issue, which is a pity.

I too congratulate my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary on the interest that he appears to be taking in the PAC's work. After all, we are a part—albeit a small part—of the business of trying to keep the leviathan of public spending under control. Therefore, when the Committee comes up with an example, as in the case of the Chelsea and Westminster hospital, that is scandalous in terms of how the project was managed and the strategic decision that lay behind it, the Government should give a more substantial reply.

8.48 pm

Mr. Rhodri Morgan (Cardiff, West): I am half apologetic for being yet another Welsh Member to speak in this debate—*[Interruption.]* I said half apologetic. You, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and your predecessors who have chaired the debate may be forgiven for thinking that it was the annual Welsh day debate and that some English interlopers had fallen into it by mistake. Not so. The point is that there has been a lot of interest in the work of the PAC in Wales. Over the past two or three years the PAC has taken a great deal of interest in quangos for which the Welsh Office is responsible and in quangos operating in Wales for which United Kingdom-wide Departments are responsible.

The interest in Wales has centred in the main on the investigation into the 1991-92 accounts of the WDA, but there are many parallels with the English investigations that the PAC has carried out, too.

Tonight we are looking at how the Government responded to the criticisms levelled by the PAC. In the case of the WDA the response has come in three forms. First, we have the formal Treasury minute, but, as has already been pointed out, the Treasury tends to hide behind nit-picking technicalities when it can. We therefore do not always learn much from Treasury responses. The Treasury should be a little more frank and a little less technical and defensive when it responds, as the PAC is making good points.

The second response about the WDA was last week's statement by the Secretary of State, which also tended to be rather light, attributing all the blame to officials who have had to walk but claiming that everyone else is clean, including the previous chairman, who can stay, say the Government, in his other public appointments. Obviously, previous Secretaries of State are clean too, we are told: after all, they are previous Secretaries of State. They should not be forced to give up appointments that they have recently been given by the Government.

Lord Walker became chairman on 1 April this year of the English equivalent of the WDA—the new Urban Regeneration Agency. So the Government will not suddenly agree, just because the boring old PAC has found that he has done something wrong, that they were wrong to appoint Lord Walker head of the URA, which has a budget 10 times the size of the WDA's. The Government would never do that.

Have these responses been adequate? We have also had the internal report by the WDA—Sir John Caines's report, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) has already referred. These reports do not express how the people of Wales feel—which is that they have been let down by the WDA's goings on of the past few years. The all-pervasive culture of arrogance needs to be uprooted from the WDA.

I would not be speaking tonight if I felt that the three responses had been adequate. I still believe that we are underplaying the issue. I would go as far as to say that the Chairman of the PAC underplayed it, but that is to do with his personal style; it is not a criticism of him. Unfortunately, he is not in his place to hear my remarks at this moment.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) has already alluded to Operation Wizard and the question whether it was properly dealt with. The Secretary of State referred to it last week. The PAC has heavily criticised the operation, but it was rebuffed by the Secretary of State in his statement. He said that the Comptroller and Auditor General did not pick up any improprieties in the business of the hiring of consultants to do £300,000-worth of work. Parliament was not told what the work was for, but the Secretary of State did not find the matter irregular in any narrow accountancy sense, so we are given to believe that it did not really matter.

More broadly, though, it is surely not right that a body for which the Secretary of State is responsible can decide, with his authority but not that of Parliament, to consider privatising itself. It was not aiming to bring in private capital by increasing its activities and leasing factories to private developers—not at all. That might have been said to fall legitimately within the discretion given to a Secretary of State, or even a chairman of the agency. It can legitimately consider how to bring in private capital.

But that is not what Operation Wizard was about, as the PAC minutes of evidence make clear on page 67. In appendix 10, the PAC put the question:

"Did any senior executives or Board members have talks with any outside body or persons about finance for either a management buy out or a management backed buy out ?"

The agency's answer was:

"The initial studies concerned either a share placement or flotation whilst later studies considered a partnership approach".

So what was under discussion was the selling of shares in the WDA and the floating of the WDA on the stock exchange.

Unless Parliament authorises a move towards privatising an agency and is given a Government explanation from the Dispatch Box, it surely cannot be right for £300,000 to be spent on consultancy fees with the intent of selling shares in the WDA on the stock exchange. That requires parliamentary approval, and it plainly did not have it. That is why the people of Wales still think that the top brass at the WDA, who were actively encouraged by Lord Walker, ought to be asked to pay the £300,000 back. If the privatisation plan had gone through, they might have been major partners in the management buy-out, proceeding to a share flotation, and they might easily have become millionaires. As the flotation did not go through, why

should the taxpayers have to pay for the one-way bet that the top brass took on privatisation without authority from Parliament?

In short, the Secretary of State, in total confidence and secrecy, was able to authorise a complete change in the WDA's status, as established by Parliament, without explaining anything about it to the House.

Mr. Alan Williams: Does my hon. Friend agree that what is singularly and worryingly devious about the whole situation is the fact that the Secretary of State authorised this not using Welsh Office money, which would have been identified by Parliament, but at arm's length via the WDA, which gave him a greater chance of concealment?

Mr. Morgan: Perfectly right. The point has been made that this was not explained to the House—but it goes further. The matter was specifically denied in the House when, at oral questions, my hon. Friend the Member for Carmarthen (Mr. Williams) asked the then Secretary of State, in the summer of 1989, whether the WDA had authorised Barclays de Zoete Wedd to do some studies on the privatisation of the WDA. The Secretary of State replied that my hon. Friend's information was wholly inaccurate. At least my hon. Friend got the name of the merchant bank right. We now know that Barclays de Zoete Wedd did indeed carry out the studies.

The Chairman of the PAC also referred to Neil Smith and the famous episode of the Shapes model agency. Although an extremely interesting issue, it too was underplayed in the course of this debate. Great play has been made of the fact that the Shapes model agency was unregistered. It had been registered at one time but the registration had lapsed. Is that the most important issue, or is it that the agency was run by a convicted brothel keeper? The latter is probably a better indication of the dangerous waters into which the WDA was entering. The full flavour of that has not come out in the debate. *[Interruption.]* My hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells) makes the point that the ethnic origins of a brothel keeper could be considered important matters of public concern. I do not think so.

The pattern is the same whether in England or Wales when one is dealing with a failure to monitor the activities of quangos. What does Dr. Gwyn Jones have to do to get himself sacked from public office in the BBC and S4C, and what does Sir Robin Buchanan have to do to prevent his being promoted from chairman of the Wessex health authority to deputy chairman of the National Health Service Supplies Authority? What do those people have to do to prevent their being moved not simply sideways but upwards after some ghastly misdoings have been discovered by the various parliamentary monitoring processes of which we and the debate are a part? What do they have to do before they finally get the chop because Parliament has said that they are not fit and proper people to be in charge of expenditure and responsible through the Secretary of State to Parliament for millions of pounds of public money? In that context, it does not matter whether they are operating in England or in Wales.

The hon. Member for Ceredigion and Pembroke, North (Mr. Dafis), who is not in his place, reacted in a Pavlovian manner to Sir John Caines's report about what was supposed to happen in the WDA following the uncovering of the shenanigans. Page 9 of Sir John's summary report contains a reference which I think the hon. Gentleman misquoted. He implied that one of Sir John's recommendations was that Welsh people should not be appointed to the WDA board. Sir John did not say that. He said:

"The Secretary of State should be ready to seek more widely to find board members, even if that risks diluting the proportion of Wales-based people serving on the board in order for the board to be seen to be above criticism."

That could easily mean talented Welsh exiles working in industry in America, Scotland, England, Germany or anywhere else, as distinct from people of non-Welsh origin who are working in Wales as bosses of big firms. Such people often tend to be appointed to the WDA board.

The Pavlovian reaction by the hon. Gentleman was absolutely predictable. He took it to be an admission that Wales cannot run its own affairs. But that is not what the report is about. It is about how to clean up an act that has clearly been going wrong and how to prevent a recurrence of the problems.

Other matters on the same page of the report are far more important than the ethnic origins of board members. For example, it refers to procedures that I thought were already in place, but I presume from the report that they are not. That has lessons for the whole world of quangos. At board meetings, a chairman or any member of the board can declare an interest. One assumes that, from that moment on, those people take no part in the discussions, but it appears that that has not been happening.

The report recommends:

"No relevant papers should be provided to a board member with a declared conflict of interest."

I should hope not, and I should like to think that that has been the practice in the past, but I am certain from reading Sir John's report that it has not. That means that those with a conflict of interest are still given the papers that are provided to other board members.

The report states:

"At board meetings once declarations have been tabled the board member who has declared an interest should exclude himself from the meeting for the discussion of the items giving rise to the conflict."

That has not been happening, either. Therefore, there is no rule to say that board members should declare an interest but cannot stay there and take part in the discussions. What is the point of declaring the interest? There is nothing to stop that board member using his influence and contributing with his specialised knowledge of the project because he has an interest in it. I had hoped that that was happening all along, but evidently it was not.

Before the Treasury responds to the criticisms, it should read Sir John's document. It states:

"The Secretary of State should ensure that no two or more board members should have a common other directorship regardless of whether any conflict of interest exists at the time."

I assume that that cannot be a reference to anything other than the problem that has arisen over Dr. Gwyn Jones becoming a board member of Tesco at the same time as the managing director of Tesco became a board member of the WDA. That is obviously thought undesirable. As far as I am aware, that is the only example on the WDA board. However, it is not a matter just for the WDA: it should become the basis of a generalised Government rule for all quangos.

We have learnt other lessons about protection for whistleblowers. Time and again, hon. Members have said how important they are in supplementing the abilities of the National Audit Office in getting behind the defences put up by Departments and quangos. We cannot work without whistleblowers. Members of Parliament are

[Mr. Morgan]

dependent on them, perhaps me more than most. They are important in the process of monitoring what is happening and identifying any waste of public money.

We must deal with gagging clauses imposed on people who are asked to leave their jobs because they have fallen out with the chairman or something like that. My recollection is that last year the Treasury said that gagging clauses should be banned in the public sector, but I do not know whether any action has been taken to ensure that. Because of the fear of industrial tribunals and the fact that they are held in public, every time there is a major row involving someone who knows where the bones are buried —someone who can identify where there has been a significant waste of public money—the natural reaction of quangos and Government Departments is, as the PAC's Chairman said, to spend yet more public money on a gagging clause to cover up that waste. They want to prevent that person from revealing the waste to a Member of Parliament, a newspaper, a permanent secretary or whatever.

I hope that tonight the Financial Secretary will make a firm declaration that gagging clauses in the public sector will be banned. We must protect whistle blowers and strengthen our monitoring function and control over the waste of public money.

9.6 pm

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): As a Scottish Member of Parliament, I feel slightly nervous about following all the Welsh Members who have already spoken. I want to take this opportunity—and I intend to do so annually—to congratulate my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon), the Chairman of the PAC, on what must be his 10th year in that position. I remember him taking over the Committee after the general election in 1983. Before that, I had served on the Committee under the chairmanship of Joel Barnett. Although my right hon. Friend has chaired the Committee for 10 years, his speech this evening has shown that he still retains his enthusiasm for the job, which he does with the same verve now as he did 10 years ago.

When I served on the Committee, one of its inquiries was into the De Lorean affair. When I was dragged by my children—or perhaps it was the other way around—to see the film "Back to the Future", I was interested eventually to see a De Lorean car in operation, even if it was only on film.

I am always sorry that more hon. Members do not take part in these debates. If they looked at all the reports, not just those listed on the Order Paper, they would realise the opportunities available to raise issues related to their constituencies or areas. They could then put on record, both here and in the local newspapers, various issues of concern. My problem with today's debate is that, because I was not in the House last Thursday, I did not know that this debate was to be held today. I did not receive my Whip until late on Friday because I had left home early in the morning before the post had arrived. Therefore, I was not able to get hold of the relevant reports until this morning. I regret that and I wish that there were some way of providing longer notice of debates.

I do not intend to speak to any of the reports that are listed for special consideration. I want to concentrate my remarks on the 20th report on the national health service accident and emergency departments in Scotland— *[Interruption.]* Hon. Members may be expecting me to do so. It is an important report, and it may be an accurate report. My concern is that it has political implications for those of us who serve in Scotland because it could be used by a Government seeking to cut certain services within the NHS and especially within the city of Glasgow, of which I am one representative in the House.

Paragraph 8 of the report states:

> "In Glasgow, the provision and location of Accident & Emergency services largely reflect historical factors. The rationalisation of these services would help avoid expensive duplication of facilities and result in a more efficient and effective service to the public."

I do not know what that would mean to my constituents in Cathcart. Rationalisation usually means that one or two departments—if not more—will be closed and then centralised elsewhere.

Like most major cities, Glasgow is divided into south and north by a river. People on the south side want services on the south side and people in the north want services on the north side. My constituency is located on the south side of Glasgow where there are two accident and emergency services in two hospitals. One is in the Victoria infirmary and the other is in the Southern general hospital. The one that is under threat—if there is a threat—from rationalisation is the Victoria, which directly serves my constituency although the hospital is not in my constituency.

If the accident and emergency service there were to close, my constituents would have to travel by bus into the centre of Glasgow—if they called an ambulance, it would be even more expensive—and then catch another bus nearly five miles in the opposite direction to the Southern general hospital. The alternative would be to change buses and cross the river to the Royal or the Western infirmary. That would mean that they would have to travel considerably further; the risks would be much greater and more people might die. I am talking about my constituents.

Did any member of the Public Accounts Committee go to Glasgow to examine what the closure of an accident and emergency service in one hospital would mean to the people who have to travel into and out of the city? I believe that, if the accident and emergency service at the Victoria were to close, it would be the first step towards closing the entire hospital. That is the inevitable conclusion. It would mean that my constituents would have to travel greater distances, not only for accident and emergency services but for all hospital treatment.

It is not good enough for the Committee simply to say that there should be a rationalisation of services. The report states that the need for rationalisation has long been recognised—at least since 1985—but that nothing has been done. Perhaps nothing was done because Greater Glasgow health board recognises that it cannot close accident and emergency departments willy-nilly without putting something else in their place.

The report states that there are problems with what are called unnecessary attendances, although I accept that the claim is made in a survey carried out by the health board, not by the Committee itself. It is claimed that one third of patients do not need to attend the accident and emergency department. Who said so? Who judges whether someone is attending such a department unnecessarily? Let me relate a small personal story to illustrate my point.

About a year ago, my son was having a shower in one of those showers that is part of the bath. He slipped and cut his foot on the plug, which is one of those that go up and down. I heard him shout and I went into the bathroom. On entering, one would have thought that it was a scene from "Psycho". There was blood all over the walls and the bath. I thought that he had done serious damage to his foot, so inevitably, and rightly in my view, my wife and I put pads on his foot and I took him to the nearest accident and emergency department. When the pads were removed, staff had difficulty in finding the cut. It was a razor-sharp cut to the padded part of the foot that sent blood everywhere but quickly abated. The nurse did not even have to stitch it; all she did was put some webbed tape across it.

Was I right to take my son to hospital? Was it an unnecessary admission? In my view, it was not. I had every good reason to believe that my son required hospital treatment. That was my assumption when I saw blood everywhere, but I am sure that someone conducting a survey would have regarded it as an unnecessary attendance. Who makes such a judgment? Someone may walk into an accident and emergency department because he has pains in his chest and it may turn out to be indigestion.

There is speculation in Scotland about the helicopter ambulance service. Inevitably, helicopters are required to take people from remote areas to hospital. I have read a proposal in newspapers—I know that what one reads in newspapers is not always true—that if a general practitioner calls the ambulance service to take a patient to hospital and the hospital decrees that it was unecessary for the patient to go to hospital, the GP has to pay for the helicopter from his own funds. That is absurd and should not even be considered, but apparently it is the way that the Scottish Office is thinking.

The report does not suggest where people should go after 5 or 6 o'clock at night when most GPs' surgeries are closed and there is one doctor, who often does not belong to the practice, on duty to deal with all the patients who call. What are parents expected to do when a child falls and cuts himself so badly that he requires stitches, or breaks an arm or twists and possibly breaks an ankle? Should they go to the accident and emergency department? Would that be an unnecessary referral? If there is an alternative, I wish that the report had spelt it out.

I believe that there is an alternative. Greater Glasgow health board is considering a proposal that health centres —there is one in the major housing scheme in Castlemilk in my constituency—should provide a 24-hour service and that a doctor should always be on duty with full X-ray equipment to deal with cuts and breaks, to treat heart attacks with resuscitation equipment and to refer people to hospital; fewer patients would then use an accident and emergency department.

In many ways, that would be a more efficient way of dealing with those patients, but I do not believe that it would be cheaper if health centres had to have radiographers to work X-ray equipment or technicians to deal with plastering. It would be no cheaper than keeping open accident and emergency departments in all hospitals. That way may be more efficient, but I do not believe that it is cheaper. If we could achieve that fuller service in our health centres, I would probably welcome it. However, I do not see those proposals coming and I certainly do not see a Government who are currently intent on cutting public expenditure allowing Greater Glasgow health board to do that.

The report may be perfectly adequate. However, I am afraid that it will be thrown in my face and in the faces of my Scottish colleagues when there are proposals to cut accident and emergency services in Scotland. That is my concern about the matter.

9.19 pm

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): As my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, West (Mr. Morgan) said, one could be forgiven for thinking that this is a Welsh night with the occasional English and even more occasional Scottish interloper. At the beginning of last year's debate, I congratulated my hon. Friends with Welsh constituencies for making full use of the opportunities presented by this annual debate. Quite rightly, they have done the same thing very effectively this year.

However, I find it disappointing that, again like last year, only a very small number of Conservative Members have chosen to participate in the debate. Before dealing with matters of substance, I want to place on record—as other hon. Members have—my thanks to my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) for his work and for that of the Public Accounts Committee. Under his chairmanship and functioning in a bipartisan manner, the Committee continues to speak with great authority and to command respect from all parts of the House.

Depressingly, however, there are recurrent themes when one reads the Treasury replies to this year's Committee reports. I wonder just how much notice the Government take of the Committee's work. Year after year, we are assured by successive Financial Secretaries that the Government take the issues very seriously. However, there are recurring themes. I find it very difficult to equate the tough language of the Chief Secretary to the Treasury on public expenditure matters with the facts as revealed by the PAC.

Among those depressingly recurrent themes is out and out fraud. Fraud is identified in reports ranging from the Welsh Development Agency accounts investigation through the important report on countering VAT avoidance to the report dealing with the accounts of the Forward civil service catering arrangements.

Inevitably, and equally depressingly, there is yet again a report that highlights losses to the public purse as a direct result of the Government's privatisation programme. That is a recurrent theme in these debates. This year, it involves the issue of the sale of the 12 regional electricity companies. That report takes its place alongside previous reports on the sale of Rolls-Royce, the royal ordnance factories, Rover group and the water authorities.

The 26th report, on the Chelsea and Westminster hospital, also sets out a sorry tale of losses brought about as a direct result of the Conservative party's ideological absurdities, as my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis) explained.

Mr. Page: To try to say that the losses of various aspects of Government, as revealed by the PAC, can be put down purely to the Government's privatisation policy is rather simplistic. If the hon. Gentleman looks back over history and considers PAC reports under a Labour

[Mr. Page]

Government, he will find equal losses. I would hesitate to suggest that we can pin everything on one particular process.

Mr. Brown: One will not find losses due to privatisation or to property speculation. I am drawing the attention of the House to two areas in which the Government's ideological commitment have got the better of their other stated objective which is the sound management of public finances.

The Government's privatisation programme has led to the interests of the new shareholders taking precedence over the legitimate interests of the British taxpayer. Similarly, the Government's ideologically driven obsession with an ever-rising property market in the late 1980s led to substantial losses, absurdities and bankruptcies in the early 1990s. Any hon. Member who represents a constituency that has the misfortune to be saddled with an urban development corporation will know what I mean. Developments that are predicated on a rising property market tend to come unstuck when the property market does not rise.

On the subject of property values and safety, my hon. Friend the Member for Hodge Hill referred to coastal erosion. That was particularly selfless of him, as Birmingham is probably under no immediate threat. However, on second thoughts, if work proceeds at the present pace identified by the PAC, who knows, my hon. Friend might be congratulated on his perception. At least, as the water laps around his ankles, my hon. Friend will not face the reproaches that will be directed at the three previous Ministers of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, all of whom represent Anglian constituencies. Presumably, the right hon. Member for Suffolk, Coastal (Mr. Gummer), who has presided over the matter, is willing to see more than his vote being eroded.

Two other firm favourites of Public Accounts Committee debates are the Ministry of Defence and, of course, the affairs of Northern Ireland. This year, the Ministry of Defence is again represented by a range of reports, most significantly those dealing with major defence projects, spare parts and the costs of the Gulf war. As well as the report dealing with the premature retirement of teachers in Northern Ireland, this year there are also reports on the Northern Ireland Local Enterprise Development Unit and on the payment of income support in Northern Ireland.

It is almost as though the Public Accounts Committee, aware of its heavy responsibilities and the detailed routine —some might even say the dull nature—of much of its work, has set out to enliven this year's debate with a little topical comic relief. As well as the report dealing with the catering arrangements at the Treasury, we have a report dealing with the Treasury's own in-house legal aid scheme as it applies to Chancellors of the Exchequer—not, of course, that there is much chance of getting the money back, even though it was described as

"astonishingly good value for money"

and "extremely cheap" by Sir Peter Middleton. One wonders what Sir Peter was using for comparison. I thought that the Conservative party was in favour of competitive tendering. We could certainly have used a little competitive tendering in that case.

However, on to more serious matters. My hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) spoke of the importance of economic development in Wales and drew upon his extensive knowledge of 20th century history. Last year, we discussed the affairs of the Development Board for Rural Wales, headed by a Conservative party political appointee, a Mr. Glyn Davies. The report criticised the outrageous retirement settlement to the retiring chief executive of the board. It criticised the £180,000 capital cost of his pension enhancements and the consultancy arrangement which enabled that gentleman, in retirement, to work for up to 150 days on unspecified work for a fee of £200 a day.

That scandal, the clear result of Conservative party political jobbery in Wales, is echoed in the equally serious report this year dealing with the Welsh Development Agency. Again, the agency is headed by a Conservative party political appointee, this time a Dr. Gwyn Jones. Again, the chief executive has gone in a welter of criticism. Again, there is a massive loss, this time £1·4 million, on redundancy payments. Again there is criticism of ineffective supervision by the Welsh Office. Again, the Public Accounts Committee criticised over-generous retirement settlements, in a manner almost identical to last year's complaints against the Development Board for Rural Wales.

Of course, there is the free personal use of cars for private motoring and what seems to be the bizarre arrangement whereby an American citizen, a Mr. Carignam, was able to remove and sell £53,000 of development board furniture and repay the board $15,000 for it. That is effectively fraud. The Public Accounts Committee tells us that the appointment of the director of marketing

"constituted a major financial risk which should have been avoided."

The Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee, unusually for him, went much further and said that it was a case of a "genuine 24-carat crook".

No doubt the same care and diligence was exercised in the director's appointment as was exercised in the appointment of the agency's chairman, who was chosen at a Tory party fund-raising lunch. Undoubtedly, that is what the Prime Minister was referring to last Tuesday when he told the House about the "great many secret sources" of Conservative party funding. He said:

"they are all cheese and wine parties up and down the country." —[*Official Report*, 19 October 1993: Vol. 230, c. 144.]

My right hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) drew telling links from a number of the themes that emerged from this sorry affair.

My hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells) drew attention to the corrosive effect of political interference on public life and the independence of the civil service. The grotesque counterpart to that unpleasant political jobbery is the squandering of some £300 million in European Community grants for party political motives. Although the Conservative party is content to see large sums of public money squandered in a most outrageous way through political jobbery in Wales, it is not willing to attract European development funds to areas respresented by its political opponents.

We have been warned by the Regional Affairs Commissioner of the European Commission that

"significant amounts of money allocated to the UK risk being lost".

A Member of the European Parliament, Mr. Wayne David, has warned us that his constituency—an area that is supposed to benefit from the work of the Welsh Development Agency—will lose some £11·9 million in potential European Community grants because the Government will not provide matching funding.

The issue of blatant party politicking raises its ugly head again with the Conservative party attempting to redraw Britain's list of needy areas to include such famous centres of urban deprivation as Kensington and Chelsea. This outrageous, politically driven scandal is a blatant attempt to punish poor communities for having voted Labour and to bribe marginally better-off communities to retain a misguided allegiance to the Conservative party. It is pathetic, irresponsible and wholly in character for this Government.

The topic of irresponsibility brings me to the two reports dealing with the Government's privatisation programme. The report dealing with the sale of the two generating companies, National Power and PowerGen, highlights the lack of competition in the appointment of some of the Department's 37 advisers on the sales, and the Department's decision not to publish the sums of money paid to them. The Public Accounts Committee made the point—the Chairman of the Committee has made this point in previous debates—that the compressed timetable for the sales and the resultant pressure on Departments to do things quickly should not be used as an excuse for uneconomic arrangements.

The same point about the appointment of advisers without competition is made in the report dealing with the sale of the 12 regional electricity companies.

Mr. Maxton: I point out to my hon. Friend that the point about advisers also applies in the sale of Scottish Power and the Hydro Board.

Mr. Brown: My hon. Friend is right to draw the attention of the House to that point.

The Public Accounts Committee drew our attention to the fact that the taxpayer did not share in the higher than expected profits for the first year following privatisation. In short, the Committee told us that the interests of the new shareholders have taken precedence over the legitimate interests of the taxpayer. Nor has the Government's stated objective of achieving a broader share ownership been achieved, despite privatisation having been accompanied by the most generous arrangements yet for employee participation. As the total level of shareholdings has fallen from 9 million to 3 million since privatisation, it is clear that people have reasonably taken a short-term gain, rather than sought a long-term investment.

Increasingly, people believe that privatisation of the public utilities is like the national lottery but without the attendant risks. As the stated objective of wider and deeper share ownership is not achieved, it seems reasonable to ask why the British taxpayer should be forced to subsidise the arrangements.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Swansea, West referred to the cost to the taxpayer, and was challenged gamely, but inaccurately, by the Financial Secretary. The issue was the indexation of prices for the public utilities. I regret that my figures only go up to 1991. I had hoped to have civil servants to update them beyond that, but, alas, it was not to be. Taking 1979 to 1991, the average change per year on the 1978 base is 7·9 per cent. for electricity, 8·6 per cent. for gas, 7·7 per cent. for telephones and 11·4 per cent. for water charges, although the all-items retail prices index increase is only 7·4 per cent. Public utility prices under the Conservatives have risen dramatically ahead of the inflation rate. The hon. Member for Hertfordshire, South-West (*Mr. Page*) is being uncharacteristically obtuse.

The Government say that they are keen on performance indicators, on publishing lists and setting targets. I wonder whether it has occurred to my right hon. Friend who chairs the Public Accounts Committee that the PAC might adopt such an approach. Lists could be provided year by year, indicating Government Departments in order of efficiency. Incidence of fraud, loss of public money proportionate to the overall budget, perhaps even a list of the individual Departments' ability to achieve stated performance indicators could be provided. Such a way of viewing things would promote healthy and good-natured competition among Ministers and senior officials. We could debate such an overview of the effectiveness of Government Departments as part of our annual debate.

No one could be in any doubt where such scrutiny would leave the Ministry of Defence. The report dealing with the major defence projects highlights a grotesque state of affairs surrounding a number of significant defence procurement decisions—especially the AOR1. We are told that the vessel has been delayed by three years—a 74 per cent. overrun—and that extra funding of £53 million was required, which Harland and Woolf was just given by the Northern Ireland Office.

My hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) referred to the De Lorean car and its performance in the film "Back to the Future". It is not the only Northern Ireland project to perform less well than was promised. The AOR1 story is one of the biggest defence procurement scandals of the post-war era. There are currently more than 2,000 faults in it that require correction and one wonders why the Ministry of Defence does not take the obvious course and have the same vessel refitted at the same yard that delivered the AOR2 to the Ministry of Defence defect-free. The report dealing with prices paid for spare parts highlights concerns. It is not a small matter, since the Ministry of Defence spends some £2 billion a year on parts —although not, apparently, on labelling them.

What are we to make of the £79,000 that the Ministry of Defence contrived to spend on a party—not the Conservative party, but a real party with refreshments and floodlights? That is the way in which savings were spent. Is disciplinary action to be taken? No. The Ministry of Defence does not take effective disciplinary action against those who come under that Department. We know that, because a report from the Public Accounts Committee in the past year told us precisely that.

One other report to which I wish to refer is the 30th report of the PAC entitled "Countering VAT Avoidance". It drew our attention to the fact that the Committee was concerned that Customs and Excise has so little information on incidence of tax at risk from avoidance. The report continues:

> "We are concerned that not enough has been done in the past to monitor the effectiveness of avoidance countermeasures."

My hon. Friend the Member for Hodge Hill told us that the Customs and Excise had no age profile of their debt. There is clearly cause for concern in the report.

When the Government firmly intend to extend value added tax to the domestic fuel bills of the poorest in our

[Mr. Brown]

society, when they intend to make the poorest fifth of consumers spend an average of 12 per cent. on fuel and pay tax on top, while the richest one fifth pay 4 per cent. only —although they will pay 17·5 per cent. VAT on top—it is surely right that the House should look again at whether the VAT that is supposed to be paid now is collected. The Government have a duty to collect what is due—to clamp down on graft and fraud and on inefficiencies in the public sector.

The Public Accounts Committee does a first-rate job in drawing such matters to the attention of the House. However, I cannot say that the Government do a first-rate job in responding to the matters that the PAC draws to our attention because the same issues and the same themes, often in the same Departments, recur year after year after year. That disgrace is the stark truth of the matters that face the House today.

9.39 pm

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Stephen Dorrell): The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) struck an uncharacteristically partisan note in his closing comments. He did not pick up the perfectly proper remarks by my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, South-West (Mr. Page), who drew attention to the fact that the Public Accounts Committee has existed for well over 100 years and that, in that time, it has made it its business to report on the inadequacies in the public service. It is in no sense to undermine the commitment and quality of our public service to draw the attention of the House and of the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East to the fact that the PAC throughout its history has found inadequacies and has performed the important task of reporting them to the House so that we can collectively ensure that the high standards that we set are maintained as effectively as possible.

I congratulate the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon). I congratulate him personally because, as the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East observed, he has been Chairman of the PAC for more than 10 years. As he himself said, he was first a member of that Committee in 1965, almost 30 years ago. It is a considerable record of service to the most important and the longest established of all our Select Committees and it is a record to which, I am sure, the whole House wants to give credit.

It is not merely a matter of personal service; it is also a matter of the efficient conduct of business in the Committee. The right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne drew attention to the fact that the Committee has published 43 reports in the past year. During his period as Chairman, it has published more than 400 reports, all of them unanimous. That is a considerable testament to his success as Chairman of the Committee. As he said, it is a vindication of Gladstone's dictum that the way in which to make the Committee effective as a policeman of standards of propriety in the public service is to ensure that the Chairman of the PAC is an Opposition Member. The right hon. Gentleman is fulfilling that task in a way of which, I am sure, the grand old man would have approved.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) observed, the European Community might do well to copy some of the systems that we have here for enforcing propriety in the expenditure of public money. One might say that that should be the case not merely in terms of propriety but in terms of the budgetary disciplines that we should all want to see in that institution.

This is the day on which the Committee reports to the House and gives an opportunity for the House to give credit to the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne for the tenure of his chairmanship of this important Committee. It is also an opportunity for the whole House to reaffirm the debt that we all owe to the quality in general of our public servants. As I said, merely to report on a few lapses, important though those are, does not undermine our recognition of the quality of the vast majority of the people who work in the civil service and of those who work more generally in the public service. We are indeed fortunate in this country in the standards of propriety and honesty that we have in the public service.

The PAC plays an important part in the support mechanism for those standards within the public service. All of us in the House want to see those standards maintained and we shall never be content until the happy day, which my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, South-West rightly believes will never dawn, when the PAC can report to the House in its annual debate that it can find no example of inadequacy in the public service.

The commitment to continue to enforce, to maintain and, where possible, to improve the standards of our public service must not be confused with a commitment to see things continue to be done in the way in which they have always been done. The public service, like every other part of our society, will change; it always has. It is changing and it will continue to change to try to ensure the better delivery of public services. It is important to stress that we have to continue to ensure that the methods of delivery change and that the methods of management change to match current best practice without losing any of the traditional values to which we all rightly attach great importance.

That was the theme with which the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne concluded his remarks, but I think that he would agree that the general theme is the most important argument that he made in drawing together the specifics that ran through his speech. He was concerned to ensure that we had a code that set out clearly what we believe to be the standards that are required for the proper conduct of public business.

He and other speakers emphasised a theme that emerged in the debate last year—that it is important for the proper conduct of public business that we define clearly the objectives that we expect all institutions in the public sector to deliver, that we set them, where possible, finite targets against which their performance can be judged and that we require them to publish reports of their performance at the end of each year against those objectives. The right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne said that we had made some progress this year towards that objective.

The Government consider it very important that we should define the standards and the outputs that we seek from the public service and test the delivery of those standards against the objectives that we set ourselves. That is what the programme of the citizens charter is about. It is about defining outputs and testing performance against those outputs.

The right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) was worried that the proper standards in the conduct of public business may in some sense be under stress as a result of a long period of Conservative Government. He was generous enough to say that it was the long period rather than the nature of the party that concerned him. He will forgive me if I do not volunteer a solution to that problem in terms of the length of tenure of the party in government, but I recognise the enhanced importance, after a long period with one party in government, of reinforcing again and again the difference between the definition of objectives, which is the proper task of the politician, and the delivery of those objectives in an economic sense, which is the proper task of the public servant.

That is where the answer to his conundrum lies, if indeed a conundrum exists: it is our job as politicians to set the objectives and it is the task of the public service and of the Executive branch of Government to deliver on objectives set by the politicians, who are themselves accountable to the House for the setting and delivery of those objectives.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, South-West stressed the importance, as he saw it, of strategic management—of the Department and Ministers being responsible for strategy and officials being accountable for ensuring that that strategy is carried out. That is the proper distinction that he drew and it is the answer to the argument that was made during the debate by the right hon. Member for Swansea, West.

Having reaffirmed the fact that I agree with what the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne said about the importance of rules for the proper conduct of public business, I shall now mention the specific example in which it is common ground in all parts of the House that those standards were found most wanting in the course of the Committee's work during the past 12 months. That is the concern about what has been happening in the Welsh Development Agency.

As one Opposition Member observed, it is a cause of regret to me that this is the second debate of this nature that I have answered as Financial Secretary. Last year we were discussing the Development Board for Rural Wales and this year it is the Welsh Development Agency. The hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney (Mr. Rowlands) spoke about the importance of the work that has been done by the WDA and I agree. It has had a record of success in delivering improved economic and structural development in Wales.

That does not excuse things that were revealed by the PAC and accepted by my right hon. Friend the present Secretary of State for Wales as disclosing a state of affairs that should not be tolerated. Clearly, matters in the WDA have not been as they should. My right hon. Friend was at pains to make it clear at this Dispatch Box last week that as long as he is Secretary of State he will seek to ensure that rules are put in place to prevent a recurrence of the events revealed by the Committee.

Mr. Rowlands: The Financial Secretary sat patiently listening to a number of submissions made by the Opposition. Will he now say whether he believes that Dr. Gwyn Jones should remain as a governor of the BBC and S4C, given what we have told the Minister about that person's track record?

Mr. Dorrell: My right hon. Friend made it clear that he does not believe that the revelations about the WDA constitute a reason for doubting Dr. Gwyn Jones's fitness to continue as a governor of the BBC and of S4C. The facts revealed by the PAC did not demonstrate that he acted in any sense beyond the law. They certainly demonstrated a want of judgment of the way in which the public resources should be used by the chairman of a public body. That is not in dispute, but there is no sense in which Dr. Gwyn Jones acted beyond the law.

I want to cover a number of other issues.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: How fortunate.

Mr. Dorrell: It is fortunate, but the hon. Member for Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney and the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne both thought that this was an important point. I refer to the sale of regional electricity companies.

There is nothing for which to apologise in that respect. The right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne thought that the companies should have been sold in tranches, and he doubted the basis on which that approach was rejected. The Government thought that was not the correct approach because there would have been doubt in the marketplace as to whether the end result of the policy would be delivered.

The right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne suggested that that was a weak argument because everybody knew that the policy would be delivered, but that is based on hindsight. It was much less clear at the time the electricity industry was privatised that the new market would be successfully developed. We know now that the industry was successfully privatised, and that the companies trade successfully on the stock exchange. At the time the decision was taken, it was a question whether or not that judgment was right—and at that stage it was a judgment and not a fact. I do not agree with the right hon. Gentleman's dismissal of the Government's argument, which was a perfectly proper judgment for them to reach at that time.

The right hon. Gentleman said also that he did not believe that that was the driving force behind the Government's judgment; rather, that it was Treasury concern to see the cash in its hand in a particular year. I doubt that the right hon. Gentleman can find any basis on which to support that argument in the history of the privatisation of regional electricity companies or of the rest of the privatisation programme. We made it clear from the beginning that the case for privatising large parts of the public sector in 1979 was based on a desire to make those parts of the economy work more effectively.

When one considers the effect of privatisation on the electricity and gas industries, British Telecom and other undertakings that were taken out of the politicised management of the public sector and put into the commercial context of the private sector, it is clear that we delivered the objective that we set ourselves of improving the quality of management of an important part of the British economy.

Mr. Sheldon: That is not the point that I was making from the point of view of the Public Accounts Committee. The point I was making was about the speed of the action, not whether it was right or wrong. If more time had been given to it, it could have been done with greater benefit to the taxpayer.

Mr. Dorrell: That is the right hon. Gentleman's judgment. The greatest benefit to the taxpayer has been to deliver an electricity industry that is efficiently managed and responds properly to the signals from its customers, rather than to continue under the political management from which the industry had suffered for too long. Other things being equal, there was a gain to be made by securing a quick rather than a slow transfer of the industry to a private sector structure of management.

I have to take seriously the judgment of our advisers at the time as to how the industry could most effectively be floated on the stock exchange. Their advice was that the manner in which we did so was most likely to deliver value to the taxpayer.

Mr. Terry Davis: Is the Minister not in danger of glossing over a part of the defence for the 100 per cent. sale? The Department told the National Audit Office that it went for a 100 per cent. sale rather than a partial sale because it was concerned about the effect of an Opposition statement on investor confidence. When pressed at the PAC, Sir Peter Gregson, the permanent secretary to the DTI, could not point to any such statement, because it had never been made.

Mr. Dorrell: I dealt with the argument in what I said to the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne.

What may seem obvious with hindsight was not obvious at the time the companies were floated. The question was whether they could be successfully floated and whether there would be a successful trade in the shares of the regional electricity companies under the structure designed by the Government. We now know that that was a success, but ahead of the event we could not possibly have known that it would be.

As a former Minister at the Department of Health, I have had previous dealings with the Chelsea and Westminster hospital project, although I hasten to add that I was not in office in January 1989.

My hon. Friend the Member for Orpington (Mr. Horam) quite rightly said that judgments about the development of individual hospital projects in London should now be made in the context of the London-wide hospital position. My right hon. Friend the present Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster set up the Tomlinson inquiry to look at that subject as a key part of NHS management.

My hon. Friend the Member for Orpington will remember that since approval in principle was given by the Department of Health for the Chelsea and Westminster hospital, the NHS management structure has been fundamentally reformed, in a way that is far more likely to reveal the kind of issues to which he referred. I sympathise with my hon. Friend's concern about whether the decision would have been taken in the same way today; unfortunately, that also runs the risk of applying hindsight to an issue that was less clear at the time.

We knew at the time the judgment was made that the Chelsea and Westminster hospital project would involve the expenditure of substantial capital resources, but it would also deliver health service care to that part of London at a lower revenue cost than the existing system of care. By that yardstick, the Chelsea and Westminster hospital investment project has been a success. The budget for patient care of that hospital is now roughly £23 million lower than it would have been had the previous pattern of provision continued.

I must add that, as the Committee has rightly identified and the Treasury minute has acknowledged, there were examples of the management of the project that we would wish to see handled differently in future. It is perfectly clear that a project of such a nature should have full-time project management within NHS capacity. The project was not unmanaged but was subject to a project management contract. It involved the full-time employment of four people who managed the evolution of the project, as a result of which we delivered lower contract values than would otherwise have been the case.

This is an important annual debate which reflects the importance that we attach to propriety in the public service. It is an honour for me, as Financial Secretary, to be able to respond to it.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House takes note of the 12th to 54th Reports of the Committee of Public Accounts of Session 1992-93, and of the Treasury Minutes and Northern Ireland Department of Finance and Personnel Memoranda on these Reports (Cm. 2145, 2175, 2186, 2199, 2226, 2257, 2279, 2310, 2341 and 2354) with particular reference to the following Reports:

Sixteenth, The sale of the twelve regional electricity companies; Twenty-sixth, The Chelsea and Westminster Hospital; Twenty-seventh, Quality of service; war pensions; mobility allowance; attendance allowance; invalid care allowance; Thirty-fourth, Ministry of Defence: prices paid for spare parts; Thirty-fifth, PSA Services account 1991-92; Forty-seventh, Welsh Development Agency accounts 1991-92; Fifty-second, Fire prevention in England and Wales.

Local Government (Isle of Wight)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Conway.]*

10 pm

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): The Adjournment debate tonight concerns a matter of particular importance to my constituents because it affects the future of local government in the Isle of Wight.

On 6 March 1992, the Local Government Act received the Royal Assent. On 21 December 1992, the then Secretary of State for the Environment, who is now the Home Secretary, issued a press release from the Department in which he stated, inter alia, that the Government intended that fresh council elections be held in all areas where unitary authorities were set up. He stated that there would be elected shadow authorities in the areas where unitary authorities were to be set up. They would be established in virtually all areas, and my right hon. and learned Friend went on to talk of "a fresh start".

In a letter of 22 December—I emphasise the fact that the letter was written on the day after the press release—Robin Young, director of the local government directorate at the Department of the Environment, asked the chief executive of South Wight borough council for representations from the Isle of Wight about elections to a shadow—I also emphasise that word—authority. The letter states that that could affect the establishing of any new authority.

In a Department of the Environment press release on 5 March this year, the then Secretary of State says that the new structure for the island will be introduced in April 1995 and, to prepare for that, a shadow authority will be elected in May 1994. In a letter dated 2 July this year, the Minister for Local Government, my hon. Friend the Member for Skipton and Ripon (Mr. Curry), informed me that the recommendations of the Local Government Commission had been generally welcomed. He said:

"The timing of implementation would be 1 April 1995, as Michael Howard announced in March."

The Local Government Commission had of course published its final recommendations to the Secretary of State in April of this year. The commission recommended that

"a single unitary authority should be established for the Isle of Wight to replace"—

again I emphasise the word "replace"—

"the existing county council and the boroughs of Medina and South Wight."

The commission said "to replace". It could hardly be clearer.

So what is the problem? Why are we having the debate this evening? On 4 August the Minister for Local Government upset the apple cart in a letter to Councillor Pettit who, I believe, is the chairman of the Association of County Councils. The letter stated that there would be no new authority and no shadow authority separate from the existing three councils. Unbelievably, particularly in view of all my work and the time that I spent with the Minister's predecessors in getting it right, the elections in May 1994 would be for the existing county councils, albeit with the additional seats.

In one fell swoop, the Department of the Environment had dissolved every ounce of consensus that I had erected and had sold the borough councillors and staff right down the Solent. That was done without the slightest word of consultation as was promised in the ministerial letter of 2 July—just four weeks previously.

So what on earth is going on? To say that the decision caused an earthquake on the Isle of Wight would be an understatement. On 29 December, all the parties concerned went to see the Parliamentary Under-Secretary, my hon. Friend the Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry), and told him how angry we were. All the political parties on the three councils were represented, including independent councillors, and council leaders and officers and myself also attended.

At that meeting, the Minister promised us that, if we could prove that the Department had in any way misled us or given us false expectations, he would have the matter reopened. Nothing could be clearer than the press releases and the correspondence from Mr. Young and other members of staff in his Department, as well as the commission—all referred to in my letter to the Minister of 5 October. I put it on record that I am happy to waive my parliamentary privilege in matters of correspondence should the Minister wish to publish all or part of the correspondence that he and I have had.

At the meeting, I suggested that paragraph 4 of the commission's recommendations about seaward boundaries should be revisited. That is entirely in line with the report of the Select Committee on the Environment on coastal zone protection and planning published in May last year in which Sir Hugh Rossi was kind enough to indicate that I played a leading part. That would enable the commission's recommendations to be adhered to and the wishes of the people of the Isle of Wight complied with.

At our September meeting with the Minister, the leader of the county council, Morris Barton, told the Minister that elections next year to the existing county council—albeit with the additional seats—would confuse the electorate and be seen as a waste of money given that elections were held only last year.

What makes me madder than a bald badger is that I spent hours in correspondence and conversation with the previous Secretary of State and the then local government Minister—now the Secretary of State for Wales—arguing this very point and obtaining their agreement as evinced by the press releases already quoted in the debate.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will at least do me the courtesy tonight of confirming that he has understood the unanimity of purpose among all the political parties, councillors and people of the Isle of Wight. I hope that he will acknowledge, too, that despite my very real upset at seeing my patient work totally dismantled, my response has been tempered by my refusal to become embroiled in personal recriminations or an unconstructive approach, although I have told the Minister that I will be seeking a meeting with the Prime Minister. I am actively pursuing that, as I believe that my right hon. Friend, and my right hon. Friend alone, should consider the consequences of the problem. I have received confirmation from my right hon. Friend's PPS tonight that that matter is in train.

I note that, in evidence to the Select Committee on the Environment last week, Sir John Banham stated that, if the commission's proposals were turned down, he would have to consider his position.

How do we proceed? Where there is a will, there is a way. At Question Time last week, the Secretary of State for the Environment indicated that the island has his ear as

[Mr. Barry Field]

regards this problem and his good will in so far as he can influence the present impasse. I suggest that my right hon. Friend looks to the staff commission to see whether it can protect the borough's position and whether a way can be found for the three authorities to become an ad hoc shadow authority for 1994. I suggest that the disposition and staff appointments should be made, with the elections to the new authority taking place in 1995.

I also suggest that the Secretary of State should confirm that he will use his powers to allow the authority to name itself, because the Isle of Wight is unique and feels strongly the need to recognise that fact. Councillor Barton is quite right about the elections. The line drawn in the sand in all of this should be the cancellation of those wasteful elections next year and the holding of elections the following year.

My frustration is compounded when I read two things. First, in the *Local Government Chronicle* an unnamed spokesman from the Department of the Environment wrote:

"the Isle of Wight decision was not controversial. 'It seems sensible to be completely clear where the review is going before the secretary of state makes a final decision on the Isle of Wight'."

I agree with that but, unfortunately, that was pre-empted somewhat by the letter from the Minister for Local Government and Planning in August.

I note that *County News* of 14 October reported that, in connection with the commission's new objectives, the Secretary of State has again referred to the need

"to give more weight to proposals emerging as a result of local consensus".

That is exactly what the Isle of Wight did. It gained local consensus. It was in entire agreement. There is not so much as a moiety of doubt or a scintilla of disagreement among the good citizens and burghers of England's fairest isle, yet we are now told that we cannot proceed as we originally proposed.

My hon. Friend the Minister impressed all who met him on 28 September. We hope that, in him, we may have found the David who will defeat the Goliaths at Marsham street. Anyone who gives permissions for sharks to stick out of roofs in suburbia is surely just the Minister for whom we are looking—one with original thought to accommodate the needs of the people of the Isle of Wight.

Perhaps the Minister will be able to tell us this evening when the Secretary of State intends to make an announcement about the recommendations of the Local Government Commission. Is the operative date still 1995? When is the Isle of Wight order to be laid before Parliament? When does the staff commission intend to issue specific guidance about the staff transfers relating to the reorganisation of the Isle of Wight?

If I may be so bold, I suggest that my hon. Friend arranges to meet the three chief executives or senior managers of the island's three authorities to make absolutely certain that there are no unforeseen wrinkles in any solutions that he has to offer, then invites the leading councillors of the authorities, along the lines of the deputation that he kindly saw on 28 September, to discuss his proposals. After that, it will, of course, be up to each authority to endorse the way out that impasse.

I hope that my hon. Friend will take my points on board. I am grateful for having been granted the Adjournment debate. I am sad that I have to come before the House on this issue, because there was no doubt in my mind—or those of my constituents, councillors of all parties and of none—that we had originally in the statement from the previous Secretary of State and from the Minister for Local Government and Planning a decision and solution that would commend itself to the majority of the people of the Isle of Wight. The letter in August unfortunately seems to have cut right across that consensus and caused us considerable consternation.

10.12 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Tony Baldry): A fresh start and a new beginning with a new council on the Isle of Wight is what the people of the Isle of Wight said that they want. It is what the existing local authorities on the island have said that they would like; and it is what my hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field) has been steadfast in advocating to Ministers as being in the best interests of the island.

The approach of a fresh start, one local authority provider and one voice for the Isle of Wight has been carefully considered by the Local Government Commission. Having listened, the Local Government Commission has now recommended one island, one authority.

Of course, I have to point out that in law my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is still considering the Local Government Commission's proposals for the island. I have no doubt that he will wish to come to a conclusion on that shortly, but not before he has had adequate time to consider the matters that have arisen from the debate. Anything—indeed everything—that I say tonight must be without prejudice to the decision that will be taken by my right hon. Friend.

The House will have noted, however, that in recent guidance the Local Government Commission has been asked to give more weight to proposals emerging as a result of local agreement, and the benefits of unitary authorities have been re-emphasised. In those circumstances, the House will note that the commission's proposals for the Isle of Wight are based on strong local agreement —a point that my hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight has made clear—across party and local authority tiers and boundaries and would lead to a unitary authority for the island. That is in keeping with the guidance given to the Local Government Commission. It may be helpful if this evening I consider the likely implications of the commission's recommendations on the basis that they were to be accepted.

My hon. Friend has made three specific requests. The first is that I ask officials in my Department to discuss with the chief executives and senior officers of the local authorities on the island the best way of taking forward and completing the transition to a new authority. The second is that we consider further the timings of elections on the island. The third is that, having considered those points, I visit the Island to discuss the matters in detail with local councillors from all three local authorities, to make sure that everyone is agreed on the best way forward and what is in the best interests of the future of the Isle of Wight. I am happy to say yes, yes and yes to my hon. Friend's three requests.

When we established the Local Government Commission, we said that we were in favour of unitary authorities, and that where they were to be set up there should be a fresh start. Local people should have the opportunity to set for themselves the political agenda for decisions on how best local government services should be delivered to local people by the new council in their area. That is still very much our objective.

The concerns that have been raised this evening by my hon. Friend relate to issues concerning the differences between "new authorities" and "continuing authorities" under the legislation. It might help if I put those two phrases in inverted commas when I use them throughout my speech. I am not sure how one puts inverted commas into *Hansard*, but doubtless it will be worked out. In practical terms, for reasons that I shall go into, I do not believe that in practice, particularly in an area such as the Isle of Wight, there will be very much difference between a "new authority" and an authority which will clearly be perceived by everybody as being new but which will in law technically be a "continuing authority".

The Local Government Act 1992 will not allow a unitary authority to be set up as a new legal entity where the boundaries of the new authority are coterminous with those of an existing authority. So, for example, if the commission were to recommend that in a particular part of the country the best way forward for local government would be a unitary authority based on the boundaries of an existing shire county, with the districts being absorbed into the new council, in law what we would have would be a "continuing authority" of the county council rather than a "new authority".

Because the Isle of Wight is, in fact and by definition, an island, its boundaries are fixed, and because the sea cannot be included in a local authority's area, no amount of creative manoeuvre—for example, of the local government allegiance of any of the forts in the Solent—could serve substantially to alter the boundaries of the Isle of Wight. It thus follows that any new unitary authority on the island for the whole island will by definition have boundaries that are coterminous with the existing boundaries of the county council and thus in law will be a "continuing authority" rather than a "new authority".

I appreciate that that fact has caused concerns on the island, not least because earlier comments from Ministers had not highlighted that point. I appreciate that there were concerns that, once it was made clear, it signalled some intention on the part of Ministers to bring about something other than that desired by people on the Isle of Wight. It does not. It is simply a straightforward statement of the law as approved by Parliament and with which none of the local authority associations disagree. However, for all practical purposes I do not believe that it will make a significant difference to, or impact on, the strength of a fresh start for the Isle of Wight with what everyone will see as a new council with new local boundaries after fresh elections.

In the context of local government reorganisation, thought needs to be given to several matters, including where people want to get to after the establishment of a new unitary authority. I suspect that there are several issues by which we should test that: first, preparations for the new authority; secondly, elections for the new authority; thirdly, staffing issues—instructions to both the existing and new authorities.

As my hon. Friend made clear, there are at present three local authorities on the Isle of Wight: the county council and two district councils. Those three authorities have already shown a willingness to get together, sort things out and prepare for the future. When they came to see me recently, they formed a united deputation of councillors and officers from all three local authorities, who have clearly all been working together to try to determine what is in the island's best interests.

There is absolutely no reason why members of the existing local authorities should not get together to shape and plan the strategy of the new unitary authority on the island. Such an approach is to be encouraged and welcomed. They are perfectly free to enter into such working agreements together as they consider will be helpful in sorting out new staffing and management procedures after reorganisation. Indeed, councillors on the island have already set a good example of working together and I see absolutely no difficulty in their bringing about practical working arrangements best suited to the needs of the island to ensure the most constructive transition to the new unitary authority.

My hon. Friend asked me whether existing authorities on the island can work together to prepare for the new unitary authority. My answer is yes, I very much hope that they will be encouraged to work closely together and set an example to other parts of the country of how local authorities can work together to prepare for new unitary authorities.

Secondly, my hon. Friend explained his concerns about elections. There will of course be fresh elections to the new unitary authority on the island. Every existing councillor, whether county or district, will have an opportunity to seek election to the new authority, as will anyone not at present a councillor who wishes to contest those elections. The elections will also take place on new local boundaries.

At present the elections are due to take place in May 1994, so the councillors would then have powers to take decisions for the assumption of all unitary local authority functions in April 1995. Local people would of course be able to elect the councillors whom they judge would best do the job.

I appreciate, however, that my hon. Friend and many people on the Isle of Wight would prefer no elections next year and elections on new local boundaries to the new authority in May 1995. I appreciate the arguments that my hon. Friend and local councillors have made for such a course. There are a number of issues to consider. A good starting point would be if my officials discussed this further with the chief executives of the existing local authorities, whereupon I would be more than willing to meet councillors from those authorities to discuss options for elections, before my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and the House take any final decisions on the timing of elections for the new unitary authority.

Thirdly, but of equal importance, are the staff. I appreciate that there are concerns on the island that if there is in law a "continuing authority" rather than a "new authority" the staff of the existing district councils may in some way be discriminated against in favour of the staff of the county council. I do not believe so. Of course local government reorganisation, wherever it takes place, will give rise to staffing issues. That shows the wisdom of our decision to set up a local government staff commission to consider these issues and to give guidance and advice.

[Mr. Tony Baldry]

My hon. Friend has been most helpful, tonight and in correspondence elsewhere, in highlighting the concerns of people on the island and suggesting ways of ensuring fair treatment for all staff. That is certainly what we want; we want no local government staff to feel that they have been discriminated against in the process. We have been drawing up new guidance to the staff commission, in consultation with the local authority associations, to ensure that it is fully aware off all these issues—especially the "new/continuing authority" questions. We shall give this new guidance to the staff commission shortly. I believe that as a result of our guidance and of the existence and work of the staff commission no local government employee on the island need feel subjected to any prejudice.

On all the issues of importance we shall ensure that for all practical purposes the arrangements for moving forward to a new unitary authority mirror as far as possible those that would have been in place had it not been possible for a "continuing authority" to exist in law.

If my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State accepts the recommendation of the local government commission after May 1995, there will be a new unitary authority on the Isle of Wight with a new name. Fresh elections will have been held on new local boundaries. Local people will have elected councillors to the new authority to give the island a fresh start.

Local people, local councillors and my hon. Friend have all been working hard to ensure the best future for the Isle of Wight. We, too, want to ensure the best future for the island, and with good will and flexibility I am sure that we can achieve what we all want—that which is in the best interests of the people of the Isle of Wight.

I am extremely grateful to my hon. Friend for having brought these matters to the attention of the House. I hope that I have been able to reassure him, and to confirm that I am more than willing to make sure that officials work on his request. In due course I look forward to discussing these matters with elected councillors from the island and with my hon. Friend. I believe that there is every possibility that we shall achieve what he and everyone on the island want: a new authority with a fresh start.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-nine minutes past Ten o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 26 October 1993

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

Standing Orders (Private Business)

Ordered,

That the Amendments to Standing Orders relating Private Business set out in the Schedule be made.

SCHEDULE

Standing Order 27

line 14, leave out 'in duplicate'.

line 18, leave out 'in duplicate'.

line 64, leave out paragraph (5).

Standing Order 39.

line 10, leave out 'Energy' and insert 'National Heritage'.

Standing Order 191

line 9, leave out 'community charge' and insert 'council tax'.—*[The Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

BRITISH RAILWAYS (No. 4) BILL

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That the Promoters of the British Railways (No. 4) Bill shall have leave to suspend proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office not later than the day before the close of the present Session of their intention to suspend further proceedings and that all Fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid;

That, on the fifth day on which the House sits in the next Session, the Bill shall be presented to the House;

That there shall be deposited with the Bill a declaration signed by the Agents for the Bill, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill at the last stage of its proceedings in this House in the present Session;

That the Bill shall be laid upon the Table of the House by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office on the next meeting of the House after the day on which the Bill has been presented and, when so laid, shall be read the first and second time and committed (and shall be recorded in the Journal of this House as having been so read and committed);

That since no Petitions remain against the Bill no Petitioners shall be heard before any committee on the Bill save those who complain of any amendment as proposed in the filled up Bill or of any matter which arises during the progress of the Bill before the Committee;

That no further fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which fees have already been incurred during the present Session;

That these Orders by Standing Orders of the House.—*[The Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

BRITISH WATERWAYS BILL [LORDS]

Motion made, and Question proposed.

That the Promoters of the British Waterways Bill *[Lords]* shall have leave to suspend proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office not later than the day before the close of the present Session of their intention to suspend further proceedings and that all Fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid;

That, if the Bill is brought from the Lords in the next Session, the Agent for the Bill shall deposit in the Private Bill Office a declaration signed by him, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill which was brought from the Lords in the present Session;

That, as soon as a certificate by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office, that such a declaration has been so deposited, has been laid upon the Table of the House, the Bill shall be read the first and second time and committed (and shall be recorded in the Journal of the House as having been so read and committed);

That all Petitions relating to the Bill presented in the present Session which stand referred to the Committee on the Bill, together with any minutes of evidence taken before the Committee on the Bill, shall stand referred to the Committee on the Bill in the next Session;

That no Petitioners shall be heard before the Committee on the Bill, unless their Petition has been presented within the time limited within the present Session or deposited pursuant to paragraph *(b)* of Standing Order 126 relating to Private Business;

That, in relation to the Bill, Standing Order 127 relating to Private Business shall have effect as if the words "under Standing Order 126 (Reference to committee of petitions against Bill)" were omitted;

That no further Fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which Fees have already been incurred during the present Session;

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House.—*[The Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

CROYDON TRAMLINK BILL *[Lords]*

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That the Promoters of the Croydon Tramlink Bill *[Lords]* shall have leave to suspend proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office not later than the day before the close of the present Session of their intention to suspend further proceedings and that all Fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid;

That, if the Bill is brought from the Lords in the next Session, the Agent for the Bill shall deposit in the Private Bill Office a declaration signed by him, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill which was brought from the Lords in the present Session;

That, as soon as a certificate by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office, that such a declaration has been so deposited, has been laid upon the Table of the House, the Bill shall be read the first and second time and committed (and shall be recorded in the Journal of this House as having been so read and committed);

That all Petitions relating to the Bill presented in the present Session which stand referred to the Committee on the Bill shall stand referred to the Committee on the Bill in the next Session;

That no Petitioners shall be heard before the Committee on the Bill, unless their Petition has been presented within the time limited within the present Session or deposited pursuant to paragraph *(b)* of Standing Order 126 relating to Private Business;

That, in relation to the Bill, Standing Order 127 relating to Private Business shall have effect as if the words "under Standing Order 126 (Reference to committee of petitions against Bill)" were omitted;

That no further Fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which Fees have already been incurred during the present Session;

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House.—*[The Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

LETCHWORTH GARDEN CITY HERITAGE FOUNDATION BILL

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That the Promoters of the Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation Bill shall have leave to suspend proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office not later than the day

before the close of the present Session of their intention to suspend further proceedings and that all Fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid;

That on the fifth day on which the House sits in the next Session the Bill shall be presented to the House;

That there shall be deposited with the Bill a declaration signed by the Agents for the Bill, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill at the last stage of its proceedings in this House in the present Session;

That the Bill shall be laid upon the Table of the House by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office on the next meeting of the House after the day on which the Bill has been presented and, when so laid, shall be read the first and second time and committed (and shall be recorded in the Journal of this House as having been so read and committed);

That all Petitions relating to the Bill presented in the present Session which stand referred to the Committee on the Bill, together with any minutes of evidence taken before the Committee on the Bill, shall stand referred to the Committee on the Bill in the next Session;

That no Petitioners shall be heard before the Committee on the Bill, unless their Petition has been presented within the time limited within the present Session or deposited pursuant to paragraph *(b)* of Standing Order 1226 relating to Private Business;

That in relation to the Bill, Standing Order 127 relating to Private Business shall have effect as if the words "under Standing Order 126 (Reference to committee of petitions against the Bill)" were omitted;

That no further Fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which Fees have already been incurred during the present Session;

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House.—*[The Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

London Local Authorities Bill [Lords]

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That the Promoters of the London Local Authorities Bill *[Lords]* shall have leave to suspend proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office not later than the day before the close of the present Session of their intention to suspend further proceedings and that all Fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid;

That, if the Bill is brought from the Lords in the next Session, the Agent for the Bill shall deposit in the Private Bill Office a declaration signed by him, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill which was brought from the Lords in the present Session;

That, as soon as a certificate by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office, that such a declaration has been so deposited, has been laid upon the Table of the House, the Bill shall be read the first and second time and committed (and shall be recorded in the Journal of this House as having been so read and committed);

That all Petitions relating to the Bill presented in the present Session which stand referred to the Committee on the Bill shall stand referred to the Committee on the Bill in the next Session;

That no Petitioners shall be heard before the Committee on the Bill, unless their Petition has been presented within the time limited within the present Session or deposited pursuant to paragraph *(b)* of Standing Order 126 relating to Private Business;

That, in relation to the Bill, Standing Order 127 relating to Private Business shall have effect as if the words "under Standing Order 126 (Reference to committee of petitions against Bill)" were omitted:

That no further Fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which Fees have already been incurred during the present Session;

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House.—*[The Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

London Underground (Green Park) Bill

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That the Promoters of the London Underground (Green Park) Bill shall have leave to suspend proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office not later than the day before the close of the present Session of their intention to suspend further proceedings and that all Fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid;

That on the fifth day on which the House sits in the next Session the Bill shall be presented to the House;

That there shall be deposited with the Bill a declaration signed by the Agents for the Bill, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill at the last stage of its proceedings in this House in the present Session;

That the Bill shall be laid upon the Table of the House by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office on the next meeting of the House after the day on which the Bill has been presented and, when so laid, shall be read the first and second time and committed (and shall be recorded in the Journal of this House as having been so read and committed);

That all Petitions relating to the Bill presented in Session 1991-92 or the present Session which stand referred to the Committee on the Bill, together with any minutes of evidence taken before the Committee on the Bill, shall stand referred to the Committee on the Bill in the next Session;

That no Petitioners shall be heard before the Committee on the Bill, unless their Petition has been presented within the time limited within Session 1991-92 or deposited pursuant to paragraph *(b)* of Standing Order 126 relating to Private Business;

That in relation to the Bill, Standing Order 127 relating to Private Business shall have effect as if the words "under Standing Order 126 (Reference to committee of petitions against Bill)" were omitted;

That no further Fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which Fees have already been incurred during the present Session;

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House.—*[The Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

Oral Answers to Questions

HEALTH

Regional Health Authorities

1. **Mr. Jim Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement about the future size, number and role of regional health authorities.

The Secretary of State for Health (Mrs. Virginia Bottomley): I announced to the House last week my intention to abolish the 14 statutory regional health authorities. In advance of the necessary legislation, I propose to reduce the number of RHAs from 14 to eight by next April. These changes will help improve the management of the health service, reduce administration and overhead costs and support the continued drive towards a decentralised health service.

Mr. Marshall: When I tabled the question, I hardly expected it to be the catalyst for the change announced by the Secretary of State last week. Will the right hon. Lady tell the House how many jobs will be lost and how many extra doctors are likely to work in the national health service as a consequence of the changes? She will recognise that the regional health authorities had as part of their responsibilities the encouragement of regional centres of excellence. Will she tell the House who or what will take over that responsibility?

Mrs. Bottomley: I am pleased that the hon. Gentleman should be a catalyst for change. We welcome a sinner who repents—even at a late stage—to the changes which we are introducing in the NHS. The hon. Gentleman makes some good points about the importance of safeguarding specialist centres. The management executive outposts will be working to ensure that there is a strategic role to safeguard precisely the units to which the hon. Gentleman refers.

It is not possible to make a precise estimate of the numbers of jobs that are involved. We have stated previously that the number of staff in management outposts should be reduced from 570 to 200, and we expect a reduction in the number of regions from 14 to eight over the next few months. We have to work with the NHS to make sure that the necessary tasks are performed. No one wants needless duplication or unnecessary layers of bureaucracy. At the same time, NHS management is an important function which will continue in a new and slimlined style.

Mrs. Roe: Will my right hon. Friend tell the House who will decide on the allocation of resources to the districts once the regional health authorities have been abolished?

Mrs. Bottomley: The regional director of the management executive will of course be involved in the allocation of resources to the districts, but in line with policies that have been laid down and approved by Ministers.

Mr. McCartney: In the Secretary of State's statement to the House last week, she avoided giving any details of the future arrangements for the development of community health councils. Will she now tell the House what those arrangements will be?

Will the right hon. Lady take some time out of her busy day's shopping at Marks and Spencer to comment on a community health council's report in south London on the continuing abuse of elderly people in accident and emergency units? In some units in south London, elderly people are lying for between 15 and 29 hours because no beds have been opened. Is not that a result of the disastrous cuts that have been caused by the Government's budgetary policies?

Mrs. Bottomley: The hon. Gentleman makes two different points. With regard to his latter point about accident and emergency centres, he will know that the patients charter has set explicit targets for the time that it should take for people to be treated. Special issues concern the development of primary care in London so that all elderly people can have the services to which they are entitled.

GP Fund Holding

2. **Sir Roger Moate:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what further plans she has to spread the benefits of fund holding to other practices.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The GP fund-holding scheme has empowered family doctors to improve services for patients. We wish to see more fund holding and more fund holders and we are pursuing several arrangements, such as consortia, to fulfil our manifesto commitment to extending the benefits of fund holding to all GPs.

Sir Roger Moate: Does my right hon. Friend agree that GP fund holding is proving to be one of the great success stories of the health service? Does she agree that the best way to nail the lie that there is a two-tier service, so often put about by the Opposition, is to extend GP fund holding and the benefits thereof to all practices, including the smaller ones, as soon as possible? Will she confirm her support for consortium arrangements and the multi-fund applications that she is now receiving?

Mrs. Bottomley: My hon. Friend is exactly right. We want to extend the benefits of fund holding to all GPs. We welcome the number of groups that are forming consortia. Of the 800 fund-holding practices that are coming forward for next April, about 350 are precisely for those smaller schemes. We are looking particularly to see further development in London, where the energising effect of GP fund holding on primary care in general could play an important part.

Ms Lynne: Can the Secretary of State tell the House how she intends to fund the initiative that she announced last week whereby non-GP fund holders' patients will receive urgent treatment within six weeks? I welcome the announcement. I believe that it means that the Secretary of State has accepted that she created a two-tier health service. How does she intend to fund it?

Mrs. Bottomley: Fifty per cent. of cases are now seen within five weeks. We must make sure that those are the most urgent cases. All emergency cases are, of course, seen immediately. It is clear that GP fund holding is leading to improvements in primary care generally. GPs are funded

on a comparable basis for their patients. Any new fund holders who join the scheme will have their budgets arranged on the basis of their referral patterns this year. There is no two-tier system. We are seeing a levelling up.

Mr. Sims: Will my right hon. Friend take steps to contact directly non-fund-holding GPs who may have some doubts and acquaint them with the facts about the advantages of fund holding? That would offset some of the misleading impressions given until recently by the British Medical Association and which continue to be given by those who seem more interested in making party political points than in pointing out the benefits to patients.

Mrs. Bottomley: My hon. Friend has it exactly right. There is no more effective advocate for GP fund holding than the fund holders themselves. GP fund holding is all about empowering the general practitioners. The GP is the most effective advocate on behalf of the patient. A party such as ours, the priorities of which are dominated by the interests of patients, not providers, wishes to see that further advanced. I strongly urge the Labour party to speak to many of its supporters who are active, innovative and energetic GP fund holders. They are showing the way to others.

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: Is the Secretary of State aware of the blatant abuse of the two-tier system in the Coventry and Warwickshire area, and of the consequences of it on the Walsgrave hospital trust? The hospital has refused to operate a two-tier service. The nearby George Eliot hospital offers to fund holders' patients half the waiting time that it offers to health authority patients. As a result, the George Eliot hospital is undermining the Walsgrave hospital trust and is in danger of causing redundancies in the trust. Surely the Secretary of State is aware of this. The blatant introduction of a two-tier service and abuse of the service are causing redundancies within the system that would otherwise be unnecessary.

Mrs. Bottomley: All hospitals are maintaining their patients charter standards. We are seeing a steady downward pressure on waiting times for all patients. The average was previously nine months. It is now down to five months. There has been a 20 per cent. fall in the number waiting more than a year in the past year alone.

I repeat that fund holders are funded fairly and comparably. We want all GPs to come forward and have the benefits of fund holding. It is a voluntary scheme. I commend to the hon. Gentleman the comments of Professor Howard Glenister from the London School of Economics. He said:

> "GP fund holding shifts the balance of power away from hospitals towards GPs and primary care. It replaces a top-down model of the NHS resource allocation with a bottom-up model driven by GPs acting as purchasers on behalf of patients."

I commend Professor Glenister's work to the hon. Gentleman.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: My right hon. Friend will recall that she was good enough to waive the requirement that there should be 7,000 patients for one practice in the southern end of my constituency, when it had already recruited every man, woman and child in its area. That practice is now going from strength to strength. It has extended its buildings and is an example to all others in the area. Will she help fund-holding practices to extend now to the north end of my constituency?

Mrs. Bottomley: I thank my hon. Friend. Those general practitioners with practice sizes that did not reach the 7,000-patient limit are bringing to bear pressure that they should be able to join the scheme. That is why we so welcome the consortia that are developing, which make it possible to push through the preferences of general practitioners in the delivery of care for patients.

Ms Primarolo: When will the Secretary of State accept the evidence that a two-tier system is being created by GP fund holders? The joint consultants committee has handed her a document which demonstrates that 70 per cent. of hospitals are fast-tracking GP fund holder patients. When will she act on that information? When will she make it impossible for GP fund holders to make profits for themselves instead of spending the money in the national health service where it is needed? When will she finally agree to prevent the payment of a £35,000 management fee to every GP fund holder to be spent on bureaucracy and instead give it to practice nurses, who are desperately needed in our community?

Mrs. Bottomley: When a hospital has completed the contract that it has agreed with the district health authority to meet its patients' targets and to ensure that it improves the quality and quantity of care, if it has spare capacity it can give it to another health authority or to a GP fund holder. The hon. Lady should ask why the GP fund holders have been able to use comparable amounts of money so much more effectively. Let us learn from that. Let us level up and have good value for money, rather than look for the lowest common denominator.

The hon. Lady resists no opportunity to take a swipe at any managers in the health service. The management allowance for GP fund holders is enabling resources to be used more effectively; it is about 2 per cent. of the cost. There have been benefits of about 4 per cent. These are ploughed into better patient care. They do not go into the GPs' pockets. They go to physiotherapists, chiropodists and—exactly what the hon. Lady wants—more practice nurses.

Accident and Emergency Units

3. **Mr. French:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health in how many hospital accident and emergency units medical staff are routinely made available to assess the seriousness of each case immediately on arrival.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Tom Sackville): I cannot give my hon. Friend the information that he seeks in numerical form, but I assure him that there has been excellent progress around the country, including in his local hospital, in achieving the targets set under the patients charter for accident and emergency units.

Mr. French: Does my hon. Friend agree that, in addition to immediate assessments by medically qualified staff as to the seriousness of an accident, a patient at an emergency unit also wishes to know how long he or she is likely to wait and where he or she stands in the queue? As the latter seems to be capable of being achieved at the delicatessen counters of supermarkets, will he please ensure that it is also achieved in our hospitals?

Mr. Sackville: I very much welcome my hon. Friend's advice, but he should remember that the giving out of

tickets in an accident and emergency unit would not necessarily be appropriate as patients are not necessarily seen in the order in which they arrive. In his hospital and many others, there is now a formal system of triage by which patients are prioritised and seen in order, depending on the seriousness of their condition.

Mr. Alfred Morris: Will the emergency units be able to cope with more, clearly very urgent, cases of babies with neo-natal hypothermia when, as expertly forecast, more vulnerable babies in low-income families feel the effects of VAT on domestic heating? Is the hon. Gentleman aware that leading midwives have warned that there will be a sharp increase in deaths from that cause? What advice have Health Ministers given Treasury Ministers about that preventable tragedy?

Mr. Sackville: I note what the right hon. Gentleman said about neo-natal intensive care. May I point out that accident and emergency units are now better equipped and better staffed to deal with all eventualities.

Dame Jill Knight: May I press my hon. Friend to look again at the suggestion from the conference of royal medical colleges last week to the effect that all cancer and heart patients ought to be assessed expertly as to the urgency of their needs? After all, accident and emergency patients are seen on the same day while some other patients have to wait up to six months for an appointment with a consultant. Will my hon. Friend please try to do something about that?

Mr. Sackville: I note what my hon. Friend says. Clearly, all urgent cases must be seen as a matter of priority. That must be sorted out between general practitioners and consultants.

Contact Lenses

4. **Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the Government's policy on charging for contact lenses prescribed and supplied by national health service hospital eye clinics.

The Minister for Health (Dr. Brian Mawhinney): Contact lenses may be prescribed through the hospital eye service if the patient has clinical need for them. A charge is made, although there are a number of categories of patient who are exempt.

Mr. Prentice: Will the Minister give the House an assurance that my 70-year-old pensioner constituent, Dorothy Shanley, and 20 or 30 other people like her in my area will not have to pay £300 a year for the contact lenses that they need? Is it not a fact that the regulations are about as clear as mud and that hundreds of anomalies need to be ironed out if my pensioner constituents are not to face such disgraceful treatment?

Dr. Mawhinney: I am aware that the hon. Gentleman's constituent had a problem with the Burnley trust. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Bowis), the Under-Secretary of State, wrote about that case to the hon. Gentleman on 29 July. I am happy to repeat what was said in the letter, which is that I regret the fact that there was a misinterpretation of the guidelines at Burnley which caused a degree of distress to the hon. Gentleman's constituent. The guidelines are not "clear as mud" but are perfectly clear and are operating in the rest of the country. There was a misinterpretation in Burnley which has been resolved. As my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary said in his letter, Mrs. Shanley's case can now be carried forward under the proper guidelines and in line with the advice of her consultant.

Mr. Matthew Banks: My hon. Friend is aware that the number of eye tests carried out is broadly similar to that before charges were imposed. Will my hon. Friend give the House an assurance that he will continue to ensure that we provide the most help in respect of charges where the need is greatest?

Dr. Mawhinney: My hon. Friend makes a good point in both regards. As he said, the number of sight tests has come back to the original level. We are concerned to ensure that needs are met and, as my hon. Friend will know, a significant number of people are entitled to help as a consequence of those need and exemption arrangements.

Mr. Blunkett: In the light of the discussions between BUPA and GP fund holders about the sale of private insurance through GP practices and the words of the Chief Secretary—I use his words—that charges will be needed to offer comfort and choice to people in hospitals as part of cutting back on NHS spending, will the Minister give an assurance to the House that all existing free prescription charges will remain, including for categories such as pregnant women and nursing mothers, and that no new charges will be introduced in the NHS for all of us who pay our taxes for a free and equal service?

Dr. Mawhinney: I would not want any element of discord to arise between the hon. Gentleman and myself, but his question went considerably wider than the one that we were discussing.

Mr. Blunkett: Answer the question.

Dr. Mawhinney: If the hon. Gentleman will give his lungs a rest, I might have a chance to do so.

I encourage the hon. Gentleman to read again the speech that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made at the Blackpool conference. It was an excellent speech and contained much that the hon. Gentleman ought to learn, mark and inwardly digest, including comments about this subject.

General Practices

5. **Mr. Rowe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to ensure the continuance of satisfactory deputising/on-call services for general practice.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Government remain committed to ensuring the continuance of a good quality out-of-hours service. To this end, we are currently discussing with the medical profession how best to take forward this commitment.

Mr. Rowe: My hon. Friend is well aware of the high regard in which services such as Maidstone doctors on call —MAIDDOC—and Medway doctors on call—MEDDOC —in my constituency are held, and the anxiety with which MAIDDOC views the new formula because of the difficulties that patients have in rural areas. Can my hon. Friend offer words of comfort to the committed doctors, that they will be able to continue in those services after he has completed his negotiations?

Dr. Mawhinney: My hon. Friend is right, I am aware of those issues, not least because of the eloquent advocacy with which my hon. Friend expresses the concern of his constituents. I am further aware that his constituents hold the services that they receive in high regard, and those services form part of the discussions that I am having with the general medical services committee. We need to look at a number of issues, not least the use of the cash-limited funds of the family health services authority. We want to do that against a background of ensuring that decisions are devolved as closely towards the patient as possible.

Paramedics

6. **Mr. Bates:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on progress towards the target of placing a paramedic on each frontline emergency ambulance.

Mr. Sackville: There has been excellent progress in paramedic training in all ambulance services.

Mr. Bates: Will my hon. Friend join me in congratulating the Cleveland ambulance trust on achieving its target of having a paramedic on each of its 18 frontline ambulances three years ahead of target? It was the first ambulance service to do so. Does my hon. Friend agree that this is another example of how the new ambulance trusts are delivering improvements in health care and emergency cover to the communities that they serve?

Mr. Sackville: Indeed. After my visit to the Cleveland ambulance service—I thank my hon. Friend for his invitation—I said to myself that if Cleveland can do it, why not the rest of the country? At that time, Cleveland was four years ahead of target, and I decided to bring forward to 1995 the target date by which there would be a fully trained paramedic on every frontline ambulance. The manner in which my hon. Friend's local ambulance service has achieved its target is a tribute to it, and I hope that he will pass on my congratulations.

Mr. Spearing: Will not the Minister agree that, irrespective of the importance of paramedics, it is even more important to get an ambulance to the scene in the first place, within the limits laid down by the patients charter? Is the Minister aware that in London in the summer there was an average of 50 occasions a day when ambulances arrived more than 26 minutes after they were called? Does the Minister not realise, from the answers that were given last Friday, that all ambulance authorities in the country comply with the 90 per cent. standard of response times, other than the London ambulance service, which achieved 58 per cent? Will he persuade the Secretary of State for Health to see the Chief Secretary to the Treasury to assure him that it costs more to run an ambulance service in London and to tell him that more money should be made available to the London ambulance service to enable it to meet the standards of the patients charter?

Mr. Sackville: I am aware of the sad fact that, almost uniquely in the country, the London ambulance service has not managed to come near the targets set down in the patients charter. I appreciate that there are special problems in London. There is a new management structure for the central area—where many of the problems occur—which will receive extra resources. With good will on all sides, there is no reason why the London ambulance service should not meet the targets achieved elsewhere in the country.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: Is not one of the advantages of putting a paramedic on every frontline emergency ambulance that he can assess the case and take the patient to the most appropriate trauma centre, particularly to local casualty units such as the Gravesend and North Kent hospital?

Mr. Sackville: My hon. Friend is right to point to the possibility of trauma units. We have funded centrally the trauma unit at Stoke so that ambulance paramedics can pre-assess the most serious cases, bypass certain district accident and emergency units and take patients to a hospital where a special trauma team can be assembled. We are fairly certain that that experiment will show that it is possible greatly to increase the chances of survival after the most serious accidents.

Wakefield and Pontefract Hospitals

7. **Mr. William O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has received on the future provision of health services by the Wakefield and Pontefract trust hospitals; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: We have received a number of letters, including one from the hon. Member.

Mr. O'Brien: The Minister is aware of the concerns and complaints that have been registered by the relatives and friends of elderly people who have been treated at the Pontefract and Pinderfields hospitals. When will he persuade his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to commence the public inquiry, which the right hon. Lady promised the people in my area, to investigate the allegations of mistreatment of the elderly at Pinderfields hospital? When will she also agree to the request that I made many months ago for a meeting to discuss the future of the hospitals and the medical care provided in the Wakefield area? Will the Minister investigate future provision for the mentally ill and the mentally disabled in the Pontefract and Wakefield areas?

Mr. Sackville: The hon. Gentleman is aware that I visited Pontefract twice in the past year. I am aware of three incidents involving elderly people in which care fell well below the standard we would expect. He is also aware, however, that the Nuffield Institute is investigating those cases and has contacted the families of patients of the past few years. An internal inquiry into those cases is also being led by two consultants from Manchester and Cornwall. If there are lessons to be learnt, we shall act on them, but if the hon. Gentleman visits the geriatric department now he will find little cause for concern.

Mr. Hinchliffe: Is the Minister aware that a great deal of concern is felt within the Wakefield and Pontefract areas, and throughout the country, about the impact of trust status and fund holding on community care? Has the Minister had the opportunity to read the reply published this morning by Values into Action, entitled "The Resettlement Game", which reveals conclusively that trust status is obstructing the process of providing community care for people with learning difficulties? Has the hon. Gentleman also had an opportunity to talk to Dr. David

Tod, the president of the National Association of Fund Holding GPs, a prominent Tory who spoke at the Conservative conference in Blackpool about the value of fund holding? Has the Minister asked that doctor why he, along with certain other GPs has refused to take patients from mental handicap hospitals? Where does that leave the Government's community care policies?

Mr. Sackville: I am aware that there are a great number of GP fund holders in the hon. Gentleman's area, but that is nothing to be scared of and I would thank him for not putting around scare stories. I have no reason to believe that GP fund holders would take decisions that are not in the interests of their patients overall.

Hormone Replacement Therapy Clinics

8. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what measures are available for health authorities to set up dedicated hormone replacement therapy clinics.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. John Bowis): Health authorities are required to assess local needs and place contracts for services accordingly. These services may include clinics specialising in the menopause and hormone replacement therapy.

Mrs. Gorman: I thank my hon. Friend for that reply. Is he aware that there are still relatively few specialist units around the country and that most are in the private sector? That means that women who rely on the national health service do not have access to such treatment unless they can afford to pay for it. Given the amazing benefit from that treatment, of which I am an amazing example—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear"] and the fact that this treatment could save the health service millions of pounds, because without it women are currently likely to suffer from osteoporosis, strokes and other terrible diseases, does my hon. Friend agree with me that the health service should be encouraged to dedicate funds to it so that lots more women can grow old gracefully?

Mr. Bowis: I know, and the world knows, of my hon. Friend's interest in this matter. She knows, as I know, that such therapy is available from the national health service in all its forms. The number of prescriptions for such treatment has quadrupled in the past decade. My hon. Friend will also be aware, as I am, that although HRT is one of the answers to diseases such as osteoporosis, there are many other ways in which to ensure that women grow old gracefully, as my hon. Friend said, and that brittle bones and other problems are avoided. My hon. Friend will be aware that one such alternative is exercise. Having seen my hon. Friend work out with her pompoms, I can assure the House that she takes that side of the argument as seriously as that in favour of HRT.

Mr. Tony Banks: The hon. Member for Billericay (Mrs. Gorman) is radiant proof of the efficacy of hormone replacement therapy. Will the Minister acknowledge that HRT is not help for women only, but many men could benefit from it—certainly an awful lot of men in this place?

Mr. Bowis: To be fair, I am not sure that the hon. Gentleman would benefit from remedies for problems related to the menopause, but I rely on him to assure me about that. Men and women benefit from better women's health, and women's health can be helped by that therapy. That is why in the past year we spent £61 million supporting it.

Hospital Treatment, Hampshire

9. **Mr. Milligan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health by how much long waits for hospital treatment have been reduced in Hampshire over the past two years.

Mr. Bowis: Since 31 March 1991, the number of patients waiting for in-patient and day case treatment for more than a year in the four health districts in Hampshire has fallen from 3,489 to 1,033. At 31 March 1991, more than 950 patients were waiting more than two years for treatment. Now no one in Hampshire has to wait for more than two years.

Mr. Milligan: That is exceptionally good news, especially for those people—*[Interruption.]* Hon. Members may jeer, but for those waiting many years for hip replacements that is especially good news. Does my hon. Friend agree that if further action is to be taken to reduce waiting lists one course would be to complete the reorganisation of London hospitals so that areas such as Hampshire get a fairer share of the budget? Given that Southampton general hospital has a greater success rate in general surgery than any London hospital, is it not right that the system by which London hospitals receive the lion's share of resources should be ended as soon as possible?

Mr. Bowis: My hon. Friend makes important points about resources and the spreading of them across the country, about the reforms that we have put in place and about the review that is going on in London. I can assure him that the progress that has been made in his part of the world is being made in other parts of the country, including London. Overall, 50 per cent. of patients needing hospital treatment are immediately admitted—98 per cent. in under one year. My hon. Friend drew attention to the number of hip replacements. There have been 50,000 such operations in the past year, as well as 60,000 varicose vein operations, and 90,000 people have had cataract operations. It is a pity that those figures are not sometimes recognised by Opposition Members.

Mrs. Wise: Do people in Hampshire have to wait two or three years for referral to a pain relief clinic, as they do in Preston? I am informed by the Preston health authority that people in Preston—[HON. MEMBERS: "Reading."] I am quoting——

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Lady is aware that quotations are not allowed during Question Time.

Mrs. Wise: Do people in Hampshire have to wait until the end of 1996—three years—for reference to a pain relief clinic for chronic pain?

Mr. Bowis: We shall certainly look at any particular problem in Preston. As the hon. Lady is aware, Preston is not in Hampshire, but in both Hampshire and Preston we have great progress. The decisons on planning for meeting the needs of the hon. Lady's area are down to the health authorities there, and I must not second guess their clinical health decisions. I am sure that the health authorities for the Preston area are doing their best to ensure that people get their treatment on time as set out in the patients charter.

GP Fund Holders

10. **Mr. Heald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many general practitioner practices are now participating in the fund-holding initiative; and what was the figure in April 1991.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The number of fund-holding practices is more than double what it was in 1991. It now includes 6,000 family doctors in 1,235 practices. The growing success of the scheme is shown by the fact that we expect a further 800 practices to join from next April.

Mr. Heald: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the rapid expansion that she has just announced, together with the fact that north Hertfordshire has more GP fund holders than any other district in the North West Thames region, shows the popularity of the scheme with ordinary family doctors? Does she agree that the next battle is to persuade the remaining doctors to join the scheme and to enable them to do so?

Mrs. Bottomley: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. It looks as though, from next April, 99 per cent. of patients in his area will have a GP fund holder. It is a voluntary scheme for consenting adults. We believe that more GPs should see the advantages of fund holding. The best way in which they can do that is for them to talk to someone who has already taken forward the scheme, which now provides care for 12 million patients.

Mr. Flynn: Is the right hon. Lady aware that she is correct to say that we do not have a two-tier health service? In fact, we have a three-tier health service, with private patients jumping the queue and getting their treatment within days, fund-holding GPs' patients getting their treatment within months and non-fund-holding GPs' patients getting their treatment only within years. Is she proud to have increased privilege in the health service?

Mrs. Bottomley: Once again, the hon. Gentleman shows a bitter, blinkered and rather vindictive approach to the delivery of health care. I suggest that he talks to David Colin-Thomé, who was previously a Labour candiate and who said that GP fund holding was the most energising thing to have happened to general practice in his 20 years as a doctor. We must not only set the national standards that the Labour party said we would never meet—we have not only met them, but beaten them—but find ways in which to encourage the rest to do as well as the best. The scheme is voluntary and we want more fund holders to come forward.

Mr. Hayes: Does my right hon. Friend agree that GP fund holding is very popular with patients, because it improves patient services, and also with GPs, who are voting with their feet? Can my right hon. Friend offer any psychoanalysis to explain why the Labour party is intent on abolishing this popular reform?

Mrs. Bottomley: I am afraid that the Labour party, which constantly looks backwards rather than forwards, cannot bear to devolve power: it all has to be command and control. The whole point about GP fund holding is that it empowers the GP. It is the GP who is the agent of the patient and when he has control over the budget, which would otherwise have been spent for him, he makes shrewd and wise decisions which are sensitive to patients' needs. That is the distinction between our party and the Labour party. The Labour party wants to tell people what to do; we want to empower them.

Community Care

11. **Mr. Purchase:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to meet the Spastics Society to discuss community care.

Mr. Bowis: My right hon. Friend met the society when she opened its Ruth Garwood lodge in the summer. I have not been approached for a meeting, but I am always ready to consider any such request. I personally very much value the contribution of the Spastics Society to community care.

Mr. Purchase: Does the Minister realise that such is the shortage of funds in local authorities that they cannot afford the level of occupational therapists needed? The Spastics Society is now having to divert its funds into that employment, and the local authority assessment services using occupational therapists now cannot get round to the people desperately in need of assistance and adaptations in their homes. What does he intend to do about that?

Mr. Bowis: The whole question of assessment of need is central to our community care policy. We have in place a system which assesses each individual's needs, both in terms of residential needs where that is appropriate and in terms of any medical treatments and therapies. Those needs are assessed and they are then put out to be met by the providers. The Spastics Society makes excellent provision, although some of that provision has proved costly. The society needs to look at efficiency and savings within its own organisation. I assure the hon. Gentleman that the money that has been put into community care is more than sufficient, as has been recognised by the Association of Directors of Social Services, which has said that in the early months of community care the system is up and running and that it is optimistic about the future.

Mr. Thurnham: Will my hon. Friend ensure that as much as possible of the £565 million for community care goes to efficient voluntary groups and not to town hall bureaucracies, which do not deliver an efficient and fair service?

Mr. Bowis: My hon. Friend is right. As he knows, we have encouraged local authorities to work closely in both the planning and execution of community care with the voluntary and the independent sector. Voluntary and private providers have an important part to play. We have made a requirement that 85 per cent. of the transitional grant be allocated to that sector. That requirement is being met in most parts of the country. There is a great willingness among social services departments to meet it. I am confident that we can go forward with community care in partnership with the public, private and voluntary sectors.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Meale:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 26 October.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning, I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Meale: In relation to the Bilsthorpe colliery disaster, in the light of new photographic evidence which refutes the report of the health and safety inspectorate into that disaster, will the Prime Minister now agree to a full public inquiry, as soon as possible, that is open to the public so that we can get over the whole of this nonsense which shows the difficulties that are hitting the coalfield communities of Britain?

Mr. Major: I have not seen the photographic evidence to which the hon. Gentleman refers. I will certainly look at that photographic evidence and examine it. I believe that there has been a substantial inquiry. None the less, I will examine it and be in touch with the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Butcher: Does my right hon. Friend agree that one of the major impediments to reducing unemployment across Europe is high wage costs—not to be confused with high wages? We must continually draw a distinction between the high cost of employment loaded on top of paying high wages. Will he continue his efforts diplomatically within Europe to ensure that we in Britain win the argument that there is no contradiction between paying people high wages and seeking to reduce the costs of employing people generally?

Mr. Major: I agree with my hon. Friend about that. I believe that that view is increasingly being taken by Governments and by employers right the way across western Europe and elsewhere. There is no doubt that the higher the sum total of costs, the larger the resultant level of unemployment will be both in Europe and elsewhere. At present, there are 18 million citizens unemployed across Europe. Estimates are that in Europe as a whole that may be 20 million in a year or so. We all need to look to see how we can get those costs down and people back in work.

Mr. John Smith: I am sure that the Prime Minister is well aware of the revulsion and outrage felt throughout the whole of the nation when it learned of the appalling tragedy of Saturday's bombing in Belfast. The violent and horrific aftermath, which has cost even more lives today, can only deepen and reinforce those feelings. Is it not absolutely clear that the response that the House of Commons must give to those who seek to impose their will by the bomb or the bullet is that they will not succeed in undermining this nation's total commitment to the democratic process?

Mr. Major: I am grateful to the Leader of the Opposition for making that clear. The whole House will agree with him in those sentiments, as I do without reservation. The perpetrators of sectarian violence have committed cold-blooded and premeditated murder. Let me say to the House that they will be hunted down and they will be subject to the full severity of the law. That applies equally to those responsible for the outrage in the Shankill road and to those responsible for the murders in west Belfast just a few hours ago. Such murders will have one effect and one effect only: they will deepen the bloodshed through revenge killings, and there will be more deaths, more misery and more years before Northern Ireland can return to the peaceful democratic future that everyone in the House wishes to see it have.

Q2. **Mr. Bellingham:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 26 October.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave a few moments ago.

Mr. Bellingham: Is the Prime Minister aware that many Conservative Members were extremely pleased that he raised the question of the general agreement on tariffs and trade during the recent Cyprus summit? Will he find time today to contact the French members of the European Commission and tell them to spend less time worrying about creating a federal Europe and more time trying to persuade their Government to sign up to GATT?

The Prime Minister: We had a substantial discussion on the Uruguay round at the Heads of Government meeting in Cyprus over the past few days. What was striking about it was that with some 50 countries there—some large and some small, some agricultural and some industrial—from every part of the globe, there was total unanimity on the desirability of agreement in the trade talks, and agreement by 15 December this year. We agreed at the summit to dispatch a small mission of Ministers from countries in different parts of the Commonwealth to call in on a number of capitals and make it clear how important we consider the trade talks to be.

Mr. Ashdown: The Prime Minister will know that he has the backing of those in all parts of the House in his call for restraint to break the vicious cycle of tragedy and violence in Northern Ireland. He is right in saying that no British Government should ever be prepared to speak to those who will not abandon the bullet and the bomb. But does not effective action against terrorism also depend on the proper co-ordination of intelligence? Does the Prime Minister recognise that confusion between intelligence gatherers in Northern Ireland, and the fact that there are two lead agencies, on the mainland and in Northern Ireland, may lead—as it has in the past—to rivalry and squabbling, which undermine the battle against terrorism? Will the Prime Minister address that matter?

The Prime Minister: We keep our counter-terrorist arrangements under very close review. The Security Service now devotes around 40 per cent. of its total effort specifically to countering Irish terrorism. There have been considerable successes, although it is in the nature of these matters that the successes are not often public, whereas the failures are all too public.

I have looked at the question again in recent months, and I must say to the right hon. Gentleman that I am not persuaded that the creation of a new single national authority would of itself enhance the fight against terrorism. There is, I think, a danger that it would add yet another link in the chain of command. But I assure the right hon. Gentleman that I consider the effectiveness of our counter-intelligence to be vital and keep it constantly under review.

Q3. **Mr. French:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 26 October.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave some moments ago.

Mr. French: Does. my right hon. Friend agree that police officers should not be hampered in their fight against crime by the burden of excessive bureaucracy and paperwork? Will he join me in congratulating the Home Secretary on his announcement that the amount of form filling will be seriously cut?

The Prime Minister: I can agree not only with my hon. Friend and my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary, but with the recommendations of the Sheehy report in this respect. Like all right hon. and hon. Members, I want to see police officers fighting crime on the streets, not dealing with paperwork in their offices. My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary last week accepted proposals which, once fully implemented, will cut paperwork in half. They will also put something like 2,300 policemen back on the streets, where all of us wish to see them.

Mr. Donohoe: Will the Prime Minister explain why the Government are this week to announce the winding up of the development corporation in my constituency, at a cost of £16·5 million, given that we have had announcements of some 700 job losses at Jetstream in Prestwick this month and of some 320 job losses in my constituency today? What logic is there behind the Government's decision?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman will know that, uniquely in western Europe at the moment, we are now in a position where unemployment has stabilised and is gently beginning to fall. In case the hon. Gentleman has not noticed, unemployment has fallen in six of the last eight months, by a total of 84,000. It is falling against a trend of rising unemployment elsewhere across the European Community and it is now below the European average, despite the predictions of some Opposition Members some months ago. The hon. Gentleman might have addressed the reality of what is happening for once.

Fishing Industry

Q4. **Mr. Steen:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will make an official visit to Brixham, south Devon, to discuss the future of the fishing and shellfish industry.

The Prime Minister: I have no immediate plans to do so. However, my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has made widespread visits to ports, including Brixham, to consult fishermen.

Mr. Steen: The people of Brixham are well aware of the Government's commitment to the west country, what with assisted area status for Torbay and an application to the European fund for 5b status for Brixham. But when my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister comes to Brixham, will he meet fishermen and assure them that he will not be pushed around by the Portuguese or Spanish, who want to seize our fishing stock and want more fish from our sovereign waters? Will he tell fishermen that he will not introduce a conservation measure until other European countries have similar conservation measures and until their policing of them is as good as ours? Finally, will he take a cup of tea at the Melville hotel so that he hear from Brixham's hoteliers that if he reduced rules and regulations on the hotel industry it would do more for tourism than anything else?

The Prime Minister: I will look forward not only to a cup of tea but, I suspect, something stronger by the time we have dealt with that agenda. I recognise the industry's concern about access for Spanish and Portuguese vessels. The Commission's proposals for rules from 1996 have now been announced, and we have made it clear that they must not lead to an increase in fishing effort. I attach great importance to strict observance of Community rules, including quotas. We therefore welcome the control regulations, which will help to ensure consistent enforcement. One of the areas of the Maastricht treaty perhaps not generally recognised by everyone is that it now gives greater power to ensure that everyone across the Community obeys Community regulations and can face substantial fines if they do not do so. *[Interruption.]* Hon. Members below the Gangway may scoff. They simply prove, as I have always suspected, that they have never read or understood the Maastricht treaty.

Madam Speaker: I now call Mr. Jim Marshall: it is a closed question.

Mr. Jim Marshall: Does the Prime Minister recall the speech that the right hon. Member for City of London and Westminster, South (Mr. Brooke) made on 9 November 1990, in which he said that the British Government have no selfish strategic or economic interest in Northern Ireland——

Madam Speaker: Order. I indicated to the hon. Gentleman that it is a closed question. It deals with Brixham, south Devon and the fishing industry. We must move on to Mr. David Sumberg.

Engagements

Q5. **Mr. Sumberg:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 26 October.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Sumberg: Is my right hon. Friend aware of a proposal by the Department of Transport to build a new six-lane motorway adjacent to the existing eight-lane M62, which cuts through my constituency? This proposal would involve the demolition of more than 350 homes. It is creating widespread housing and planning blight and is regarded by me and the whole community as an environmental disaster. Will my right hon. Friend tell the Department of Transport to withdraw the proposals forthwith?

The Prime Minister: I understand the concerns expressed by my hon. Friend and I know how vigorous he has been in expressing them on behalf of his constituents. I can undertake that the Department of Transport will take into account the views that have been expressed to me by my hon. Friend, and those of his constituents.

Q7. **Sir John Hannam:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 26 October.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Sir John Hannam: Given my right hon. Friend's support and commitment to the people of the south-west, can he give any encouragement to our wish to see a slowing down in the programme of implementation of EC water directives and a lowering of future water charges for the hard-pressed people of Devon and Cornwall?

The Prime Minister: As I think my hon. Friend knows, we are seeing what scope there is to apply the directives more flexibly and to minimise the cost that would otherwise fall on the water user in the south-west. We are therefore inviting our Community partners to re-examine priorities in the detailed implementation of the urban waste water treatment directive and also to consider whether the timetable for meeting the obligations is consistent with the current economic conditions in the Community. There is no quick or simple answer to this matter, but I can assure my hon. Friend that we are continuing to explore all avenues to try to minimise the costs that would otherwise arise.

Q8. **Mr. Boyce:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 26 October.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Boyce: The Prime Minister talks about a recovery being under way, led by this country. How can he tell us that we must face reality when, in reality, jobs are haemorrhaging in our constituencies every day? The Prime Minister is aware that a steel works is to close in my constituency, with the loss of 260 jobs carried out by the most flexible operatives in the country, if not the world. What words of comfort has the Prime Minister for those people who have been thrown on the scrap heap?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman needs to understand that unemployment is falling in this country, whereas it is not falling in other countries. Unemployment fell last month among both men and women in every region and in every part of the country. That month's decrease confirms the underlying strength of the economy. As the hon. Gentleman perhaps does not know, long-term unemployment has fallen over the last six months; long-term unemployment over longer periods has fallen; vacancies have risen; and the work force in employment have also risen. There is still a long way to go to get unemployment at the levels we would wish to see, but those Opposition Members who were keen to forecast 3·5 million unemployment just a few months ago had better stand up and admit now that it is under 3 million and falling.

Points of Order

3.31 pm

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. It has been the custom and practice of the House, certainly while I have been here and, I believe, from time immemorial, that former hon. Members are able to come to the Members' Lobby so that hon. Members may have the opportunity to meet them. You will know that in the recess I invited the president of Sinn Fein to come so that hon. Members could hear directly his proposals—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. Hon. Members have to be heard, however unpopular it is thought that their views might be. That will continue to be the case so long as I am Speaker.

Mr. Benn: I invited him so that hon. Members would have the opportunity to hear directly from him the proposals that he and my hon. Friend the Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) had been discussing during the recess.

You will recall, Madam Speaker, that I came to see you on Monday last week, at your request, and was able to ascertain, as I expected, that there would be no difficulty from the Chair's point of view in his following the practice to which I referred. On Tuesday, immediately following our meeting, and without telling the House, the Home Secretary issued an exclusion order, which was not disclosed to the House, on the day of the debate on Northern Ireland, which was very poorly attended, with only a handful of hon. Members present.

I am not referring to the order, which is a matter for the Government for which they are accountable, but is it not right that the rights of former hon. Members should be respected for the benefit of current hon. Members as there are many who think—and I am one—that we should explore every avenue to end the killing and the horrors which have occurred in Northern Ireland?

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. I can deal with this point of order, thank you very much. What the right hon. Gentleman is confirming is that arrangements have been made to give former hon. Members a right of access to certain parts of the Palace. This right does not of course apply to former Members who, for one reason or another, do not have the right to travel as far as the Palace.

The right hon. Gentleman is really complaining about the actions of the Home Secretary in the performance of his duties. Like all Ministers, the Home Secretary is answerable to the House for everything that he does in his official capacity. The Home Secretary is not responsible to me, and it is not my intention to make any comment on any action that he decides to take.

Mr. Alan Duncan (Rutland and Melton): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Order. No further point of order on that matter arises. I have dealt with it.

Mr. Duncan *rose*——

Madam Speaker: There is no further point of order on that matter. Is it a totally different point of order? No, I do not think that it is.

Mr. Duncan *rose*——

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. Let me make it quite clear. If it is a different point of order, I must hear the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Duncan). Is it different?

Mr. Duncan *indicated assent.*

Madam Speaker: In that case I shall hear the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Duncan: I was merely seeking your guidance, Madam Speaker, on the question whether, had the Home Secretary not issued the exclusion order, the privileges would have been extended to Gerry Adams, given the fact that he did not take the oath and never took his seat in the House.

Madam Speaker: I am saying that it is the Home Secretary who is responsible, and I shall make no further comment on that matter.

We shall now move on to a ten-minute rule motion and again to Mr. Anthony Steen.

Deregulation (No. 3)

3.36 pm

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to reduce the numbr of rules and regulations emanating from Next Steps agencies.

Thank you, Madam Speaker, for your kindness in calling me to address the House. I seek the leave of the House to introduce the last in a trilogy of ten-minute Bills in order to draw attention to the onward march of the new bureaucracy, which has developed the knack of interpreting directives from Brussels so as to cause the maximum disruption to our business culture and to divert business energies away from job creation and towards dealing instead with bureaucrats whose principal aim is the over-zealous enforcement of rules and regulations.

It is the interaction between our established civil service at Westminster and the over-zealous application by officials at local level that is delaying the upturn in our economy, and blocking those who desire to make this nation more successful.

Like Dutch elm disease, the new phenomenon strikes at the root of public service culture, whether with the 1,422 quangos in this country or with the next steps agencies. Officialdom is pushing businesses to the brink, and many go under, which in turn creates additional unemployment and further burdens on the benefits system.

John Perrett owns and runs his own boat construction company in Galmpton, not far from Brixham. For nearly half a century his "Western Ladies", former rescue motor launches from the second world war, have safely plied between Brixham and Torquay carrying thousands of passengers. Now, because of new safety legislation, all potential passengers must have, in addition to the buoyancy aids and lifebelts that they currently enjoy, lifejackets, not to mention inflatable liferafts. The requirements are so demanding that Mr. Perrett tells me that his boats will be crammed so full of lifesaving equipment that there will be little room for passengers. He also has to find room for an additional 12 flares, two additional hand-held VHF radios—in plastic bags, of course—and four hand-held smoke flares. Furthermore, all the lifebelts will have to be fitted with radar-reflective tapes. The cost will be more than £18,000.

Mr. Perrett is a reasonable man. It is only 4·5 miles across Torbay, and his boats are hardly more than half a mile away from the shore. Yet his boats are expected to maintain the same safety standards as ocean-going liners. If the unflinching chiselled face of bureaucracy does not mellow, Mr. Perrett will be put out of business after 45 years.

So it is with furniture. The regulations demand fire-resistant furniture in holiday homes but, oddly enough, that requirement does not apply to furniture in hotels, guest houses or bed-and-breakfast accommodation. The rationale is that guests staying in flats are in control of their furniture while hotel and bed-and-breakfast guests are not —as if the furniture has an independent will and wanders about on its own. As a consequence, holiday flat owners must fund replacement furniture. Many just do not have the money for that and are closing down.

Preventive legislation is all very well when there is plenty of money about. However, after four years of recession, people just cannot do what the public officials want them to. Devon county council found £160,000 of public money to spend on preventive measures. It built two roundabouts just outside Kingsbridge in the middle of nowhere in order to reduce the likelihood of accidents, and it straightened roads to make them less dangerous. The council then approved an additional £1 million of traffic-calming measures to slow traffic.

Officialdom is not discriminating. It will hound the public sector as well as swipe at the private sector. Take the 2½ ft paddling pool in Stoke Gabriel village primary school on the banks of the Dart. Suddenly, after 25 years of the paddling pool's existence, the school received a bill for £1,800 from the National Rivers Authority. "If it is water, we'll charge you for it", said the NRA. The fact that the water is removed by buckets and the pool is refilled with rainwater every year is irrelevant. The NRA demanded payment. If I may say so, it was my exposure of the NRA's bullying tactics which caused it to change its mind.

We live in a Kafkaesque society which penalises the law-abiding and rewards offenders. Just take a look at village halls in rural communities which are run by volunteers—something that the Conservative party supports. Those people give their time voluntarily. The village hall is the pivotal point for the community. It provides for playgroups, over-sixties' lunches, badminton groups and youth clubs as well as a place for public meetings.

If the village hall community wishes to improve its hall by adding an extension, it must raise additional money from the private sources to pay the VAT. No wonder village hall extensions are now being built without interconnecting doors. Without interconnecting doors, the extension is considered to be new build and therefore no VAT is payable.

People who want to go from the old hall to the new extension when it is pouring with rain must dive out of one door and they arrive, soaked to the skin, through another door in the new extension. You may think that that is a little mad, Madam Speaker. If the village hall kitchen is to be improved, the environmental health officer arrives on the scene. Every year, a fire officer comes around and each fire officer interprets the regulations differently.

If a public entertainment licence is required, the village hall community must satisfy the magistrate that there are sufficient loos. To have a public entertainment licence, there must be a loo for the physically handicapped. There is one concession. Not surprisingly, the provision of a loo for the physically handicapped or disabled does not attract VAT. Not surprisingly, all village halls are now building loos only for the physically handicapped.

Quangos, next steps agencies and self-financing regulatory agencies are all forcing people to retrench and step back to look inwards rather than to look outwards optimistically to the future. Take my experience. Two weeks ago I parked my car in Waterloo place near Pall Mall to take a constituent to meet a Minister from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. I paid my money and put my ticket on the windscreen. I am told that five minutes later my car was lifted off the road and taken to a pound. Inside was my seven-year-old West Highland terrier who was left in the pound for over an hour, frightened, cold and unattended. Apparently, one of the car's wheels may have intruded into the adjoining parking place in spite of the fact that it was nearly 6 pm and there were more than a dozen empty parking spaces either side of the car.

[Mr. Anthony Steen]

The police say that the contractors are a law unto themselves. The more vehicles they take away, the more they earn. They rely on most victims not having the energy, money or determination to pursue them. Many of the teams prowl around the capital seizing people's cars—the modern equivalent of highway men, over-zealously interpreting rules and regulations for their own financial gain.

The unrestrained growth of rules and regulations has become a scourge of this country and a kind of creeping paralysis that threatens the fabric of our lives and invades the quality and freedom of our very existence. It is a menace which has, for far too long, been allowed to fester. It attacks the individual and wipes out small firms. It hampers recovery and inhibits enterprise. It causes hostility and creates anger, despair and exasperation. It inspires anti-social behaviour. It attacks the very fabric of our society.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Anthony Steen, Sir Michael Grylls, Sir Marcus Fox, Sir Michael Neubert, Sir Anthony Durant, Sir Donald Thompson, Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith, Sir Keith Speed, Mr. Roger Evans and Mr. John Sykes.

DERBGULATION (No. 3)

Mr. Anthony Steen accordingly presented a Bill to reduce the number of rules and regulations emanating from Next Steps agencies: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 29 October and to be printed. [Bill 257.]

Mines (Health and Safety)

3.44 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I understand that arrangements have been made by the Government to provide an extra hour and a half for this debate. However, you will notice from the Order Paper that the instrument has not yet been considered by the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments, which is a matter of considerable regret. Indeed, the Committee would normally consider the instrument this afternoon and therefore it would be impossible to report to the House.

It should be recorded that the Committee is there to do a job and that it cannot possibly do that job if the debate takes place before the report is made, particularly in view of the fact that the Committee, when it considers the instrument, will consider a report from our counsel that the instrument is defectively drafted and makes unexpected use of powers. Obviously, I cannot predict the outcome of the Committee, but those elements are under consideration and, unfortunately, the House cannot consider that because of the rush to undertake the debate, which is at the insistence of the Government and not of the Opposition.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members will have noticed the item on the Order Paper which the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) has referred to and has elaborated on. I am sure that the House is grateful for his comments.

3.46 pm

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): I beg to move,

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Management and Administration of Safety and Health at Mines Regulations 1993 (S.I., 1993, No. 1897), dated 28th July 1993, a copy of which was laid before this House on 6th August, be annulled.

These new regulations were published on 6 August after the House adjourned. They and the code of practice were supposed to come into operation on 1 October before the House resumed. That prevented Members of Parliament from mining areas from making representations on behalf of their constituents before the regulations came into operation, but it is not clear to people in the mining industry whether the new regulations are in operation at this moment or whether they are being implemented. I wonder whether the Minister would tell us what the situation is.

The Minister of State, Department of Employment (Mr. Michael Forsyth): The regulations came into force on 1 October. The coal board and other operators of mines are obviously covered by the regulations.

Mr. Dobson: Perhaps the Minister will tell us which rules now apply below ground. British Coal has written to the industry's trade unions, saying that the necessary consultations for bringing the rules into operation could not be achieved by 1 October. In its letter it stated:

"so in the meantime we intend to maintain the existing structures pending the outcome of such consultations."

Which laws now apply in Britain's mines below ground? Are they the old ones or the new ones? If they are the new ones, could the Minister tell British Coal?

Mr. Forsyth: I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman, if he understands this subject, should ask such a question. The regulations apply. There is no evidence to suggest that British Coal is not complying with them. The point which is being made by British Coal is that the existing structures —that is, where deputies carry out both the supervision and the inspection roles—will continue, and the regulations provide for that.

Mr. Dobson: A large number of people are risking their lives working below ground today and they are confused about the situation. Certainly those responsible for the supervision of safety are confused about the situation. It is worth reminding the House that, on a previous occasion when there were substantial changes in the laws applying to safety under ground, those whose lives would be affected and the managements concerned were given a year in which to make the necessary changes in the arrangements, not a squalid little period in the middle of the summer, as was the case this time.

Under the Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act 1974, any changes to health and safety regulations must maintain or improve standards of health and safety. We believe that the new regulations produced by the Government will not maintain or improve safety standards—they will reduce safety. That is why the regulations are being challenged in the courts and why they should not be passed by the House today.

Basically, mines run by British Coal are the safest in the world. They are twice as safe as those in west Germany, and three or four times safer than deep mines in the United States and other parts of the developed world. That proud British record has resulted from the detailed safety regulations laid down by law, the uniquely powerful and effective position of pit deputies and, until recently, a culture in British mining that put safety first.

Clearly that is a good case for the Government to leave well alone. However, they do not intend to leave well alone. Nor do they intend to build on the sound foundations of the British way of doing things that has made Britain's mines the safest in the world. The new proposals will replace the detailed regulations which have served so well in the past, with codes of practice. The new regulations will dispense with the unique role of the deputies, reducing them to the subordinate position of safety inspectors.

The new regulations are intended to produce a new culture underground with paramount attention given to production rather than safety. Not content with that, the new regulations will permit the Health and Safety Executive to exempt any mine or mine owner from any or all of the regulations without reference to Parliament or the Health and Safety Commission. The new regulations are likely to result in more deaths and injury, more grief and anger and more sanctimonious Tory Ministers coming to the Dispatch Box to express sympathy for the victims and praise for the emergency services.

The Government are introducing the regulations to promote deregulation and privatisation. The Tories are addicted to deregulation and privatisation. Like all addicts, they cannot be deflected by rational argument or concern for others. They will sacrifice anyone to feed their stupid addiction. This time, it is the turn of the miners.

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Dobson: No.

The Tory Government are determined to privatise what is left of the British coal industry. They got their friends in the City to tout Britain's mines and miners around the foreign coal companies, asking those companies what they wanted done to make the British assets even more attractive. They were told by the foreign coal owners that the safety standards in Britain's mines were too high, high safety standards cost money and more coal could be produced more cheaply if standards were reduced. Ever willing to oblige, the Government have set about doing what the foreign coal owners requested. The new regulations will change the rules to allow foreign coal owners to come to our country and to kill and maim as many miners in Britain as they have done in their mines abroad. They may reduce the cost of coal, but there will be a price to pay, and that price will be paid by British miners and their next of kin.

Mr. John Marshall: Can the hon. Gentleman tell the House whether the regulations will be similar to, or markedly different from, those that prevail elsewhere in the European Community?

Mr. Dobson: The regulations will be remarkably similar to those that prevail elsewhere in the European Community. If the hon. Gentleman had bothered to listen to what I was saying, he would know that all of the mines in the European Community are at least twice as dangerous as British mines, and many of them are three or four times more dangerous. We do not want useless foreign regulations. We want to stick to British regulations which have worked and which are the best in the world.

The changes to the regulations have been justified by some people on the ground that there has been technological change in the mining industry. However, some technological changes have made mining more complex and have increased the scale or operational size of the faces and the need for more human inspection.

At one stage in its formulation of the new regulations the Health and Safety Executive, which is supposed to be responsible for promoting safety, suggested that monitoring devices could be used to reduce the need for human inspections. One of the hazards that the executive had in mind was fires. It was then pointed out to the Health and Safety Executive that in 1987-88 only three out of 96 fires were spotted by monitoring devices. The other 93 were spotted by human beings; and the figures have been broadly similar ever since. In the light of those facts, the HSE had to abandon that line of argument, but persisted in pushing ahead with the regulations that it had formulated on the basis of its original false and sloppy assumptions.

It is also argued that fewer accidents occur at the coal face, where the law is stricter. There is some dispute about that, but the Government, British Coal and the HSE argue that there is no connection between contractors and the use of roof bolts, on the one hand, and accidents on the other. They claim that it is all a question of supervision. If it is all a question of supervision, surely the answer is to extend the stricter authority of the deputy to areas away from the face, as that authority is so successful in keeping down accidents at the face. That would be a common sense answer, but that is not what the regulations propose.

The real impetus for the new regulations is not concern about technological change, or some high-minded desire on the part of the Tories to reduce accidents away from the

[Mr. Dobson]

coal face; it comes from a desire to reduce production costs by deregulating mine safety, to promote what are called flexible working practices.

The existing regulations and their supervision by the deputies are the targets for those who call for flexible working practices. All the literature proves it. Mr. L. J. Mills, former deputy chairman of British Coal, asserted:

"changes in face management have all tended to founder on the overriding statutory authority of the deputy".

Mr. Albert Wheeler, something less than a hero in the Scottish coalfield and the present deputy chairman, claimed that

"The officials have the role of safety checks and supervision of workers. Over the years the numbers have grown to give more intensive supervision at each place of work".

He proposed getting rid of a quarter of that supervision. What he did not add was that, as supervision has increased, accidents have been reduced.

What he was really objecting to was the culture of safety that has, until now, predominated in Britain's mines. The Government wish to change that culture. As recently as 11 October the Minister with responsibility for coal told the Coal Industry Society lunch that he believed that the existing culture of British Coal placed it at a significant disadvantage compared with mines in the United States.

The culture of mines in the United States is different, I will grant him that; it is a culture that allows three or four times as many miners to be killed and injured, and a culture where crooked, multinational mining companies have systematically rigged the readings on dust monitors and put at risk the lives and health of people who work for them.

Those multinational mining companies showing an interest in our mining industry have been prosecuted and fined. Recently, much to their surprise, one mining official was sent to gaol, but that did not happen until the deregulating Republicans had been thrown out of office. That is the American culture that the Tories want to introduce into Britain's mines which, until now, have been the safest in the world.

The Government have been getting advice from Boyds, the American mining engineers. In a sane world, Boyds would put forward British ideas to make American mines more safe, not American ideas to make British mines more dangerous. For that is what Boyds is doing.

Boyds produced a report for the Government. The Government published it in January of this year. That was before the fatal roof fall at Bilsthorpe colliery which the HSE attributed not to the use of roof bolts, but to the collapse of a pillar of coal which was too narrow to take the weight bearing down on it or, even possibly, the absence of any pillar at all. So what did Boyds recommend in January in its report before that fatal fall? It recommended that the pillars between workings should be reduced to a quarter of the thickness presently required, even by British Coal. So much for the culture that the Government want to import from the United States. Unsafe for any depth: that is their culture.

The Government will no doubt argue that the new regulations have the support of the HSE, and so they have. But they do not have the support of the trade union members of the commission who made clear the view that the proposed regulations do not improve or maintain health and safety. The local authority member of the commission also questioned whether the regulations would, as required by law, improve or maintain safety.

The Government will also claim that the new regulations come from the HSE. I regret to say that these days the actions of the HSE are open to serious question. On mine safety the HSE has gone along with the management of British Coal and seems to see itself as having a duty to promote new working practices at the expense of its prime duty of promoting health and safety. It is ominous to note that in that self-same Boyds' report Boyds—the American mining engineers, accustomed to killing three or four times as many miners as are killed in Britain—says:

"We acknowledge the more progressive attitude of HMI in the last year and encourage their continued co-operation and participation in improvement of colliery operations."

That is an unusual example of a poacher praising a gamekeeper. Poachers seldom praise gamekeepers, except when a gamekeeper conveniently agrees to look the other way. As a result of this progressive attitude and the continued co-operation welcomed by Boyds, the mines inspectors' relations with British Coal have become far too cosy.

I revert to the earlier example of the roof fall at Bilsthorpe colliery which killed three people. At present, although many people seem to be unaware of it, the use of roof bolts as a primary support is unlawful. They can be made lawful only if the HSE issues an exemption certificate. It claims that it issues exemption certificates sparingly. Such exemptions are supposed to lay down in detail the conditions appropriate to each particular case and to involve site investigations.

Yet the HSE's own interim report into the Bilsthorpe roof fall makes no reference to an exemption certificate or the circumstances in which the HSE might have issue it, what conditions, if any, were laid down or whether any site investigation took place. The HSE report into the roof fall, needless to say, exonerates roof bolts and attributes the collapse to the narrowness of a pillar of coal.

Had the HSE looked carefully enough, if it had looked at all, before issuing the exemption certificate, it would have found that roof bolts were to be used next to an old working, separated only by a pillar of coal just one metre wide, if there was any pillar at all. If the HSE had done its job properly before it issued that exemption certificate, it would have been alerted to the danger of the collapse of a thin pillar. It should have been aware of that danger because when a roof collapsed at Allerton Bywater on 26 July 1989 the self-same HSE issued a report which exonerated roof bolts and attributed the collapse to the thinness of the pillar involved. There is some explaining to be done, and the HSE should not be allowed to issue reports that exonerate it from a failure to carry out its duties.

Mr. Paddy Tipping (Sherwood): Does my hon. Friend agree that what the miners in north Nottinghamshire want is reassurance on this point? Given the catalogue of accidents that my hon. Friend has described, is not the correct way forward the holding of a full, open and independent public inquiry? The Health and Safety Executive is in the dark; it is being asked to be judge and jury at the same time. That clearly cannot be right.

Mr. Dobson: I entirely agree, just as I agreed with the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Mansfield (Mr. Meale) during questions to the Prime Minister.

There can be no question but that there are serious doubts about the professional competence and commitment of the HSE in respect of the issuing of exemption certificates at Bilsthorpe. The HSE cannot clear itself; I do not think it can be cleared. We need a full, independent inquiry to find out what went on and why.

Mr. Cryer: That is an absolutely valid point. If what my hon. Friend is saying is true, does it not also follow that any new regulations recommended by the Health and Safety Executive are likely to be in breach of the legal obligation placed on it —endorsed by the Minister—to the effect that all regulations must have the aim of improving existing standards? It is patently clear from what my hon. Friend has said that the executive has not had regard to that important legal obligation, which was placed on it at the insistence of Labour Members in the 1974 Standing Committee.

Mr. Dobson: I absolutely agree. The HSE also has some obligation to explain the following. When the collapse occurred in the road that was being driven through with the use of roof bolting, there was no total collapse in the parallel road that was not using roof bolting. Ministers will see from the photograph of the double driveway that I have that that is so. The traditional system of support proved stronger and kept up some of the roof. But for the fact that the parallel road was kept open by the effectiveness of the old-fashioned roofing, more people would have died, because the rescuers went in along the parallel road.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): One of the reasons why most miners have long accepted that the roof-bolting practice is unsafe on its own is the fact that with the old-fashioned system of arches—still used in most pits —if there is a heavy roof fall, the chances are that the arches will be distorted or may even crumple and twist, but they will still leave a large enough aperture for people to escape through. My hon. Friend's photographs prove that, and the Ministers on the Front Bench should be ashamed of themselves. The Prime Minister says that there are three bastards in the Government. I do not think that he can count—there are three more on the Front Bench today.

Mr. Dobson: Once again, I agree. If anyone, including Tory Members, has any doubts about what I say about the shortcomings of the HSE in relation to mine safety, I refer him again to the report by Boyds. It states that blanket exemptions to allow the use of roof bolts are being issued by the Health and Safety Executive and they cover, not a specific place or circumstance, but a whole seam in a coal mine. That was not what was intended by Parliament when it granted the HSE the right to issue such exemptions.

There are no questions on conditions appropriate to each particular case and on-site investigations. Boyds, the American mining engineers, to whose views the Government attach such paramount importance, say that blanket exemptions are being issued.

It is a disgrace and it cannot be right. No safety inspectorate that takes its job seriously should operate in such a manner, and no safety inspectorate with such a lousy record of enforcing the law should expect its proposals for the most far-reaching changes in Britain's mining safety regulations to go unchallenged. Nor can the Government justify the new regulations by relying on the perceived authority of an agency that is proving increasingly incapable of doing its proper job. I understand that the Health and Safety Commission is meeting to discuss reductions in the budget of the Health and Safety Executive. How will that improve the health and safety of miners?

The Health and Safety Executive has no authority in the matter. The House will judge the new regulations on their merits, and it should judge them harshly. Winston Churchill said that Parliament should direct upon the industry of coal mining a specially severe scrutiny and introduce regulations of a different character from those elsewhere. We already have such regulations. They have been in place for years and they have worked. They have made our coal mines the safest in the world. The existing regulations need to be updated and improved, but the new regulations do not update and improve on the old. Instead, the new foreign-based regulations uproot and cast aside a system that has proved that it works.

We are not considering some theoretical text on deregulation produced by the Adam Smith Institute. What we are considering directly affects the safety of men, our fellow citizens, working as deep as 2,000 ft underground —miners facing real dangers working in mines. We owe them a duty of care, and any hon. Member who takes that duty seriously cannot vote for the regulations.

4.12 pm

The Minister of State, Department of Employment (Mr. Michael Forsyth): We have listened to a disgraceful speech, a vicious and unwarranted attack on a tripartite body, the Health and Safety Commission, and the Executive to which it is responsible. The Management and Administration of Safety and Health at Mines Regulations were not dreamt up by me, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment or the Government— *[Interruption.]* They were submitted to the Government by the Health and Safety Commission. I would not have been prepared to lay those regulations before the House without a clear view from the Health and Safety Commission that they were designed to improve health and safety in mines.

Mr. Skinner: The Health and Safety Commission was in the Government's pocket.

Mr. Forsyth: The Health and Safety Commission includes representatives from the Trades Union Congress. If the hon. Gentleman thinks that the TUC is in the Government's pocket, he is mistaken.—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. Let us have a little more quiet from hon. Members below the Gangway. I am having difficulty hearing what the Minister is saying, and I am sure that other hon. Members are, too.

Mr. Forsyth: I can assure you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that, in the case of the sedentary interventions, you have not been missing much.

Mr. Ronnie Campbell (Blyth Valley): Does the Minister agree that the idea of using the roof bolting is that it is cheaper than girders and would save money? The people who push for the introduction of roof bolting are

[Mr. Ronnie Campbell]

those at Hobart house, the coal board officials, Clarke and his cohorts who want to take the industry over when it is privatised.

Mr. Forsyth: The hon. Gentleman knows that the Health and Safety Executive cannot allow exemptions for the use of roof bolts in a situation that would result in unsafe practices. That would be contrary to law. If the hon. Member for Blyth Valley (Mr. Campbell) has complaints about the conduct of the Health and Safety Executive, he is free to raise them.

The debate today is about the Management and Administration of Safety and Health at Mines Regulations, which are not concerned with roof bolting except in so far as they put a stronger obligation on the management of coal mines and other mines to conduct their business in a way that gives priority to health and safety.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I would not have been prepared to accept the regulations without a clear view from the Health and Safety Commission—a tripartite body—that they were designed to improve health and safety at mines. The commission's advice was that the new regulations would remedy serious defects and inadequacies in the existing law. Those who are opposed to the regulations should ask themselves who sits on the Commission that has proposed those regulations. Commissioners who have submitted the regulations and approved the associated codes of practice include members of the TUC and representatives of the CBI and of local government. It is a disgrace that Opposition Members should seek to challenge their integrity in that way.

Sir Harold Walker (Doncaster, Central): The Minister is giving the House the impression that the Health and Safety Commission was unanimous in its decision. Will he make it clear that the TUC representatives were totally opposed to the proposals?

Mr. Forsyth: No, I will not make that clear. I will make it clear that some of the TUC representatives did not attend the meeting. The proposals were made by the commission with the express recommendation that they should be carried.

One of the reasons why there has been a delay is that I asked to be assured that the Health and Safety Executive was satisfied that the proposals are necessary to improve health and safety in mines.

The notion that the regulations are being slipped through at the last minute, as the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) had the nerve to suggest, is bizarre. Consultations on the regulations started in 1988 and all interested parties have had the opportunity to express a view and they have taken that opportunity. The British Coal Corporation, the National Association of Colliery Managers, the National Association of Colliery Overmen, Deputies and Shotfirers, the National Union of Mineworkers, the Union of Democratic Mineworkers, the Federation of Small Mines, the Mining Association of the United Kingdom, professional institutions, and Her Majesty's inspectorate of mines have all had an opportunity to give their opinions.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): Did not it occur to the Minister that, due to the serious nature of the regulations, it might be useful for him to consult not only the Health and Safety Commission which had the majority view, but those organisations within the mining industry which, throughout the long period of consultation, had perceived grave weaknesses in British Coal's proposals? Would not it have been wise for the Minister to consult them before he decided to accept everything that was put before him, even though it is obvious to many in the industry that it is a recipe for danger?

Mr. Forsyth: The hon. Gentleman has followed the matter closely and will therefore know that a discussion document on the matter was published in 1988 and that there have been two formal consultation proposals. Endless informal revisions have been issued, there have been at least 10 meetings with the unions concerned and the proposals have been considered six times by the Health and Safety Commission.

Peter McNestry, the general secretary of the union that sponsors the hon. Gentleman, had the nerve to say on the "Today" programme on 25 August that the consultations were "single sided". The hon. Gentleman could do well to spend time teaching his sponsors how to count. There have been endless consultations on the matter and both sides of industry have had every opportunity to explore the implications of the regulations.

Mr. Bill Etherington (Sunderland, North): Will the Minister explain to the House what percentage the TUC has of the voting power on the Health and Safety Commission? Does he accept that it is impossible for the TUC representatives to carry anything from a minority position on the Commission?

Mr. Forsyth: If that is a speech against the nature of tripartite bodies, I am surprised to hear it coming from the hon. Gentleman. The Health and Safety Commission is a tripartite body, and the unions have representatives. If he is concerned that the union representatives are being outvoted, he should know that the Health and Safety Commission proceeds by consensus. He should also know that it would be considerably easier for the union representatives to give their views if they attended the meetings where the matters are discussed. It is certainly true that at the last meeting not all the TUC people were present. Consideration of the regulations has been going on for some four years and they have been subject to widespread consultation. Despite all the consultation, where is the opposition coming from—except from Labour Members who choose to speak for the main dissenting voices outside? Who are the dissenting voices? They are NACODS and Mr. Arthur Scargill.

Mr. Dobson: If the Minister wants to sustain the basis of the tripartite approach to health and safety, will he confirm that, at the final meeting of the substantial number of meetings of the Health and Safety Commission at which the proposals were discussed, the TUC representatives made it clear that they did not support the proposals and believed that the new regulations would reduce health and safety? That is what the minutes say. If the Minister wants to deny that, God only knows why.

Will the Minister also confirm that the trade unions that represent the bulk of the people who work below ground in British mines are so opposed to the proposals that NACODS, which represents the colliery overmen, deputies and shotfirers who have been responsible for safety so

successfully all this time, is taking the Government to court because it believes that the regulations breach the basic law?

Mr. Forsyth: I can confirm that the TUC representative did not press for a vote on the matter at the final meeting. I am sorry to hear the hon. Gentleman take the line that he has taken this afternoon. I congratulate the Health and Safety Commission on putting the interests of safety ahead of the interests of trade unions and other lobbies that have put across a particular view. If we accepted the views expressed by NACODS and the NUM, we would have to believe that every other union and professional institution involved in the industry either has got it wrong or simply has no interest in the safety of miners in Britain. Only NACODS and the NUM have spotted that

"These regulations would push our standards down to third world standards",

as the general secretary of NACODS described the regulations. That is in contrast to the view of the Health and Safety Commission.

I wonder what is the real reason why Opposition Members are getting so excited.

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Forsyth: If I may make a proposition, I shall be happy to give the hon. Gentleman the opportunity to knock it down. I wonder what is the real reason for NACODS and NUM opposition. It certainly cannot be safety, because the Health and Safety Commission would not submit regulations that reduced safety standards. The truth is that, as Opposition Members well know, NACODS sees the proposals on supervision and inspection, which the Health and Safety Commission believes essential for better health and safety for miners underground——

Mr. Michael Clapham (Barnsley, West and Penistone): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Forsyth: I shall not give way until I have developed this point, and I promised that I would give way to the hon. Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) first.

Opposition Members may not wish to hear this, but it is important that the House should be aware of why NACODS is opposed to the proposals. The truth is that NACODS sees the proposals on supervision and inspection as a threat to its monopolistic hold over pit deputies. That is the root of its objection. Before the regulations were introduced—the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras did not seem to realise that they were in force—mines could not be worked without a deputy being present. Of course, all deputies are members of NACODS.

Mr. Barron: The Minister asked why Opposition Members were worried about the regulations. He seemed to imply that we were after protecting some trade unions or trade union rights. Let me tell him that I spent 20 years working under the Mines and Quarries Act 1954 as an underground electrician. If I had not had the protection and independence that the statute gave me, on occasions I would have had to do things that people asked me to do even though I deemed it unsafe in that instance.

We and people in the industry are concerned that the Minister proposes to take away statutory rights that people have had for safety and production reasons, and divide people. I believe—leaving aside any coal industry politics—that it is a backward step for safety in Britain's mines.

If my memory serves me well, every change of regulation that has taken place in the coal industry this century has happened through consensus. The Minister stands at the Dispatch Box and says that we cannot get consensus for the changes from people who work underground in those dangerous conditions. I think that that is a precedent which no Government should accept in an industry such as coal mining.

Mr. Forsyth: The Health and Safety Commission proceeds by consensus. I accept what the hon. Gentleman says about the importance of safety and I accept his experience. I should have thought, therefore, that he would welcome the regulations, which, for the first time, place a duty on all management in the mines to put safety ahead of every other matter.

Mr. Eric Illsley (Barnsley, Central) *rose*——

Mr. Forsyth: I shall reply to the hon. Member for Rother Valley first. NACODS is worried because it perceives a threat to its membership. If one looks at the position from the point of view of what is happening in the mines, however, there still needs to be a minimum level of qualification, because the changes will simply mean that someone might be called a manager or a supervisor. NACODS feels that its position as the deputies' union is under threat. It is not the members' health and safety that it is concerned about; it is merely the self-interest of the union. The health of the union, not the safety of the members, is uppermost in its mind.

Mr. John Cummings (Easington): I am grateful to the Minister for giving way. I make no apologies for speaking with passion and concern about an industry in which I worked for 29 years and where one leaves so much of oneself behind and so many fellow colleagues have suffered accident, serious injury or death. That is why we speak with passion.

The Minister should understand that collieries are deeper and machinery is more powerful than in the past, and there is pressure, not just from the colliery manager, but from the silhouettes in Hobart house with their computers, who, at times, are aware of breakdowns before the colliery manager.

The pressures on management and workmen are now so intense that we should seek to strengthen the present regulations. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron), I was an electrician underground and many was the occasion when I had recourse to the miners' regulations in the top pocket of my waistcoat against the under-manager, the manager and the group manager. That protection will be removed. It is a detrimental step; a step back to the dark ages.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I do not only express my remarks to the hon. Gentleman who has just sat down, but I make the point that nine hon. Members are hoping to catch my eye during the short debate and if we continue to have long interventions some will not be successful.

Mr. Forsyth: I agreed with everything that the hon. Gentleman said until he neared the end of his remarks. It cannot be right, given what he describes—an industry which is deeper and which has new technology—to depend on regulations that were first formulated in the year when

[Mr. Forsyth]

I was born. They are out of date. They need to be renewed and improved and that is why the Health and Safety Executive has done so.

Mr. Illsley *rose*——

Mr. Forsyth: I have been very generous in giving way and I heard what Mr. Deputy Speaker said about the importance of making progress.

It was right for the Health and Safety Executive and the Commission to ignore the attempts that were made to maintain a legislative framework that was more suited to life about 30 years ago. I was astonished by the attitude of the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras. After all, the work of the commission and executive, which the Labour party set up when it was in government, has been to modernise health and safety legislation, replacing prescriptive regulations with modern target-setting regulations and approved codes of practice. They are doing that in the mining industry, yet Opposition Members attack the Health and Safety Commission for doing precisely what the Labour Government set it up to achieve.

Mr. Dobson: Does the Minister understand that we are not talking about bureaucratic neatness? Procedures that might be successful on the surface in other industries and have been spread, rightly, by the Health and Safety Executive and people involved in safety are welcome. However, as somebody who claims to be a Conservative, the Minister ought to be able to see some merit in leaving alone a system that is the safest in the world. Why does he want to change it?

Mr. Forsyth: Because the Health and Safety Commission, a tripartite body set up by a Labour Government, has recommended that, in its view, it is necessary to make changes in order to improve safety in the mines. It would be an irresponsible Minister who ignored that and it is an irresponsible Opposition who seek to frustrate that process.

The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras talks about practicalities. What will the regulations do? MASHAM—the management and administration of safety and health at mines—will require each mine to have a management structure that is suitable for its circumstances, and the circumstances vary between mines. The previous legislation, so beloved of the hon. Gentleman, did not even require mines to have a developed management structure. A mine must have sufficient properly qualified and competent managers and every one of them must give precedence to health, safety and welfare over all other duties. How can the hon. Gentleman be against that?

The hon. Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill) was quick to say to the newspapers at the end of August that there is a conflict between productivity and safety. Does he not realise that an efficient mine is a safe mine and that safety demands efficiency in production? Does he not realise that MASHAM integrates responsibility for production and safety at every level far more securely than ever before?

Mr. Martin O'Neill (Clackmannan): Is not the Minister aware that in countries where regulations of that character are in operation safety levels are much lower than in the United Kingdom and accident levels are much higher? Why change something that is seen to be working effectively? Why give instructions to the HSE to come up with regulations that may be internationally compatible, but which do not necessarily provide us with any greater safety than at present?

Mr. Forsyth: I am not aware of any such instructions. The hon. Gentleman should know that the Health and Safety Executive began in 1983 the process of modernising the health and safety legislation for mines. The hon. Gentleman has not answered the point, which is that everyone involved in the management of mines under these regulations will have a specific duty for safety. MASHAM strengthens the requirements for thorough supervision of everyone in all areas of the mine below ground.

The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras mentioned that there are more accidents away from the coal face than at the coal face. He was right. For the first time, these regulations require fully adequate arrangements to be made for the supervision of workers away from the coal face where those accidents occur. I listened in disbelief as the hon. Gentleman sought to argue against them. The regulations require all parts of the mine below ground to be divided into suitable clearly defined districts of a size that allows adequate inspection. MASHAM allows the functions of supervision and inspection to be carried out by the same person or by different people and——

Mr. Dobson: Exactly.

Mr. Forsyth: The hon. Gentleman seems to suggest that allowing supervision and inspection to be carried out by different people is a bad thing. There may be good reasons to prevent one person from performing both roles if it means leaving workers unsupervised while carrying out statutory inspection duties. Is the hon. Gentleman honestly saying that it is safer to allow a situation where someone may be off supervising and is, therefore, not available for inspection? Of course it is not. Common sense demands that there should be flexibility and that is what the regulations provide.

Mr. Illsley: The Minister seems to have missed the fact that in the role of deputy, supervision and inspection are combined. A deputy has the right and, in some cases, the statutory duty to stop a mine if safety is threatened. If supervision and inspection are separated—we will see a situation in which an inspector is subservient to a supervisor—the supervisor will be paid on a production bonus and it will not be in that supervisor's interest to stop production in the mine if safety is threatened, despite the representations of the inspector. That is the key issue in all these regulations. It is not the districts and the deputies, but the role of the deputy in safety and the statutory obligation placed on him, which the regulations would remove.

Mr. Forsyth: The hon. Gentleman sounds as if he believes that a deputy is not responsible to the management. What the hon. Gentleman does not take on board, and where the flaw in his argument lies, is the distinction between the duties of the inspector and those of the supervisor. Under the regulations, the supervisor will be under a duty to ensure that the paramount priority is health and safety in the mines.

Mr. Illsley: It is all to do with production.

Mr. Forsyth: The hon. Gentleman shouts from a sedentary position that it is to do with production, but the

regulations make it a requirement for all management to make health and safety its foremost priority. That is where the hon. Gentleman's argument falls to pieces.

Mr. Illsley: Is the Minister aware that in 1988-89 the Select Committee on Energy considered the MASHAM regulations in a report on mining safety? A document, issued by British Coal, entitled "The Management of New Mines Working Party", refers to the separation of production and supervision. The working party was worried that it would not be able to get people to be district managers under the MASHAM regulations because they would be required to have a deputy's ticket. It stated:

"This might counter some of the benefits of separating safety and production."

One man will therefore be responsible for production and one man for inspection, and inspection will be subservient to production.

Mr. Forsyth: The hon. Gentleman is merely repeating the same points. What he should recognise is that the regulations make everyone involved in production in the mine responsible for health and safety. The regulations do not preclude one man or woman being responsible for both functions.

The hon. Gentleman did not deal with my key point, which is that there may be very good reasons against one person performing both roles—for example, if that means leaving workers unsupervised. Surely he does not believe that such practice is sensible and should be required by statute. The key point is that both functions should be carried out by suitably qualified and competent people. Those responsible for inspection and supervision in a coal mine must hold the minimum qualification of a deputy.

I was reeling off the list of positive benefits of the MASHAM regulations, which the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras did not recognise. They improve provisions for the installation and maintenance of plant and equipment. They require managers to ensure that all plant and equipment is safely installed and commissioned. They strengthen the requirements for qualified——

Mr. Barron: The regulations always did that.

Mr. Forsyth: The hon. Gentleman may say that, but we have had to have exemptions from the existing regulations in order to allow new equipment to come into the collieries.

The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras scoffs at the changes, but it seems to me that regulations that strengthen the requirement for qualified first-aiders—as these do—should be welcomed and not rubbished as they have been. The regulations double the ratio of first-aiders to employees underground.

The hon. Gentleman is always going on about contractors. Why did he miss out the fact that, to enable the mine manager to carry out his statutory duties, these regulations will, for the first time, require contractors to co-operate with him and comply with his instructions?

The regulations are an opportunity to ensure that those who work in mines benefit from a modern, target-setting health and safety system, which other industries have enjoyed during recent years. Those who wish to overturn the regulations seek to prevent the change which would result in miners being more safe and secure, and managers more accountable for safety. They seek to lock the industry into a 1950s time warp. I commend the regulations to the House.

4.39 pm

Sir Harold Walker (Doncaster, Central): The regulations have their roots in the Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act 1974, which, as one who shared the responsibility of taking it through the House, I remember well. Any pride that I had in announcing what I thought and still think is, on the whole, a dramatic leap forward in the provision of health and safety in mines has been severely dented by our proceedings today. The Act was passed on a consensual basis, but not without a great deal of controversy between Government Departments. One of the controversies that dominated the proceedings was precisely the issue that we are discussing today—the procedure that is being used.

There are two matters before the House: the technical merits of the proposals and the way in which the House handles those proposals. I do not pretend to be sufficiently competent to comment on the technical merits—I shall leave that to other more experienced hon. Friends. However, significant numbers of people in my constituency who have had experience of the coal mining industry at all levels have expressed concern about the harmful effects of the regulations once they are implemented.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer) was one of the participants in the debates in 1974. He rightly recalled the way in which on Second Reading and in Committee my right hon. Friend the then Secretary of State for Employment, Michael Foot, said that he had received representations from all the mining unions about the way in which the Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act might empower the body that was being set up to act in a manner that would weaken the prevailing health and safety standards.

To convey the flavour of the debate in Committee, I shall refer to the former Member for Hamilton, Alex Wilson, whom many of us will recall with affection and respect and who later became my Parliamentary Private Secretary. On behalf of the National Union of Mineworkers, he was persistent in expressing its anxiety that the powers that we were giving to the Health and Safety Commission to make regulations might be exercised in the way it seems to be exercised this afternoon —marking a regression from the prevailing standards, especially those embodied in the Mines and Quarries Act 1954. I can remember replying to him in Committee on 30 April 1974. I said:

"I turn now to the basic point that I understand my hon. Friend to make, namely that while he accepts that the Bill is a good thing for all other industries, somehow it should not be applied to the coal mining industry because it might lead to a regression from the high standards which he thinks have been achieved."

I went on to say that there would be change

"only after the fullest consultation when my hon. Friend's trade union sees and accepts in the course of the consultation ways and means of improving and strengthening the present provisions in a way which will satisfy both my hon. Friend and myself, and in a way that I should expect to see the industry proceed."

Later at that sitting, I quoted from the letter that Michael Foot sent to the NUM seeking to assuage the anxieties that it had expressed. He wrote to give assurances

"on two matters which you regard as being of crucial importance. The first of these concerns the statutory standards of protection for mineworkers which are at present laid down in the Mines and Quarries Acts, and in their supporting regulations. As I explained, the Bill repeals none of this legislation. All of the present statutory standards will remain in force until replaced by equally or more effective provisions, which would be made under the wide regulation-making power contained in the Bill. The object of any such revised provisions would be to seek improvements —which indeed is the object of the Bill as a whole."

[Sir Harold Walker]

The letter continued:

"All regulations under the new Act will be laid before Parliament by the Secretary of State in the usual way."

My right hon. Friend meant in the usual way that had applied up to the present time. "The usual way" is now rather different.

The Bill had the support of all parties in the House. It had been prepared by the former Secretary of State and we inherited it and made some minor changes that the previous Secretary of State accepted. The Opposition at that time was led by Lord Whitelaw, then the hon. Member for Penrith and The Border. On behalf of the Conservative party, he said:

"I want to see whether I can do something to allay the anxieties of the hon. Member for Hamilton".

He went on to say that, when he was the Minister in a previous Government, he

"heard all the representations then made by the National Union of Mineworkers. Like the Under-Secretary, I believe that these fears are—perhaps groundless is the wrong word—but I believe that they will be found in the long run to be ill founded . . . The hon. Member for Hamilton made another remark on which I hope I can give him some reassurance, if any words of mine can do that. He suggested that if this proposal in the Bill went through as it stood, there might at some time in the future be a Government—presumably he was thinking of a Conservative Government—who through this Bill might make an attack on the safety provisions in the mining industry."

My hon. Friends and I fear that that moment has arrived. The attack about which the Lord Whitelaw sought to give assurance is occurring today. Lord Whitelaw continued:

"I wish to give the hon. Member assurance, as one who has in the past had considerable interest in safety, health and welfare, from the time of the Offices, Shops and Railway Premises Bill, that these matters have always been regarded entirely as non-political. They certainly would be in the future. I can only give the hon. Gentleman the assurance that I certainly would be no party to doing anything which would in any way undermine the exceptionally good work of the mines inspectorate, the way in which the inspectorate has sought to do their best in the mining industry, and equally the strong support—which has been very important—which they received from the National Union of Mineworkers."—*[Official Report, Standing Committee A,* 30 April 1974; c. 7-10.]

My hon. Friend the Member for Bradford, South will recall the manner in which that comment was welcomed as an assurance from the Government that we would proceed in such matters only with full support from those who work in the industry.

The Committee went on to establish assurances in a more specific and formal manner and, because of the debates that we had and the anxieties that were expressed, we wrote into section 1 of the 1974 Act that

"the regulations, orders and other instruments in force under those enactments"—

were to be—

"progressively replaced by a system of regulations and approved codes of practice operating in combination with the other provisions of this Part and designed to maintain or improve the standards of health, safety and welfare established by or under those enactments."

That was not a piece of parliamentary embroidery. Those words were deliberately chosen to reflect the views of the Government of the day and were fully supported by every party in the House—the changes would be only those that would maintain or improve prevailing safety conditions.

The Minister may say that the proposals meet precisely that desire, but that is in conflict with all the views that have been expressed by people who—unlike the hon. Gentleman and I—work or have worked in the coal industry. Interventions have come from the coalfields of Hendon; I prefer to speak from the coalfields of Yorkshire. I have not been a coal miner, but I am prepared to listen to those who are or have been miners. I only wish that the Government would do so. The Minister says that the Health and Safety Commission has produced the proposals, but my understanding is that the trade union representatives on the Health and Safety Commission have the gravest reservations.

I feel somewhat personally tarnished in the light of the work that I put into health and safety legislation and the assurances and commitments that we gave with the full support of the House. I am sure that Lord Whitelaw, if he has the opportunity to read our proceedings, will feel equally sad that there has been a resiling from the commitments that all of us gave. Today we face a prostitution of the powers that are contained in the 1974 Act. My hon. Friends and I are worried that the proposals are merely paving the path to privatisation.

I should have thought that the experience of Bilsthorpe would give the Minister cause to delay the proposals. I ask him to withdraw the regulations and to consult those whose jobs and livelihoods in the industry and whose families' well-being are at stake. The Minister should consult them and, if they share his view, we may take a different attitude. I very much doubt whether he will get support for the views which he has presented to the House today. I hope that he will take the regulations away and think again.

4.49 pm

Mr. Richard Alexander (Newark): The House will have listened to the right hon. Member for Doncaster, Central (Sir H. Walker) with great interest. He commands great respect in the House, although the conclusions of Conservative Members may differ from his. I apologise for the fact that I have a Select Committee meeting running at the present time. With the leave of the House, I hope to join the meeting shortly after I sit down. I hope that my apparent discourtesy will be understood.

I sometimes do not know who advises Ministers and Departments about their public relations and their presentation of policy. As a Government, we should have the best, rather than the worst, presentation. If there is anyone out there who is supposed to be like a bird sitting on the Minister's shoulder and telling him the best time at which and the best way in which to present policy, there must have been some dereliction of duty in this case.

The House rose on 27 July after one of the most difficult ever public relations presentations in the coal mining industry when, as we all know, 31 pits had been proposed for closure the previous October. The day after the House rose, the regulations were made and just over a week later they were presented to the House when Parliament had gone to the seaside for its summer break.

I tell the House and my hon. Friend the Minister, if he does not already know, that there are people outside who doubt the Government's commitment to a thriving and profitable coal industry. As my hon. Friend will know, the young bride said to her husband the day following her wedding, "Jock, I didnae ken." He replied, "Well, Maggie, you ken noo." I say to my hon. Friend, "Michael, you ken noo."

I accept that, as my hon. Friend will agree, the regulations are part of a general review of mines and quarries regulations which was put in hand by the Health

and Safety Commission some years ago. There was no reason in common sense or in common humanity why the regulations could not have been laid before the House a week before it rose for the recess or a week after it returned. As it was, the worst possible interpretation was put on the timing by those outside who took an interest in the matter. I am anxious to hear my hon. Friend's explanation.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I have no bird sitting on my shoulder that I can blame. The regulations were not laid earlier because there was a change of ministerial responsibilities and, before I agreed to lay the regulations, I insisted that I had undertakings from the Health and Safety Commission that it would maintain and improve safety in mines. As a result of the delay arising from my insistence, it was not possible to lay the regulations until the end of the Session.

My hon. Friend asked why we did not wait until now to lay the regulations. It was the view of the Health and Safety Commission that the regulations should be in force by 1 October. I felt obliged, given the commission's view that the regulations were important from the point of view of safety, to act accordingly. I appreciate that that has caused criticism and difficulty. However, we expect people in mines to make safety their paramount consideration. The same should apply to Ministers.

Mr. Alexander: I am obliged to my hon. Friend for his explanation.

There is a further difficulty. The Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments, on which I serve under the excellent chairmanship of the hon. Member for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer), who is in his place waiting to make his contribution, has had no opportunity because of the timing to consider the regulations. We do not consider regulations on their merits; we consider whether they are intra vires of the parent statute or whether there are unusual uses of powers. It would have been helpful if the Committee could have had that opportunity. I do not wish to make the speech of the hon. Member for Bradford, South. He is the Chairman of the Committee and I shall let him elaborate on that point. Despite my hon. Friend's explanation, I think that, on a subject as emotional as mining safety, there was a little left to be desired in terms of timing and presentation.

Worse was to come. A couple of weeks after the regulations were laid, the Bilsthorpe colliery disaster occurred. It took place a couple of miles from my constituency boundary and that is why I have a particular interest in it. I see one or two hon. Members from neighbouring constituencies in their places today. It was one of the worst recent mining disasters and its reverberations are still being felt in north Nottinghamshire and beyond.

I believe that the regulations, which will require full supervision of everyone everywhere in the mines below ground, are beneficial. However, there is still deep uncertainty, and we had discussions about it this afternoon, about precisely what happened at Bilsthorpe and why. I suggest that it was unwise to plough on at that time with regulations that amend the regulations on safety and health in the mines without Parliament being able to debate them. That is my main point.

As the House can imagine and as happened today, the Government's political opponents, especially at local level, made big capital out of the fears that existed. Today, they made similarly heavy weather of the regulations. I make no criticism of that because as the Opposition it is their right and it is proper that they should do so even if, as I said in response to the right hon. Member for Doncaster, Central, we may reach somewhat different conclusions on this side of the House.

Having criticised the timing of the regulations, I must say that I do not think that they are as harmful as has been suggested this afternoon. I listened to the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson). Although he said much, he did not really discuss the regulations themselves. I have listened carefully to the whole debate and I believe that that is a flaw in the Opposition's arguments so far.

Mr. Clapham: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that absolute duties, as a deputy had under the Mines and Quarries Act 1954, are stronger than the duties that arise under the new package, which are far less specific and are general? As a result of the strong and absolute duties under the 1954 Act, the deputy, with his combination of responsibilities for safety and supervision, was able to ensure that British pits were the safest in the world.

Mr. Alexander: I understand what the hon. Gentleman is saying. I was just going to come to that precise point. I accept that he is an expert in the industry. My reading of the regulations is that each mine must have a management structure with suitably qualified people who will give precedence to health, safety and welfare above all other duties. That must be a step forward and not a step back, despite what the hon. Gentleman says.

We have two large codes of practice. They are not flimsy documents; they are detailed and the duties are specific on safety, health and first aid—*[Interruption.]* Opposition Members may scoff. As I said, they are entitled to make the worst of these matters. Conservative Members are equally entitled to be positive about the proposals.

The lack of reduction of the powers of intervention by the inspector of mines is important. There is no diminution of his powers. He will continue to have all the powers originally given to him, or them, by the Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act. That is where I would have disagreed with the right hon. Member for Doncaster, Central.

Mr. Cryer: Is not it true that, in the statutory instrument, the obligation on people to carry out statutory duties is qualified by the phrase, "so far as is practicable"? Does not that phrase have a legal definition in court actions for compensation, to the effect that an employer or owner who says that the cost is too high is justified in not applying those safety standards? Therefore, is not that a reduction in the standard from the absolute duty that care shall be provided?

Mr. Alexander: I understand what the hon. Gentleman says, but I do not reach that conclusion when I read elsewhere in the regulations that there must be present everywhere and at all times someone suitably qualified whose paramount duty is to ensure that safety is the first consideration.

Mr. Illsley: The hon. Gentleman might not be aware that at present any district underground must have a suitably trained person—in this case a deputy—who is capable of and trained in taking readings for levels of gas. Under the regulations, it will be apparent that whole districts will be without a trained person in charge who is capable of and trained in taking readings for gas.

Mr. Alexander: I was not aware of that. I am still not sure that will be the case, but that will be for the Minister to argue. I cannot deal precisely with that point.

Having read the regulations, and despite my criticism of the timing, I do not see that they represent a diminution in standards of safety in mines. If I thought that they did—I hope that the Opposition will give me credit for this in view of my interest in the coal mining industry—I would not not vote for them at any price. I am not a party hack. I am a party man, but I am also a man who looks after his constituents, who, in this case, are those in the mining communities of north Nottinghamshire.

My concern has been with timing and the method of introduction, which, like so much that has happened to the coal mining industry in the past year, has left much to be desired. I wish that the Government could have found a more sensible way of introducing the regulations, and had been a little more sensitive about their timing.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. In the two hours available for the rest of the debate, no fewer than nine hon. Members, including Front Benchers, hope to catch my eye. If hon. Members co-operate by making short speeches, all hon. Members might be successful.

5.2 pm

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): I shall endeavour to be brief.

The hon. Member for Newark (Mr. Alexander) addressed the issue of timing. I hope that he will accept that timing is extremely important and that it is not only a matter of cynicism; it is a matter of mismanagement and incompetence, although it could be interpreted as cynicism. Two particular points of timing will not be lost even on people with no real connection with the mining industry: first, major changes in working practices underground were published the week after the House rose for the summer recess and were implemented before we had an opportunity to debate them; and, secondly, in the Queen's Speech next month the Government will introduce measures for the privatisation of the coal industry. Those factors will not be lost on anyone. What is the prime motivation for those changes? Can we be absolutely sure that it is simply a totally objective and right moment to introduce new working practices that affect the operation of mines? I will not follow the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson), who expressed his view on that in his inimitable style. The Minister cannot be surprised that people make deductions from that coincidence of timing.

Another matter of some concern is that, within the same period, we had the Bilsthorpe colliery disaster. As one who is not as well informed or as closely involved as other hon. Members, I felt that the safety inspectors were remarkably quick to deduce that the bolting mechanism was not the source of the problem. I do not question their integrity and am not in any position to comment on them, but the speed with which they made their statement demonstrated one thing clearly to me, if I had not known it already: there clearly is great concern about the practice among the people who work underground. That concern cannot lightly be put aside. It is not right to introduce measures in which mineworkers—who are supposed to be protected by them—do not have confidence. That is a matter of extreme importance and it is one that we should take on board.

The specific point as I understand it—perhaps the key point—is the role of the deputy manager in determining the safe operation of the pit and his authority to stop the process if he believes that that is justified. First, it is apparent that deputy managers spend more of their time underground. Secondly, they are specifically charged with safety as their prime consideration.

Under the new regulations, it seems to me that the only person with authority to stop the process is the manager of the pit, who, in most cases, will not be underground. The only responsibility that any other operative has is to report a breach of safety if that occurs. One needs a much quicker line of response. That point—I am sorry that the Minister is not listening—seems to be an inherent sign of a change for the worse. Under the new regulations, the ability to halt the process because of a safety risk has been removed further from the process than was the case under the old regulations. I should like the Minister to answer that point at the end of the debate. Unless he can satisfy me that that is not the case, that example will be a clear indication of new regulations weakening existing safety standards.

I should have thought that it might be appropriate, if one were interested in strengthening regulations, to say that, at all times, there must be someone underground who has the authority to override the process for safety considerations. That would be an improvement on existing regulations.

Mr. Etherington: The hon. Gentleman raises an interesting point. I, too, shall be interested to hear what the Minister has to say.

Like many people, I spent 21 years working underground on the coal face. I was a fitter. Under the 1954 regulations, I had the power—under section 81 of the Mines and Quarries Act, which talks about machinery being free of patent defect—to stop any machinery that I did not think was operating properly. The hon. Gentleman is quite right: I would no longer have that power. At the time that I was working, the colliery manager could not override my decision, nor could the chairman of the British Coal Board at Hobart house, because I was carrying out my duties under the statute that was laid down in the House. If I were a fitter now and worked on the coal face, I would no longer have that power and could be overruled.

Mr. Bruce: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for reinforcing a point from a period of specific personal knowledge.

I should like to take up a point that the Minister made. The point is not entirely surprising but is questionable. Let us keep the National Association of Colliery Overmen, Deputies and Shotfirers—NACODS—and the National Union of Mineworkers out of it, just to make it less sensitive. The Minister seemed to imply that NACODS' reservations about the regulations were entirely to do with its concern about its membership and its role as a trade union. That is unworthy of him. I do not think that it is right to suggest that a trade union with that degree of specialism is not capable of being persuaded—and needs to be persuaded if the new regulations are to work.

Even if the regulations are good in law, principle and practice, if the people who are to operate and benefit from them have no confidence in them, their morale will be adversely affected. No Minister should be satisfied with

that as a way to advance safety and working in the mines. The Minister accuses the trade unions of being motivated only by the recruitment and retention of members. That invites the counter-argument that managers are, by definition, concerned only with production and profitability, which also gives rise to the possibility of compromise and conflict of interest.

It is essential that we strike the right balance in safety matters. Certainly, we want to allow people to run viable and profitable pits, but we want those pits to be run so that the safety of those who are expected to do the work at the most dangerous end of the job is not compromised. That is the responsibility of the Minister and it is the responsibility of the Health and Safety Commission and the Health and Safety Executive, and it does not seem to me that they have achieved the degree of consensus that would justify the claim that this is the right time at which to introduce the present regulations.

I should like to draw attention to one or two good points in the regulations. In particular, it is essential that a pit manager should be allowed to manage only one pit, and it is good that that has been written into the provisions. It is important, too, that the pit manager should have the right to challenge the pit owner in the interests of safety. I have a slight reservation about that provision, however, because it is possible for the pit owner also to be the pit manager. Who would provide the element of intervention in such circumstances?

The Minister reminded us that the original regulations date back to 1908; that regulations have been introduced in the intervening period, in 1947 and 1974; and that we are talking about a process of continuous change. I do not think that any hon. Member is frightened of change or believes that all the regulations are wholly unacceptable and that there is not a case for modernising and updating the procedures. I hope that the Minister will recognise, however, that there are one or two factors that suggest that the regulations would weaken safety rather than strengthen it, which is crucial, and that his timing is extremely suspect. The Minister cannot proceed simply on the ground that he has a majority in the House and disregard the damaging effect of introducing safety regulations that do not have the confidence of those working in the industry. So far, he has failed to secure that confidence, and I urge him not to force the provisions through until he has won the industry over.

5.11 pm

Mr. Michael Alison (Selby): Many of those who are laymen when it comes to the technicalities of these complicated and important matters—that includes most people who will be following the debate as well as many taking part in it—will feel that my hon. Friend the Minister made a fair point when he said that the origin or provenance of the regulations was an expert body with an absolutely impeccable reputation and pedigree—the Health and Safety Commission and its Executive. I am glad, too, that my hon. Friend emphasised that the consideration of possible beneficial changes in mine safety regulations goes back a long way.

My hon. Friend reasonably suggested that, given the list of contributing members, the proposition that the Health and Safety Executive or Commission could in some way have been beguiled, infiltrated or corrupted by the influence of Ministers and Tory policy fades into nonentity the moment it is made. The Health and Safety Commission would have faced many resignations and would never have been able to present serious proposals to the Minister or the House if there were any sense in which it was the kept woman of a Tory Government or a Tory Cabinet. It was manifestly doing its own job in an effective and serious-minded way and, although these are highly controversial and delicate matters, it has produced the specific and agreed recommendations and ideas that we are debating today. My hon. Friend was more than reasonable in emphasising that.

I have listened with great interest to the debate, and with even greater interest to the right hon. Member for Doncaster, Central (Sir H. Walker)—at whose feet I have sat in Committee and with whom I have debated—and, in doing so, have picked up nuances and detailed ideas about and insights into industry that I could have picked up nowhere else. It seems to me—again, as a layman—that the Opposition are perhaps trying to prove too much by suggesting that everything that is in place now has the quality of the law of the Medes and the Persians and should not be interfered with, touched, modified or improved in any way. Opposition Members swing from that proposition—which is not a convincing one—to the proposition that everything that we are considering today is poison in every root and branch. Both propositions are unacceptable.

Safety regulations have to be changed, improved and modernised—following a lengthy period of consideration, consultation, submission and debate—as part of the evolution and modernisation of any industry. I am thinking in particular of the railways and of the air transport industry, in which changes have had to be made to take account of considerations of passenger time and of new machinery and processes.

I remember some of the features of the old safety regulations in the days when steam operated on the railways. With the fundamental changes in the mechanical processes by which the railways operate, all that has had to go. Similarly, today's pits are unrecognisable. I speak with some experience of the machinery used and the activities that take place in the Selby complex of mines. It seems eminently reasonable to me that there should be some attempt to move with the times and that safety procedures should be updated by a serious professional body such as the HSE and its Commission. I commend my hon. Friend the Minister for placing so much emphasis on the origin and provenance of the regulations.

My hon. Friend will understand, however, that changes can give rise to anxiety, especially among ordinary rank-and-file miners and individuals engaged in coal mining, although not necessarily at the coal face—especially given that they are bombarded with allegations of nefarious intent or distorted purpose, which, for people engaged in the day-to-day activities at the coal face, can be disturbing and unnerving.

I have received detailed representations from a number of my constituents who work in or near the Selby complex of mines. I hope that my hon. Friend will find time to address himself once more to the delicate subject of the possibility, at least, of a division of responsibility. I want to quote from a quite articulate letter from a NACODS official in my constituency:

"We also fail to see where the Health and Safety Executive"—

[Mr. Michael Alison]

the official at least gives credit to where the idea originated—

"have improved or bettered existing legislation by splitting the dual duties of pit inspection from supervision, which today are undertaken by the single pit deputy, replacing this with, first, a person doing inspections and, secondly, a command supervisor."

The official goes on to make this trenchant and important point:

"By doing this, they are confusing who has total and absolute control should an emergency occur."

I should like my hon. Friend to address himself to what would happen in the very rare and extremely undesirable event of a real underground emergency. We all know that different voices giving different orders from different quarters can be desperately hazardous and can result in a failure to move whatever action is necessary at that moment in a precisely defined and necessarily correct direction.

I know that my hon. Friend will be able to reassure me to some extent by referring to the fact that the regulations allow the functions of supervision and inspection to be carried out by the same person or by different people; they introduce the dual option. It is clearly most important that that function, whether dual or in a single hand, should be carried out by qualified and competent people. Will my hon. Friend assure me that full thought has been given to the hazard that might arise, especially in an emergency, if the option for a dual hat between supervision and inspection applies in a pit?

A constituent goes so far to reinforce the idea of the single deputy as to point out that, at present, an identified person, a named individual, has immediate charge of men and operations and concern consequently arises over any step in the direction of less identity, more diffuse responsibility and less capacity to be able to pinpoint the person who carries the can.

I know that my hon. Friend the Minister is an expert in this area and that he will have been briefed adequately by the Health and Safety Executive. It must have had good reason for giving the option of abandoning the single mandate and moving to the possible option of locating responsibility for supervision and inspection under different heads. If he can reassure us on that point and refer back to the considered view of the executive and why it is confident that it is for the best, I and my constituents who have made representations to me would be much reassured and would believe that the regulations stand a better chance of gaining acceptance and confidence in the mining industry.

5.20 pm

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): The right hon. Member for Selby (Mr. Alison) has done the House a service because his question to the Minister provided reason for the Minister's apology. The National Association of Colliery Overmen, Deputies and Shotfirers certainly should receive an apology from the Minister for his unworthy comments. The association's objection stemmed from the point that the right hon. Member for Selby put to the Minister. I look forward to hearing the Minister's explanation because during the months of consultation that very point has been at the heart of NACODS' rejection of the proposals.

There are few pits now and there may be fewer still in a few months' time, but there will still be pits and there will be new ones and unmothballed ones when it is recognised that what has been done was foolish and that we should not lock away an important and fortunate national resource.

The regulations are designed for the time when pits have been privatised. Their purpose is to make the industry more appropriate for privatisation by weakening existing legislation, which is why NACODS and most people who have an interest in the industry oppose them. The safety priority is being weakened. Yes, a manager will have to run a pit effectively and safely, but the Minister did not point out the qualification

"so far as is practicable",

and that will cover an enormous amount.

The same attitude is not evident among Tories as when Winston Churchill spoke about the need for statutory qualified underground officials. The regulations provide for supervisors, who, as the right hon. Member for Selby pointed out, will not have the traditional statutory powers that have saved untold numbers of lives in pits since the law was made.

Representatives of the South African mining industry are visiting London today; indeed, one of them has been in this building. They are here to look at our safety arrangements for mines because they recognise the need to promote mine safety in their country. What are they to take back with them—the practices and regulations that hitherto applied, or this wretched, shabby lot that we are debating today? I know what advice any responsible person would give them, and I hope that it is the advice that NACODS is giving.

A few years ago it was suggested that colliery deputies should be fully included in the management structure of the coal industry, solely oriented within the production system. NACODS quite properly said that its obligations to safety meant that it could not accept that other function because safety had to be paramount. Of course there must be regard for production, and underground officials played a significant part in the immense achievement of increasing productivity by 36 per cent. in the last year. They did so on the understanding that precedents for safety would remain and that safety would continue to be their prime duty. That duty is weakened by the regulations and it is unwise and wrong for the overriding priority for safety in the mining industry to be removed, as it will be when the underground supervisor will have to report a hazard rather than respond to it.

The regulations are not only defective in character but, as the Minister confessed, have been furtively introduced. Interestingly, they are statutory instrument No. 1987 and were laid with orders such as No. 1930 and No. 1950, suggesting quite a substantial delay, when they could have been introduced, despite the ministerial changes, before the House rose for the recess. It is sad that the matter should have been so delayed, but it shows the arrogance of office to which Shakespeare referred.

British Coal, too, deserves criticism. Those responsible at Hobart house showed their disdain for Parliament when they decided that the regulations should be implemented on 1 October—before the House resumed. I said in the House last Monday that British Coal had tried to deny my suggestion that it was contemptuous of Parliament in 1989. I still think that it was contemptuous of Parliament in 1989, but it has certainly been contemptuous of Parliament in 1993, and it may have been so with the approval and

admiration of the Minister because I do not believe that it would have decided to announce the implementation early in August if it had not first consulted the Department. British Coal and Ministers have revealed their contempt for Parliament and for history.

Hon. Members who represent the older coalfields—Durham, Wales, Scotland, Yorkshire, Lancashire and Northumberland—will be aware of the many traces of the past in their constituencies. There are memorials on which there are lists of names of hundreds of people who died in colliery catastrophes. There will be another list of names tonight—of hon. Members who either could not come into the Chamber to listen to a debate on matters of life and death, of hon. Members who popped in and out, or of hon. Members who allowed themselves to be beguiled into the Government Lobby.

The number of people who died in major tragedies was dwarfed by the number of men, and often children, who died in ones and twos in days when it was not even thought necessary to have inquests when people were killed down a pit. Reaction in the House and outside to those horrors led to the introduction of the regulations that are now being scrapped. The Minister fails to understand—I wish that his colleague, the Minister for Energy, was here—that the arguments that the Government are now advancing to defend their regulations were used in Parliament and outside to oppose the safety regulations 90 or 100 years ago.

I heard the Minister say on television the other day that there had been long periods of consultation about the regulations—consultation with the miners, British Coal and the Health and Safety Executive. It is true that the consultations lasted for some years, but no one appeared to advise the Minister that what he and his colleagues were doing was preposterous. The Minister and his colleagues have been saying that the arrangements under the order would be a vast improvement: there would not be one man with a statutory responsibility for safety—the colliery deputy—because everyone would have responsibility. That was the very argument used against the appointment of the deputy with a statutory obligation.

I wish that Ministers did not have such contempt for history. They are very good at accountancy, making money and beguiling the electorate with the assistance of a servile press which may not even report our argument tonight, but they do not understand the mining industry, which they are now embarrassing, or the country, which they are misruling.

Mr. Illsley: The Minister said that the regulations were being introduced because of inadequacies in the legislation. Is my hon. Friend aware of any such inadequacies?

Mr. Hardy: No, I am not, but I shall not detain the House for too long.

I have been a Member of Parliament for a long time. I have met some great people, many who may become great, many more who think that they will be great and some who think that they are great but are not. One man who was a considerable source of inspiration to me, although he never claimed to be great, and for whom I had enormous respect was my father, a colliery deputy. He was not an especially articulate man, but he was very honest. Being brought up in his home, I learnt certain values. I learnt why he was respected in our community. He was not a boss's man, but he was concerned about production and believed that a man should have a fair day's pay for a fair day's work. He was still popular because his men, of whom there were many in those days, knew that he was skilled in the ways of the mine and that he was honest and would not allow corners to be cut or their lives to be put at risk.

In the past, the role of the honest colliery deputy was important and, but for the shysters on the Government Benches who are giving away the mining industry, it would be important in the future.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. I am not sure whether I heard the hon. Gentleman correctly, but perhaps he would like to rephrase his comment.

Mr. Hardy: I should have thought that the word "shysters" as applied collectively to the current Administration was entirely appropriate. However, I do not wish to incur your disapproval in any way, Mr. Deputy Speaker, so if I can replace the word "shysters" with the words "this group of venal men", I am happy to do so. [HON. MEMBERS: "And women."] And women, although the former right hon. Member for Finchley has departed.

The serious point is that men such as my father saved many lives. They were able to do so because of their experience and knowledge of the pit and because of their statutory capacity. That capacity placed a considerable duty on their shoulders but that duty is to be taken away. Without the capacity to fulfil a statutory regulation, not even the most honest supervisor will be able to act to save lives.

The right hon. Member for Selby was right to ask about safety and responsibility. The arrangements will weaken the capacity which has served our industry well, which has made it safe and which has made it a model to which mining industries in other parts of the world can turn to ensure that they have safe arrangements.

The regulations are intended to assist privatisation and profit. *[Interruption.]* It is no good the Minister shaking his head because we know that the regulations are fitting the industry for the marketplace and the sale room. If that is not so, why did the Minister with responsibility for coal last Wednesday shelter behind the sub judice rule, which apparently does not apply today, and refuse to answer my request for a guarantee that a foreign company, which does not have a good safety record, would not be allowed to buy parts of the British mining industry?

One such company has received 1,474 citations from the American safety inspectorate regarding faults that it had not put right but of which it had been notified over seven or eight years. Are the Government going to allow companies with such records to take over our mining industry? If they do, those companies will do what they like and will shelter behind the phrase

"so far as is practicable"

which the Minister has provided for them.

Why did the Minister not explain what

"so far as is practicable"

meant? Does he acknowledge that having such words at the heart of the regulations compels us to ask questions? As I do not believe that the Minister is capable of answering our questions, I trust that I and my colleagues will be joined in the Division by many hon. Members from the smaller parties. I regret that hon. Members from Ulster are not present; they claim to be part of the United Kingdom, so I hope that none of them will join the Government in the

[Mr. Hardy]

Lobby tonight. If they have an obligation to the rest of the United Kingdom, they should join us. In addition to my colleagues and those in the smaller parties, I hope that the Conservatives who have a conscience and those with constituency obligations to the coalfields will join us because we are sure that our cause is right.

5.36 pm

Mr. Joseph Ashton (Bassetlaw): I am sure that hon. Members will not mind if I begin by sending the House's condolences to the wife of David Shelton, aged 31, who was a constituent of mine. He was killed in the Bilsthorpe disaster and lived in Blyth. The disaster has been mentioned many times, but I emphasise the fact that the inquiry was far from satisfactory and I hope that the demands for a further inquiry will be met.

The regulations, which affect safety standards, are clearly related to the privatisation of the industry. There is a strange parallel with the privatisation of prisons because both privatisations involve a strong safety element. Let us consider how the Government approached the privatisation of a part of the prison service. They let Group 4 take control of transferring prisoners to and from the courts. What happened? The people who took on that task did not know a great deal about the job and were spread over the front pages of the newspapers because of their lack of experience in handling prisoners. Indeed, for a while, they became a laughing stock.

The proposals to sell the pits offer a parallel. Private enterprise is to be put in charge of the pits, and the new owners will remove nearly all the safety regulations and run them for their own profit. The prisons were also softened up for privatisation.

The two industries are parallel in the sense that very few people have been in prison and very few have been down a coal mine. The Government, or the Department of Trade and Industry, have consistently reduced the number of prison officers and refused to listen to their good advice. There have been more prison riots, more disturbances and more problems because the Government refused to listen to the people who work at the pit face in the prisons; exactly the same will happen at the pit face down the mines. Very few people have ever been down a coal mine, including Members of Parliament, civil servants or those who live in the neighbourhood, and very few know about the safety standards. How many hon. Members realise what it is like to crawl 200 yds on one's hands and knees in a seam not much higher than a kitchen table, banging one's head every two yards, surrounded by nothing but thick dust and filth, with no light except that from the lamp on one's helmet, and a horrendous coal cutter four or five feet in diameter going at 2,000 revs a minute not two feet from one's hands or face, chopping off coal a tonne at a time?

Men have to work in those horrendous conditions, and all the public have ever seen of them is a film on television. I am a little critical of some of my hon. Friends, many of whom have said that they worked in the pit for 20 or 30 years. Over that time they seem to have become used to those conditions, not realising how revolting such conditions are to the average member of the public, and to the average workman in any other industry. I have never worked down the pit, but my father was a miner, and many years ago I found out that there are no toilets down a coal mine. Howe many people know that? The miners have to use a shovel for a chamberpot.

There is a saying in the pit that miners, to use biblical terms, "shit on a shovel." They use coal dust for their toilet paper, because there is nowhere to wash their hands. The Minister grins and laughs, and looks surprised. He does not know about that, yet he is the Minister introducing what purport to be health and safety regulations. What sort of health regulations can there be when there are no toilets down the coal mines, and nowhere for a man to wash his hands before he eats his sandwiches during his break? He simply has to throw what is on the shovel on to the outbye and let the roof fall in on it. He cannot wash until he gets to the surface and the pithead baths and showers, perhaps three hours later. That is what health and safety is about.

There are also pneumoconiosis and emphysema. The House resisted the idea of paying compensation, and I am sorry that the previous occupant of the Chair, Mr. Lofthouse, is no longer in the Chamber, because he did so much for miners' health in that connection. He devoted his life to that cause.

Everyone with relatives in the coal industry knows how many men are carried out of the pit to the hospital. In Bassetlaw we managed to get a new hospital simply because while I was taking a health Minister round the hospital to show him why we needed a new one a man was brought out of the pit on a stretcher covered in blood and filth and there was nowhere to treat him properly. That is what the mining industry is about.

Mining is about foul air, too. Murderers, rapists and bank robbers serving long sentences wreck prisons and smash up their showers and toilets in some kind of protest, and people say, "We must stop slopping out." There is no slopping out down the pit. Below people's feet in my constituency, in south Yorkshire and north Nottinghamshire, there are men fighting for their jobs, fighting for the right to work like animals, while prisoners rioting above the ground get far more attention than the miners have ever had.

Who will be in charge of implementing the safety regulations? The manager. What an excuse! There is not even a Judge Tumim, the prison inspector who mildly complains that at the Wolds the prisoners stay in bed until half-past 10 with the curtains drawn because the sun would get in their eyes and wake them up. He is the inspector of prisons, and I am glad that he is, but where is the inspector of mines? Where is the new inspector who will go round every coal mine and ask why there is nowhere for the men to wash their hands?

The conditions are primitive. We are arguing about technicalities instead of establishing the day-to-day decencies that exist in every other industry. One of my hon. Friends referred to what Winston Churchill said in 1932. That was before I was born, but my dad was in prison—sorry, I mean, down the mine—then. He probably would have been better off in prison than down the mine even in those days. Winston Churchill said that

"special circumstances existed to differentiate coalminers from . . . many other industries . . . Others have spoken of the heat of the mine, the danger of firedamp, of the cramped position, of the muscular exertion of the miner, at work in the galleries perhaps a mile under the ground. I select the single fact of deprivation of light. That alone is enough to justify Parliament in directing upon the industry of coalmining a specially severe scrutiny and introducing regulations of a different character from those elsewhere."

What has happened since 1932? The pits are deeper, hotter and more humid. Extraction rates have increased, and the heavy-duty machinery turns the coal out faster. Men are working more dangerous machinery in more cramped conditions, and they are working longer shifts. In longer shifts men get tired. We can increase the machinery; we can increase the productivity; we cannot increase human strength and endurance.

The National Union of Mineworkers has proved the dangers time after time. On 17 June last year a development worker employed by a private contracting firm was killed at the end of his shift because he was tired. On 10 March this year a washery plant manager was drawn between the drive wheels of a barrel washer. He had been working 12-hour shifts without a break for a significant period. On 19 March this year a service engineer was killed when he was hit by two runaway mine cars when he was walking out of the pit at the end of his shift. It is no coincidence that accidents occur when a substantial proportion of employees have worked for more than 48 hours that week—far longer than normal.

What sort of life will people living near the pits have when we have ultra-productivity and seven-day working? Every time a lorry backs up at a pit it sounds a klaxon horn, for safety reasons. Klaxon horns will be sounding all through Saturday night, and all through Sunday. What about people living within 100 yds of a pit? The people in charge will not bother about the heavy lorries, the pollution, the smoke and the dust.

Mr. Illsley: Is it not more likely that the Government will do away with the klaxon on the lorry?

Mr. Ashton: Many a true word is spoken in jest, but the klaxon is a necessary safety precaution, and people who live near the pits accept that. They put up with the noise from Monday to Thursday, although they sometimes complain that such work should not be done at night. People living in the neighbourhood of a pit put up with an enormous amount of inconvenience. They suffer because they know that their jobs are at stake, and that when the pit dies they will have no future left. That is why miners put up with those working conditions, for the sake of their kids and of their future.

When we privatise the prisons it seems that those involved can have whatever they like. When the Wolds opened people said what a wonderful prison it was because every prisoner would be able to have a clean pair of underpants every day. But we cannot find out how much that costs, who is making a profit and who is paying for it. Things are vastly different when it comes to selling off the pits.

Since privatisation began, and we have done away with so many rules and regulations, one thing has stood out a mile: Lloyd's, the insurance company, has damn near gone bust. For many years Lloyd's made a massive profit, but then we suddenly had ferries going down, with the bow doors being left open because the turnround time had been speeded up when the ferries were privatised. There was the King's Cross fire, because there was no time to consider the underground safety regulations. There are football disasters too, and disasters such as that on the Piper Alpha rig have brought Lloyd's to its knees.

There will be more disasters in the mines. Driven by the great push for more and more productivity, people will take short cuts, and the insurance companies will have to pay. There is no reason for safety standards to be changed now, and putting implementation into the hands of managers who are under pressure to deliver productivity is a recipe for disaster.

5.48 pm

Mr. Jack Thompson (Wansbeck): I am the first member of the mining profession to be called to speak in this debate. Although I hesitate to compete with some of my colleagues who intervened earlier and referred to their 20 years' and 21 years' experience of the industry, I can claim to have 37 years' experience of the industry, particularly on the engineering side on which I want to concentrate. That was my forte and discipline. I spent time as an electrician in the mines and then as an engineer. I had some responsibility for supervising some of my colleagues' contemporaries in the mines in which I worked.

The important issue in the debate relates to the changes to the Mines and Quarries Act 1954 as a result of the new regulations. I worked in the industry from 1944 and, even before the 1954 Act, the priority was safety. Acts of Parliament and regulations have primarily been concerned with safety. Safety was enshrined in the 1954 Act.

The new regulations change the fundamental principle, which has already been referred to, that a workman in a mine is responsible for his own safety. In certain circumstances, he could refuse to work in a part of the mine that he thought was unsafe. A miner who took that decision was never criticised and action was generally taken to improve the situation so that the workman felt confident.

The new regulations make significant changes. There are seven pages of changes to the 1954 Act and the regulations contain 25 other changes and four modifications. My hon. Friend the Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) referred specifically to the role of deputies. I will not follow that line, because my hon. Friend made an excellent presentation on behalf of the union members whom he represents. However, he referred to an aspect on which I want to concentrate because it is fundamental to the changes proposed by the regulations and is critical for the mines. That aspect relates to the interpretation in paragraph 2(1) which states:

"In these regulations, unless the context otherwise requires . . . 'maintained' with respect to plant and equipment means maintained in relation to any matter which it is reasonably foreseeable will adversely affect the health and safety of any person in an efficient state, in efficient working order and in good repair;"

The 1954 Act demanded that plant and equipment must be in an efficient state, in efficient working order and in good repair. That is a very important difference.

I want now to refer to my experience as an electrician in the mines, because it reflects the protection of the 1954 Act and what it did for me. At four o'clock one morning, a machine at a coal face for which I was responsible as an electrician was damaged. Its flexible cable contained a tear about 18in long—I cannot say what that is in metric terms. I believed that that tear was dangerous and that it could cause a serious accident, if not an explosion. I decided to remove the power from the machine and the cable was changed. The overman in charge of production and the under-manager on the shift were not very happy about that.

I left the mine at about 8 am and went home to bed to get some sleep. I received a message to return to the mine to have an interview with the manager. The pit manager happened to be a lay Methodist preacher. When I went to

[Mr. Jack Thompson]

his office, I saw before me a piece of paper which was my notice. I was being fired. Everything on the paper was filled in except the signature. As a young married man with two children, I found that rather frightening.

I sat down and the pit manager asked me for an explanation. I explained why I had done what I did. Happily, a very good engineer defended me. He said that I had complied with the 1954 Act specifically all the way down the line. He said that he would not support any proposition to have me fired. Eventually, the manager withdrew the piece of paper. It was obviously a threat. The important point was that the 1954 Act protected me on that occasion.

The expression

"so far as is practicable"

occurs in paragraphs 10, 11, 12 and 13 of the regulations. I believe that that phrase is open to misinterpretation and abuse. I should have thought that the people in British Coal, as they are the people in the industry, would consider that phrase very carefully.

However, many hon. Members have received a copy of a document from British Coal today entitled "The Management and Administration of Safety and Health at Mines Regulations 1993", which was issued for this debate. The section relating to the appointment of a manager states:

"In accordance with Regulation 9(3) of the 1993 Regulations you shall so far as is practicable:—"

and there are then subsections (a) to (d) which are followed by 4(a) to (g) and the rest which all refer to

"as far as is practicable."

That expression does not appear in the 1954 Act.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Will the hon. Gentleman tell us what section 157 of the 1954 Act does? Does not it provide a defence of impracticability in respect of many of the Act's provisions?

Mr. Thompson: I fully understand. I do not know how many hours the Minister has spent down a mine. It cannot be too many—if any. The difference between the 1954 Act and the current changes relates to the statutory responsibility of everyone in the mining industry from the manager to the young boy who has just joined the industry. That is what is important. Everything will now be discretionary. "As is practicable" can mean anything to anyone. If I were still an engineer in the industry, I should consider the phrase a defence, and I would manage to use it successfully.

Mr. Cryer: Is not the crucial underlying legal position that if someone is injured and goes to court to claim compensation the employer can use the defence that it was not practicable to do something because it was too costly? Behind the phrase

"so far as is practicable"

lies the justification of expenditure which will, in effect, provide an argument for the employer to say, "It was far too costly and I couldn't therefore afford it." Therefore, compensation need not be paid. This is a cost-cutting measure and that is the essential application of the phrase.

Mr. Thompson: I totally agree with my hon. Friend. Such situations will certainly arise. However, having worked in the industry, I am concerned about how the regulations apply in respect of ventilation, the safety of mining equipment and the mechanical and electrical side of the industry. How do they affect roof supports and a range of other issues involved in the industry?

There is a loophole which I am sure many people in British Coal will be concerned about at colliery management level. However, they may not be so concerned about it at Hobart house, because it depends what is going to happen when the mines are privatised.

I also regret the demise of the mining qualifications board. That body was highly respected in the industry. It set and applied high standards. It appears that the Health and Safety Executive has recently given itself power to approve qualifications instead of the board. I do not know what that move means in respect of the level of qualifications that will be demanded in any level of management in the industry. It seems that we are moving into an area in respect of which the House will have no opportunity to challenge what the HSE does. At the moment, we can mount such challenges through the Minister. In other words, that is a step backwards.

I am also concerned about the Coal and Other Mines (Mechanics and Electricians) Regulations 1965. Colleagues who lived by those previous regulations, as I did, will also be concerned that significant changes will apparently take place. Under the regulations, the mechanic or electrician in charge of a mine must have a certificate if there are more than 75 prime movers in that mine. I do not know what that will mean in the context of the new propositions. He must also be at least 25 years old. Again, I do not know what that will mean in the context of the new propositions.

After studying the changes, it is obvious that responsibility for safety and health in British mines has been shifted from the Government—the Department of Trade and Industry or the Department of Employment—to an executive organisation that is not answerable to Parliament. As my colleagues have mentioned, there is a lead-in for the Government's privatisation programme. I also envisage complex legal issues being raised because of the rather loose wording of the regulations. Of course, the only beneficiaries will be lawyers.

I am sure that hon. Members who travel frequently would not like to see any detrimental changes in the regulations governing the qualifications and standards of airline pilots or ships' captains. I do not want to see detrimental changes in the regulations governing coal mining. The regulations are detrimental and a step backward.

6 pm

Mr. Kevin Hughes (Doncaster, North): The Minister shakes his head when listening to hon. Members with many years' experience of underground mining. I worked underground for more than 20 years, and for 15 years on the coal face. I wonder whether the Minister would like to tell the House and the country how many years' experience he has had of health and safety underground. What does he know about working underground, save from reading a brief that somebody in his Department has put together for him? Has it struck him that no hon. Member has supported what he is doing? Only two Conservative Members have spoken about this matter, and both were critical. One said that in no circumstances would he support the regulations.

The other one was not quite sure; he wanted some assurances. Unfortunately, neither hon. Gentleman is present.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hughes: I will not give way. The Minister did not give way to me, so I will not give way to him.

The right hon. Member for Selby (Mr. Alison) seeks assurances. Let me remind him that several Conservative Members sought and were given assurances in March last year, when the Government brought forward a White Paper. We know what happened to those assurances. Undoubtedly, it will be exposed in tomorrow's debate on the coal industry.

The way in which the regulations were laid before Parliament is a total disgrace. The Government conveniently waited until the House was in recess and, on 6 August, presented this statutory instrument which effectively wipes out the Mines and Quarries Act 1954. That instrument came into force on 1 October, before the House resumed. It is clear that the Government had no intention of allowing debate on this very important matter. It is despicable that the Government should use such methods to repeal important mine safety regulations. It is typical of the Government's underhand approach that they should sneak through changes during the recess. That shows the Government's contempt for democracy and for Parliament and its procedures.

Together with last week's announcement about abolishing the 1908 legislation, we now have the deregulation of mine safety and the extension of working hours for our miners. That will be a recipe for disaster. Hon. Members must make no mistake about it; the regulations are being put in place for one reason only and that is to pave the way for privatisation. That will create in our mines conditions that turn back the clock more than 100 years.

Mr. Etherington: Like many Opposition Members, my hon. Friend has a keen interest in, and a great knowledge of, the history of legislation covering the coal mining industry. Does he accept that, in the past, it was always the miners and their supporters who eventually managed to obtain improvements in legislation and that this is the first ever coal mining legislation which does not have the support of miners and their supporters?

Mr. Hughes: I certainly concur with my hon. Friend. It is outrageous that such measures are being brought forward in this way. We have seen improvements, but, unfortunately, they have usually been brought about because of an accident or other serious occurrence underground. Many hon. Members have campaigned on issues relating to health and safety underground. The Government are intent on destroying the regulations that have protected miners for many years.

Deregulated mine safety and longer working hours will lead to more injuries and deaths underground in our coal mines. No longer will our miners have the protection of strict rules and regulations to defend them from an owner whose main motivation is cost saving and higher profits. No longer will they have the protection of the mine deputy, because that position will be systematically scrapped by the legislation. Instead, they will be at the behest of a manager, with only loose guidelines on health and safety, whose main motivation is higher profits.

The people who pay the price for this stupid legislation will be our miners and their families. In introducing this legislation, the Government have shown their total disregard for the safety of our mines and our mineworkers. We can be in no doubt about what coal industry the Government want—one that is fragmented, low cost and low on safety. It seems that the Government do not give tuppence for the men who risk their lives each and every day in our coal mines.

6.8 pm

Mr. Eric Illsley (Barnsley, Central): Like my colleagues, I shall speak against the mines administration package, not because we want to protect the deputies' union or any other union but because we regard the mines administration package as lowering safety standards in the mining industry. The Mines and Quarries Act 1954 is being replaced by a code of practice. We will have a code of practice which cannot be followed by the industry after the implementation of the regulations, whereas the 1954 Act placed statutory duties on the industry. For example, paragraph 96 of the code of practice on the management and administration of safety and health at mines states:

"All parts of a mine should be inspected".

The code of practice does not say that the mine shall or must be inspected—it simply states that it should be inspected. Therefore, if there is an accident, or if a roof falls in a mine that has not been inspected, the injured workmen cannot claim compensation because no statutory right is placed on the manager or the owner of the mine to inspect the whole of the colliery. The code of practice will cause real problems in the industry because there will not be statutory back-up.

The Minister said that the Health and Safety Commission had produced the new regulations and the code of practice because of inadequacies in the existing legislation. However, no one has mentioned any of those inadequacies, and I have not seen a list of the inadequacies which led the commission to produce the code of practice.

In 1988-89, the Select Committee on Energy—sadly, it is now defunct—produced a report on mine safety which included references to the mines administration package. We took evidence from the Health and Safety Executive and the Health and Safety Commission. No information was given to the Select Committee about any inadequacies in the 1954 Act or other legislation. Therefore, I am sceptical about the Minister's assertion that there is anything wrong with the 1954 Act.

This summer, we saw the tragic accident at Bilsthorpe, which used roof bolting. If the Minister looked at the Select Committee's report on mine safety in the 1988-89 Session, he would see the recommendation that we made about roof bolting. We pointed out that roof bolting was not the safest method of support in a mine and that the best form of support would be arched girders.

About a year ago, I attended a meeting with British Coal in the North Yorkshire area. We were treated to a discussion on roof bolting and given a big heavy document on its pros and cons. At that meeting, I was surprised when British Coal said that it realised that geological pressures in mines do not come down from on top but from the sides. It took British Coal only about 100 years to work that out,

[Mr. Eric Illsley]

but now it has the idea that it is okay to use roof bolts. The fact that roof bolting is a little cheaper is said to have nothing to do with it.

It is no surprise that the package has been introduced before a Bill to privatise the coal industry. We expect an announcement about such legislation in the Queen's Speech. When we look at all the measures relating to the coal industry that are before us at present, we see that the idea is simply to reduce safety standards, because safety costs money. It is fairly obvious that costs will be reduced before privatisation to make the coal industry a little more attractive to the private sector.

Safety regulations will be reduced as a result of repealing the 1908 Act, and the number of hours that a miner will be required to work underground will be increased to about 12. My hon. Friend the Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) referred to accidents occurring at the end of shifts. Safety regulations will be reduced, working hours will be increased and—this is the most important part of the mines administration package—the statutory role of the colliery deputy will be removed. It is simply a matter of deregulating the industry to sell it. The Government want to sell to private mine owners who do not want to spend money on implementing safety measures.

All that will be done against the backdrop of a falling market. It seems absolutely crazy to introduce a mines administration package today when we will debate tomorrow the crisis in the coal industry—the further pit closures that we face as a result of the increased use of gas-fired generation. Why do not we wait to see what will happen to the industry before we jiggle with safety aspects? Why do not we wait to see what will happen to the industry in the future?

People in the industry, especially the electricity supply industry, are looking at 10 to 12 years of gas-fired generation, followed by the need to import gas. People at National Power have told me that they will bolt a coal gasifier to the back of a coal-fired power station to use coal again within 20 to 30 years. Collieries will be closed and, in 20, 30 or 40 years, coal will be imported, which will be put through gas-fired turbines. It is an absolutely crazy situation.

The major issue, which I referred to earlier in an intervention, is the role of the colliery deputy and the responsibility for safety. At present, the deputy has a statutory duty and statutory responsibilities with regard to safety in the mine. If there is an accident underground, the deputy has the power to stop production. Earlier, my hon. Friend the Member for Wansbeck (Mr. Thompson) referred to a situation in which he had done just that.

The deputy has statutory protection. An important point is that if the deputy has stopped production after an accident or a dangerous occurrence, the mine owner cannot sack, criticise or attack him for sticking to mine operating procedures. The deputy has always had that power.

The deputy has first-aid qualifications, especially with regard to the proper and carefully controlled use of morphine and other drugs underground. However, that responsibility will be handed to untrained supervisors and inspectors. The statutory requirement will be removed from deputies and handed to people who almost certainly will not have the same level of expertise or training.

I have referred to the measuring of gas levels, the taking of dust recordings and so on. The Government will do away with the statutory duty that is placed on the deputy at present. That will divide production and safety. At present, the deputy is protected. In the future, the supervisor will probably be responsible for production and the inspector will be responsible for safety. There will be a clash when the inspector wants to stop the mine because of a safety matter and the supervisor wants to keep it going. It has not gone unnoticed that, in the midlands, supervisors will be paid production bonuses. The supervisor will want to keep the colliery going to ensure that the financial element is satisifed, whereas the inspector will not have that specific power. That is where the whole mines administration package is weakened.

Earlier, I referred to a document from the new mines working party. The document was put to the Select Committee on Energy in 1989 when the then director of technical operations, Mr. Moses—sadly, he is no longer with us—accused me of having a stolen document because of a specific paragraph in it. The document states:

"Possible sources for District Managers given the requirement for a Deputies ticket. This would tend to encourage the view that District Managers will have to have been safety inspectors."—this is the crucial sentence—

"This might counter some of the benefits of separating safety and production."

The working party expressed the view that the industry would not be able to appoint district managers who would be willing to circumvent the safety aspects of the mine. It was worried that all the members who were employed would be deputies and, because they had been trained as deputies, would put safety first. The document reflects the fact that the working party did not expect safety to be paramount.

In the future, supervisors will not have any responsibilities for safety. They will be there simply to increase production—to get as much out of the pit as possible. In the present market, the only way that anyone will make money from selling coal is to undercut all other contracts in the coal mining industry. The only way to do that is to stop spending on safety, cut back on wages and take the industry back to the pre-1946 days of the private owners when conditions underground were absolutely diabolical.

In response to my hon. Friend the Member for Bassetlaw, I can say yes, everyone in the industry wants major improvements, especially in sanitary facilities underground, which sadly do not exist. At the same time, we want safety to be paramount underground.

Mr. Jack Thompson: Will my hon. Friend accept that there were limited chemical toilet facilities in the mine where I worked? The problem was that they were at the shelf bottom and we worked 10 km away.

Mr. Illsley: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that information. In the House we so often hear people speaking from the experiences of 20 and 30 years ago. Perhaps sanitary conditions underground are not as bad as we have been led to believe.

The mines administration package will have other results which cause me great concern. I think that future legislation will remove existing health and safety regulations. The regulations introduced after the Aberfan disaster could well be under threat, as could those introduced after the Markham Main and Houghton Main

disasters. Each of those disasters led to regulations that were designed to deal with the problems that had occurred. Those rules and laws are likely to be deregulated, as are those affected by the mines administration package.

It seems strange that although we have been dealing with the regulations since 1983 and with the various drafts since 1989—the Select Committee on Energy took evidence on such matters for a report in the 1989 Session—for some reason they were shoved before the House at the beginning of a recess. Why did that happen? It is absolutely diabolical.

In conclusion, the sum total of the regulations is that safety in mines will decrease.

6.21 pm

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): I share the view of my hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Illsley) that the laying of the regulations was disgraceful. The Minister claimed that he wanted to be able to give the regulations some high quality scrutiny, which delayed them. His scrutiny came to an end six days after Parliament rose for the recess, when he was able to lay the regulations and, concomitant with that, they became law before the House came back, so there was no opportunity for us to discuss them before they came into operation. Moreover, those regulations repeal large sections of primary legislation which were passed in this place and have simply been removed by the arbitrary fiat of the Minister.

The regulations were also laid during the recess because before it there had been a little trouble with Tory Back Benchers over Maastricht and the coal mines. By leaving the recess for the Tories to forget about such things, the Minister could pretty well depend on a majority when they came back.

Mr. Kevin Hughes: My hon. Friend has a lot of experience in the House. I am a relatively new Member. I have never seen a statutory instrument that is 28 pages long. Usually they are one sheet, or perhaps two or three at the outside. We are discussing a detailed 28-page statutory instrument. Does my hon. Friend want to comment on that?

Mr. Cryer: My hon. Friend may be used to only tiny statutory instruments, but unfortunately many of the 3,500 statutory instruments per annum that the Government are laying—more than any other Parliament in our history—run to 40, 50 or 60 clauses and to as many pages.

This statutory instrument is important. The Minister knew that it was controversial, but as he is an arrogant, right-wing, goggle-eyed extremist, he does not care. That is the fact of the matter. He is on the right-wing fringe of the Tory party, so Parliament is not very important to him. The democratic processes are not important to him and, even if it had been 100 pages long, the statutory instrument would have received the same treatment. Due to their right-wing position, the Government believe that this legislation is a necessary preparation for privatisation. That is what Opposition Members believe.

The Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments, which I chair and which meets every Tuesday, has not had the opportunity to examine the instrument because the Government insisted that if we wanted three hours to discuss it, it should be taken today instead of tomorrow, when we could have produced a report. The Committee's view is that there are defects in the instrument. We have asked the Department for some items of information, to which it has responded, but we cannot provide a response to the House because after all these years of consultation the Government insist that the statutory instrument must be discussed right now. It does not add up, except when one understands that they do not give a fig for the democratic processes.

Mr. Etherington: If my hon. Friend had had the opportunity to scrutinise the statutory instrument, which, as he is well aware, was presented to the Government by the Health and Safety Executive, would he not have been somewhat lukewarm towards it, knowing that the organisation which advised on it was the same organisation that gave the dispensation for roof bolting to be carried out at Bilsthorpe colliery? When that organisation had to report on the reasons for the failure of the roof bolts, it stated it was because they were in "unsatisfactory ground", although it had given permission for them to be used in such ground.

Mr. Cryer: We must continuously take into account the Health and Safety Executive and the Health and Safety Commission. That is why we should consider these statutory instruments—based on those bodies' recommendations—before the instruments come into operation, so that the weight of experience of working practices and the effect of existing legislation can be brought to bear instead of the academic approach of the HSE and the Commission.

As it happens, I was on the Committee of the 1974 Health and Safety at Work, etc. Bill. I and Alex Wilson—a working miner who had come to this place—were concerned to preserve the safety standards which had prevailed and to improve them. Between us, we managed to insert a phrase to ensure that delegated powers should be used only to maintain and improve existing standards as we were frightened that there would be an erosion of those standards. I very much regret that the amendment that I tabled, which would have required absolute provision to be retained, was not agreed by the Committee, because it would have made an important difference.

My hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, Central mentioned the Mines and Quarries (Tips) Act 1969 and Aberfan. That strikes a chord. The House would not include the words

"so far as is practicable"

in that Act because it was a qualification. The Act states that mines and tips "shall be kept safe". The reason for the Act was that 90 little children were engulfed and the nation rose up in horror and said that it must never happen again. That has also happened when miners have been killed in serious mining accidents.

For years we have all said that we must have absolute safety standards and that pits and machinery shall be safe, but in this statutory instrument the regulations are all qualified. It is extraordinary. For example, clause 13 states:

"It shall also be the duty of the manager of the mine, so far as is practicable . . . to make suitable arrangements for recording the names of all persons who go below ground".

Is that really to be a qualified duty? Should it not be a requirement that everyone who goes under ground is recorded and that someone knows where they are? If that is done "so far as is practicable" and anyone is injured, the owner of the mine will be able to say, "I'm terribly sorry, but it was too costly: we would have had to bring in an extra man." The mine owner would be able to say that the cost was too high and that he had conformed with the

[Mr. Cryer]

statutory requirement. If that phrase were removed, there would be an absolute duty like that set out in section 14 of the Factories Act 1961 which states that dangerous machinery "shall be fenced". Under that legislation a worker had a good chance of compensation if his hand was chopped off. We do not want compensation for its own sake, but if the duties are absolute and something goes wrong, it is the worker and his family who suffer and compensation should be available.

These regulations reduce the level of claim in civil courts, so insurance premiums will come down. Insurance companies will feel more comfortable with this sort of legislation and, of course, private owners will, too. Their friends in Government are putting these regulations before us for that precise reason.

We shall vote against these regulations tonight. I hope that even one or two of those Tories who have been expressing such concern about mine safety will vote with us, as well as all the rag, tag and bobtail parties. We should make a clear commitment that when we get into office we will restore safety standards in mines and quarries at the same time as we restore them to public ownership.

6.30 pm

Mr. Michael Clapham (Barnsley, West and Penistone): The Minister has failed to take into account the unique role of the deputy. That role has developed over more than a century and a half. The first legislation came in the 1840s, and the deputy's role gradually developed until it became enshrined in legislation in 1911. Then came the Mines and Quarries Act 1954.

The 1954 Act came into being as a result of the bitter experiences of the 19th century. The opportunities that it provided have resulted in British coal mines becoming the safest in the world due to the unique combination of the deputy's supervisory and safety roles. The separation of supervisory work from safety considerations will take us back to the bad situation which existed in the 19th century.

I will give the Minister an example. I spent 10 years at the coal face underground. Sometimes the undermanager on the coal face wanted the shearer machine to move down the face, but because the distance from the tunnel to the coal seam was more than seven yards the deputy could say, "No, that machine does not move". In other words, he could base his decision on considerations for the safety of the men working on the coal face and not have to face the difficulty of the undermanager coming back at him about that. Under these regulations, all of that will change. If a deputy decides to stop a job for safety reasons, he can expect the manager to override his decision. Production will have priority over safety considerations.

The Minister mentioned contract workers. They do not come under the same strict supervision as payroll workers. The rate of accidents is more than twice as high among contract workers as among payroll workers. That is the result of separating the safety role from the supervisory role.

Deregulation is taking place in readiness for privatisation. If the Minister were prepared to come clean, he would tell the House just that. Since 1985 we have seen the gradual Americanisation of British mines. After the strike, Mr. MacGregor sent his managers to see what was happening in American mines and to come back with ideas, and gradually some of those ideas have been implemented—to the detriment of the men in the pits.

It is clear that the regulations will produce inferior safety standards in mines. Because the deputy's supervisory role is to be separate from his other role he will not be able to make the decisions that he made previously. If the Government had any real understanding of the situation and were prepared to listen to the compassion expressed on this side of the House, they would withdraw the code of practice and allow further consultations, particularly with the National Association of Colliery Overmen, Deputies and Shotfirers—the union responsible for implementing safety in mines.

6.35 pm

Mr. Martin O'Neill (Clackmannan): I should like to start my speech, as so many of my colleagues have done, by referring to Bilsthorpe colliery. A few weeks after the disaster I had the opportunity to visit the colliery and to meet Mr. Robson, union officials and others. The devastating impact of that disaster on the whole community was clear. It has blighted the lives, not just of the suffering families, to whom my hon. Friend the Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) referred, but of the whole community. The disaster brings home to us the dangers that miners face every day when they cut coal and the need for tough safety regulations. Miners need to work in a climate or, to use a word that the Minister for Energy abused some weeks ago, a culture in which it is possible for safety and productivity to co-exist.

The debate is taking place because of the uproar following the way in which this statutory instrument was presented. It was not presented so much as slipped under the door as the House was closing for the summer recess. Despite the nine years of discussions, the Select Committee's deliberations on safety and the opportunities to comment, the only people who have not had an opportunity to comment until today are those who are ultimately responsible for safety regulations, namely, this House of Commons. We give a grudging welcome to today's opportunity because the handling of the matter—the presentation of a fait accompli—is not the way to establish a consensus on which safety procedures can proceed.

There have been several speeches, and some interventions were almost speeches. That is often the case when those who intervene speak with passion, authority and experience. I am thinking of the interventions of my hon. Friends the Members for Easington (Mr. Cummings), for Rother Valley (Mr. Barron) and for Doncaster, North (Mr. Hughes)—a sprinkling from across the whole British coalfield.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Doncaster, Central (Sir H. Walker) was the author of the Health and Safety Commission. His speech was an erudite, passionate defence of the regulations that he and his right hon. Friends introduced so many years ago and consolidated into a code of practice acceptable to and understood by all sections of the industry. At the heart of it were his words that those involved "had a duty" to maintain and improve conditions.

What we see today is not the fulfilment of that duty so much as the avoidance of it and of detailed, explicit statutes from which to seek guidance. We have heard today of men taking the 1954 Act down the pit with them as their defence

against management which is sometimes stupid and sometimes insensitive in its pursuit of production. We know that this independence was enjoyed not just by the deputies but by the tradesmen and craftsmen who go down pits and have a critical role to play. The men always knew that, quite separate from the colliery management, there were the deputies and firemen.

Perhaps surprisingly, Opposition Members today have quoted Winston Churchill. Introducing the Coal Mines Bill of 1906 he said:

"The deputies and firemen are the non-commissioned officers of the Mining Industry, and just as non-commissioned officers are said to be the backbone of the British Army, so the deputies and firemen are the essential foundation on which the safety and security of the mines mainly repose."

It may seem almost heretical of me to say this, but I do not think that the pit deputies are necessarily candidates for canonisation. They can be a pain in the neck—indeed they are, both to the management and to the men winning the coal—but they have their own standards; they have independence, based on statute and consolidated in the 1954 Act. This means that when men in my constituency go down the pit, their wives and families and people like me who send them down there have confidence that, if it is sensible and safe for them to work, they will work.

That is not at all the same as saying that it is "practicable", an expression that has infected this debate. There have been many references to the phrase "as far as is practicable". We do not want our people to be safe as far as is practicable. We want the miners in the coal mines of this country to win the coal on our behalf with the guarantee that there will be no conflict of interest underground between the demands of production and those of safety.

We know, on the basis of 40 or so years of public ownership, that it is possible to balance those two elements. Our coal industry is more successful now than any other deep mining industry in the world. It operates under geological difficulties far in excess of those anywhere else across the globe.

We know that if miners are given the right opportunities and technology they can do the job safely and effectively. And we know what happened at Bilsthorpe: the men were required to dig coal for their livelihood, but corners were cut by means of roof bolting and skin-to-skin technology. That resulted in a tragic accident that could have been anticipated. The 1989 Allerton Bywater report identified the dangers caused by the erosion of residual pillars. The warnings were clear for all to see, but as Bilsthorpe was fighting for its life, it seems that other considerations took precedence.

The miners should never have been forced to choose between these considerations. Ministers knew that they were offering false hope to the men. Similarly, the choice between productivity and safety is essentially a false one.

Mr. Alexander: The hon. Gentleman will forgive me if I have him wrong, but is he seriously saying that three men died at Bilsthorpe because corners were cut?

Mr. O'Neill: Yes. The roof bolting was not the major contributory factor. As the hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) pointed out, perhaps the inspectors protested too much in that respect. However, in the context of the skin-to-skin approach, without guarantees of proper pillars to hold up the coal around the workings there was a serious threat to which the men should not have been exposed.

Safety is not incompatible with increased productivity under a system of public ownership. We are proud of the record of the publicly owned British coal industry, and we are proud that the arrangements for safety have always been based on consensus. This is the first time an issue of safety has been the subject of division in the House. In the weeks and months ahead the House will face the challenge of the Government's proposals to privatise ownership of the coal industry. The Government want to create conditions that will attract foreign investors to our industry to buy the mines from the Government.

Increased safety is fine, but let us have safety arrangements that enjoy the confidence of the miners group in this House, for instance. We ask the miners of this country to make the sacrifices involved in going underground, after all.

It is very difficult for the Minister to provide us with evidence of fatalities in private mines because, as we know, the HSE does not calculate the figures separately. More importantly, however, why are these figures not to be made available? Will the Minister admit that the reason is that it would be deeply embarrassing for the Government and the HSE if the figures were made known?

If the Government do not have statistics, I can give them mine. The accident rate in the private mining sector is three times higher than that in British Coal. The risk of death in private licensed mines is greater than it is in British Coal mines, and the fatality rate in private United States mines is three times greater than the rate in publicly owned British Coal. It is no use Ministers claiming that this last statistic can be explained by the different geological conditions in America. If anything, conditions there are easier. The United States should therefore have a lower accident rate.

The truth is that the system of ownership in America does not lend itself to safety because the pursuit of profit is always put before safety in the private mines. The outcome of this debate will determine not how many men go down a pit to cut coal but how many come out of the pit at the end of a shift. Even as we speak, British colliery managers have nothing more than vague, unspecified guidelines to follow—instructions that are so inadequate that the managers are still hanging on to the tried and tested procedures in the Mines and Quarries Act 1954.

Surely it would have been more sensible if Ministers had taken the time to come up with a consensus on safety, since consensus has served the industry so well for so long.

There have been times in the House in recent months when Tory Members have supported us and the coal industry. I urge those who have voted with us to save the coal industry to join us in the Lobbies tonight to vote down these mean and dangerous regulations. Our task tonight is not to save miners' jobs; it is to save miners' lives.

6.48 pm

Mr. Michael Forsyth: With the leave of the House, I should like to try to answer as many of the points made in the debate as I can. I shall be happy to write to hon. Members about any important matters that I do not have time to deal with.

The hon. Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill) made much of the "practicable" point as it applies to the regulations. He was echoed in that by the hon. Members for Wansbeck (Mr. Thompson) and for Bradford, South (Mr. Cryer).

[Mr. Michael Forsyth]

The hon. Member for Wansbeck waved the Mines and Quarries Act 1954 and asked where the test of practicability was to be found in that Act. If he turns to section 157, he will find that it states:

"It shall be a defence in any legal proceedings to recover damages and in any prosecution, in so far as the proceedings or prosecution are or is based on an allegation of a contravention, in relation to a mine or quarry, of—

(a) a provision of this Act . . .

(b) a direction, prohibition, restriction . . .

(c) a condition attached to an exemption".

It goes on to say that it shall be a defence

"to prove that it was impracticable to avoid or prevent the contravention."

The hon. Gentleman and other Opposition Members argued that the idea of practicability was new. That argument is undermined by the fact that the 1954 legislation was subject to that test of practicability.

Mr. Derek Enright (Hemsworth): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Forsyth: No. I have many issues that I wish to raise.

The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) said that the mines inspectorate has too close a relationship with British Coal. That was unworthy of him and I venture to remind him of the argument made by a number of his hon. Friends that the British coal industry has an excellent record.

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Forsyth: No, I have already said that I want to deal with many arguments.

A number of hon. Members said that our coal industry had the best safety record in the world. That record might have something to do with the quality of the mines inspectorate and its splendid work. It is regrettable that the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras should have sought to cast aspersions on the integrity and independence of the mines inspectorate, which has supported the proposals.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Selby (Mr. Alison) asked me an important question about the division of responsibility for supervision and inspection. He specifically asked about what would happen in an emergency. The regulations separate supervision from inspection. The advantages of that separation are clear. If the person in charge is miles away making an inspection, he cannot supervise the men at the coal face.

My right hon. Friend also asked who was responsible in an emergency. The supervisor for an area, as is normal throughout the industry, would be responsible. Of course, if an inspector on his rounds finds something that requires immediate action, he must take it. In all other circumstances, he reports matters requiring attention to the supervisor, who has a duty to arrange remedial action. I hope that that will reassure my right hon. Friend.

The hon. Member for Gordon (Mr. Bruce) asked me about an important matter that has been raised by several hon. Members and said that my answer to his question would determine whether he supported the Government in the Lobby tonight. I hope that my answer will be clear. He said that the ability to halt the process for safety reasons had been removed. That is not so. Section 79 of the Mines and Quarries Act 1954 makes it the duty of the person in charge of any part of the mine, if there is an immediate danger, to withdraw the workers. The Management and Administration of Safety and Health at Mines Regulations do not change section 79. On the basis of that assurance, I hope that we will have the support of the hon. Gentleman and his colleagues tonight.

My hon. Friend the Member for Newark (Mr. Alexander) took me to task over the timing of the regulations. I explained to him why there had been a delay in tabling the regulations before the House and why we felt that we had to comply with the suggested timetable of the Health and Safety Commission. I will certainly bring his remarks to the attention of the commission. I hope that he will understand the reasons why Ministers have acted as they have.

The right hon. Member for Doncaster, Central (Sir H. Walker) has played an important part in ensuring that we have an excellent Health and Safety Commission in this country and high standards of health and safety. As he said, he was the sponsoring Minister, and he asked whether it was right—he almost suggested that it was not right—for the regulations not to improve or maintain safety standards. Section 1(2) of the legislation, for which he was responsible, requires the commission to introduce proposals that maintain and improve safety. The explanatory memorandum attached to the regulations states:

"The proposals are necessary in order to improve and strengthen the current statutory requirements which have certain defects and anomalies."

I suggest that if the right hon. Gentleman were the Minister responsible, he, like my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and myself, would have felt moved to table the regulations before the House, given the Health and Safety Commission's recommendations.

The right hon. Member for Doncaster, Central said that mining was different from other industries and that the Health and Safety Commission should not tamper with existing legislation. It is true that the safety record since the Mines and Quarries Act 1954 was introduced has been considerable. However, that does not mean that there is no room for improvement or that the target-setting approach endorsed by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is inappropriate for the mining industry. That approach was adopted post-Cullen in another hazardous industry—offshore oil production.

The hon. Member for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Illsley) suggested that in some underground areas nobody would be qualified to test for gas, but that is not so. In every underground area there will have to be a supervisor who must have, as a minimum, the qualifications of a deputy, including the ability to test for gas. Every inspector must be qualified to test for gas, and has the duty to do so.

The hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy), in an ill-tempered contribution, talked about the regulations being inspired by privatisation. I am at a loss to understand how he can describe a process that began in 1983—consultation on the regulations began in 1988—as being driven by the requirements of privatisation. I also fail to understand his apparent belief that the Health and Safety Commission's determination to seek privatisation was so great that it would override its statutory duties.

The hon. Member for Bassetlaw (Mr. Ashton) said that accidents were being caused because shifts were too long. Some work has been done on the relationship between

accident frequency and the time of the shift when the accident took place. The work shows that most accidents occur mid-shift and there is no discernible increase towards the end of the shift.

Mr. Enright: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Forsyth: No, I will not.

The hon. Member for Doncaster, North (Mr. Hughes) criticised me for never having worked down a coal mine. My workplace is the House of Commons, as is his. One of my activities in the House is to listen to the contributions of hon. Members. The hon. Gentleman suggested that my right hon. Friend the Member for Selby and my hon. Friend the Member for Newark had said that they were going to vote against the regulations.

The hon. Member for Doncaster, North was talking absolute nonsense as both my right hon. Friend and my hon. Friend made important and supportive contributions. My right hon. Friend the Member for Selby was at pains to describe how the regulations had issued from the Health and Safety Commission. He said that we were entitled to take them seriously, given that organisation's track record in maintaining health and safety standards in this country.

The hon. Member for Barnsley, Central talked about a code of practice replacing legislation, and its being a retrograde step. A breach of the codes of practice will be a prima facie case for a breach of the regulations. It is nonsense to compare—as many Opposition Members did—an approved code of practice with a voluntary requirement which does not have statutory force.

The hon. Member for Barnsley, Central also said that no evidence was being produced for the need for a new law. However, in submitting the MASHAM proposals, the Health and Safety Commission made it clear that they were necessary to deal with some defects and anomalies in existing law, chiefly that those in immediate charge in a deputy's district—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Blyth Valley (Mr. Campbell) and others have had their say, but he and his friends do not want to hear the answers. They know that the Health and Safety Commission have acted in the interests of safety, while they have spoken for the interests of trade unions, which is not the same.

The regulations have been produced to ensure that the highest standards of safety are maintained in mines. The Opposition have put up a dreadful showing tonight, and have shown where their interests lie. I commend the regulations to the House.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 254, Noes 292.

Division No. 368] **[6.59 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyce, Jimmy
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Byers, Stephen
Cabom, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Sheffld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Bdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McCrea, Rev William
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Paisley, Rev Ian
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John

Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'kl'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Eric Illsley and
Mr. Peter Kilfoyle.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcl'if)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan

Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Robert G. Hughes and
Mr. James Arbuthnot.

Question accordingly negatived.

Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland)

7.15 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Michael Ancram): I beg to move,

That the draft Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1993, which was laid before this House on 18th October, be approved.

Before I comment in detail on the more significant provisions, I should perhaps explain to the House the reason why the draft order was withdrawn and relaid on 18 October. The draft order previously laid before the House contained a textual omission from article 28, which relates to the substituted article 116 of the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986. That article made provision for regulations governing the repayment or reduction of grant in specified circumstances.

As a result of that technical defect, the order as originally laid would not have provided the necessary vires for the recovery of enhanced value of the proceeds from surplus school property which currently exists in article 116 of the 1986 order. It was always intended that the new order should provide for the vires to continue unchanged. For the same reason, an identical amendment has been made to part II, schedule 4, which deals with colleges of education. The opportunity has also been taken in schedules 4 and 5 to correct a similar deficiency in the Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order 1989, relating to grant-maintained integrated schools.

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): What sort of numbers will be involved, going back to 1967, if schools want to take the opt-out option?

Mr. Ancram: If the hon. Gentleman waits a little, I shall explain the provisions on the 100 per cent. grant, to which I think he was referring. I am merely explaining why the order was withdrawn and relaid. The reasons were essentially technical. I hope that the House will appreciate that there is no other reason behind the withdrawal and relaying of the order. If, when the hon. Gentleman has heard what I have to say, he still wishes to ask a question, I shall respond to it then.

The order has been the subject of wide consultation with educational interests in Northern Ireland. In addition to being sent to all schools and colleges of further education and their boards of governors, the order was sent to more than 100 other individuals and bodies, including the universities, the education and library boards, the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools, the Northern Ireland Curriculum Council, the Northern Ireland Schools Examinations and Assessment Council, the main teachers' unions and the four main Churches.

I should like to record my appreciation of the interest shown by the 70 or so educational bodies and individuals who submitted comments. Most of them were supportive and generally welcomed the proposals. All the comments were carefully considered. As a result of the comments, several changes have been made to the draft order. I shall deal with those changes a little later.

I am sure that the House will appreciate that the order is large and detailed. I should like to comment on the main points of interest.

Sir James Kilfedder (North Down): Can the Minister tell me whether the Protestant Churches support the order?

Mr. Ancram: I have to be cautious how I answer because the order covers a great deal of ground and I suspect that the Churches would support some parts and be less supportive of others. I know that representations have been made about one or two of the points in the order. In one case I have sought to alleviate the concerns by making a change in the order itself. I shall mention that later.

I shall now discuss the main provisions. I am happy to answer any questions about the other provisions during the debate, but it is to a large extent a technical order and I am sure that there are aspects of it into which hon. Members will not wish to delve in too much detail.

I start with what is perhaps one of the main issues—that of competitive tendering. Parts II and III of the order deal with competitive tendering and general administration of public supply and works contracts by education and library boards in Northern Ireland. The Government's policy of subjecting public services to external comparison with the private sector is already well established throughout the United Kingdom. The results of the policy of competition are becoming self-evident. In Northern Ireland, annual savings of about £7·9 million have been achieved in the health service, and in the civil service the exposure of services to competition has realised savings of about £6·1 million per year. Indeed, the benefits of competitive tendering have already been recognised by the education and library boards and most of the activities defined in the order have also already been, or are planned to be, submitted to the competitive tendering process. The savings generated to date by the boards amount to about £1·2 million per year and it is important to recognise that those savings are retained by boards for the benefit of the education service.

Although the boards have been making good progress on a voluntary basis, it is nevertheless necessary, in my view, to provide a firmer legislative framework for the policy.

I emphasise that the order does not cover compulsory privatisation or compulsory contracting out. Boards will continue to be responsible for the provision of services and their direct labour organisations will be entitled to tender for the work. Indeed all the education and library board contracts have to date been won by the boards' direct labour organisations. It is important to understand that boards will specify and monitor the outputs and standards of service they require, whether the service is provided "in-house" or by private contractors. In that way legislation will not mean a lowering of standards, as some people suggest; rather it will provide for greater choice, leading to improved efficiency and better services.

Part III of the order contains important provisions that will bring the education and library boards into line with the operation of competitive tendering of district councils in Northern Ireland. In particular, article 22 will allow my Department to specify information which contractors will be required to provide if they wish to tender for work. That is designed to counter the possibility of fraudulent exploitation of the tendering process, and to act as a filter for any attempts by non bona fide contractors to win contracts. That safeguard will be available, if required, to combat any such threat. I am grateful to the hon. Member for North Down (Sir J. Kilfedder) for his obvious support.

I shall now discuss the second part of the order—article 28 and its related schedule 2—in detail. They deal with the introduction of an option for 100 per cent. capital funding for voluntary schools. I shall explain later why it is an option.

Voluntary schools are at present eligible for 85 per cent. grants on capital works. Many schools are finding it increasingly difficult to meet their share of the capital cost, at a time when additional accommodation is especially required to meet education reform curriculum requirements. Against that background, detailed discussions took place last year with the voluntary school authorities. As a result of agreement reached in those discussions, the order provides that a voluntary school that is prepared to change management arrangements to ensure that no single interest has a majority on the board of governors will be eligible for 100 per cent. capital funding. That is an option for all voluntary schools, whether under Catholic or other management.

The new arrangements will not, and are not intended to, affect the existing ethos of any voluntary school. The trustee parent and teacher representatives are likely to continue to reflect the ethos of the school. Before appointing its nominees, the Department of Education will consult with the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools in the case of Catholic maintained schools and with the board of governors in the case of voluntary grammar schools. No school will be obliged to adopt the new arrangements; that is why they remain optional. All voluntary schools may retain their existing management arrangements, but if they do so capital grants will continue to be paid at the existing rate of 85 per cent. There are obviously cost implications in paying higher capital grant rates. I can confirm, however, that that additional pressure on the education budget has been fully taken into account when reaching decisions about public expenditure allocations over the next three years.

Rev. Ian Paisley: If a Roman Catholic maintained school takes that option, does it come out from under the CCMS directly on to the board, or does it remain under the council with its particular disciplinary regulations?

Mr. Ancram: It remains under the CCMS, but it falls under the arrangements that effectively apply to controlled schools in terms of their capital grant. To that extent, we are trying to put all schools on the same footing.

The option of 100 per cent. capital funding to the voluntary school sector reinforces the Government's targeting social need policy. Schools serving areas of social deprivation will not be prevented from providing adequate accommodation for their pupils because of difficulties in raising voluntary funds. The new arrangements will ensure equity of funding across all sectors and equality of funding for all pupils. Finally, they represent a new partnership between voluntary schools and the public authorities which reflects a degree of confidence and trust in one another.

I shall now discuss the amendments made by article 31. They are designed to complement the tighter controls being exercised in awarding premature retirement compensation to teachers, following a recent report by the Public Accounts Committee. I hope that the purpose is simple: to allow compensating authorities to impose a charge equivalent to all or part of the award made, when they have good reason to believe that the organisation

responsible for deciding the award has not acted in accordance with the purpose of the compensation scheme, or has made an excessive award.

As a result of consideration during the consultation period, the recovery provisions have been further clarified, including the facility to phase recovery over a maximum period of 10 years. Their substance and effect are nevertheless the same as in the original proposal.

For some time, boards have been seeking authority from my Department to raise and retain revenue through commercial activities that would be complementary to their existing statutory services and activities. Article 32 is designed to meet that requirement. Any such activity will, of course, be subject to the approval of the Department and must not be detrimental to boards' primary educational responsibilities. Any revenue in that way will, as in the case of savings secured through competitive tendering, be available to boards for the improvement or development of the education services for which they are responsible.

The draft order also makes provision in article 34 and schedule 3 for the amalgamation of the Northern Ireland School Examinations and Assessment Council and the Northern Ireland Curriculum Council into a single body, to be known as the Northern Ireland Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment.

Following the 1989 Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order, the two councils were set up separately because at that time the Government felt that it was important that when the reforms were being introduced there should be separate organisations to ensure that the exigencies of assessment—in other words, what could be tested—did not constrain or determine what should be taught in schools. Now that the programmes of study and the attainment targets are in place, however, the Government believe that the time is right to take forward the development of the curriculum and the assessment arrangements in a holistic way so that each can be seen to be supportive of and consistent with the other. I believe that that will establish an effective and integrated system which will work to the best advantage of schools, pupils and parents.

In the proposal for the draft order, article 37 limited the number of boards of governors of which a person can be a member to three. The reason behind that was that being a member of a school board of governors is a challenging and time-consuming task and it is unreasonable to expect a volunteer—for that is what governors are—to be able to devote the time and effort necessary to sustain a worthwhile contribution to more than three boards of governors at once. That is especially true since most governors are already holding down jobs and many, such as education and library board members, also have other pressing demands on their free time.

Having said that, convincing arguments were made during consultation that I should be prepared to consider exceptions to that rule for individuals with particular expertise, categories of people who are required to be appointed, or simply in circumstances where it would be in the interests of schools to have certain individuals on more than three boards of governors at once. In response to those arguments, the proposal was amended to give my Department discretion to approve membership of more than three boards in individual cases.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): I welcome the fact that the Minister has taken on board some of the representations that have been made to him. Will he accept that some people have given voluntary service in a dedicated way and have contributed much to education in Northern Ireland? Will he give an undertaking to the House that the order will not be used adversely against those in a controlled sector and that the exceptions will not be allowed only in the maintained sector?

Mr. Ancram: I appreciate why the hon. Gentleman raises that point and I have had representations made to me about it. There are instances, such as when the instrument of government of a school requires a certain office bearer to be a governor, when it may not be possible to restrict the number of boards to three. There were suggestions that that affected one denomination and not the other. The hon. Gentleman will have noted that I have effectively outlined three areas of criteria and I intend to exercise the discretion that this gives me in an even-handed way.

Rev. Martin Smyth: I welcome that response, but Ministers are transient and officials guide successive Ministers. May we have something more permanent than the commitment of a Minister, although I respect him and accept his undertaking, because this is legislation for the future as well as the present?

Mr. Ancram: All I can say is that I have laid out the criteria that the change in the order is designed to meet. Those are the criteria that I and my Department intend to operate. I have heard what the hon. Gentleman has said and it will be on the record.

I have made a number of other changes in the order before the House, partly in response to consultation and partly in response to changed circumstances. I have withdrawn the provision to establish a system of statementing appeals tribunals. There was a clear view during consultation that independent tribunals would be superior and I wish to consult further about that.

I have also withdrawn the provision to change the timing of key stage 2 assessment for use in the transfer procedure. I know that that has caused some concern in the Province. I am convinced that assessment outcomes should not be used in this way and that separate arrangements based on the curriculum followed by each pupil are necessary for transfer purposes.

I have removed provisions for the amalgamation of institutions of further education in different board areas, simply because no such amalgamations are planned. On further education, I have responded to representations from teachers' unions by including provisions to require my Department, before making a determination, to amalgamate institutions of further education and to consult with associations which are representative of staff and students.

As I said earlier, the remaining provisions in the order are largely technical and administrative. I could cover a lot more, but I know that this hour and a half is very valuable and I wish to allow hon. Members as much time as possible to raise any points, to which I shall do my best to reply in detail. At this stage I shall go no further into the details. Nevertheless, this is an important and significant, if somewhat varied, order and I commend it to the House.

7.34 pm

Mr. Roger Stott (Wigan): On behalf of, I hope, everyone in the House, I should like to congratulate you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a personal milestone. Fifteen years ago today you entered the House as the hon. Member for

[Mr. Roger Stott]

Pontefract and Castleford. I offer you my sincere congratulations on staying the pace and I wish you a happy anniversary as a Member of Parliament—I hope that will ensure that I am called again.

The order contains no fewer than 54 articles and five schedules. To describe this legislation as wide ranging would be an understatement. The Government appear to have cobbled together a series of individually important education changes and thrown them all into a general document, and allowed very little time in which the provisions could be comprehensively scrutinised or debated.

Many Members from Northern Ireland make a point consistently about the awful practice of using Orders in Council. We are not allowed to amend the order. As on most other occasions, it is rather like the curate's egg—in some parts it is good and in other parts it is very bad. Under those constraints, I shall attempt to highlight some of the Labour party's concerns about the Government's proposals. There are many concerns, but I have time to highlight only a few.

I am told that the hon. Member for Devizes (Mr. Ancram), the Under-Secretary of State, is building a reputation as a listening Minister. Only last week during Question Time, the hon. Member for Antrim, East (Mr. Beggs) said:

"The Minister is establishing a reputation already as a listener".—[*Official Report*, 21 October 1993; Vol. 230, c. 376.]

The Minister needs to work harder on that image because, although he may have listened to the disquiet expressed during the consultation period on the draft order, he has paid scant attention to the many contributions that his Department has received. It has received contributions from organisations such as the National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education, the Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance, the Irish National Teachers Organisation, the National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers and the Northern Ireland Council of Trade Unions. Each of those organisations, which represent those working day to day in Northern Ireland schools and colleges, have expressed serious reservations about the Government's proposals.

The Minister has refused to heed the warnings from the professionals in favour of pursuing his Government's rigid dogma. Instead of attempting to tackle the crisis of confidence in the Government's botched education reforms, he has decided to implement compulsory competitive tendering, a move opposed by all the organisations to which I referred.

Part II of the order makes provision for the contracting out of public services. These are measures which have already been introduced in other parts of the United Kingdom, as we know to our cost, and they have had disastrous consequences for those working in the public sector. The experience of compulsory competitive tendering in the rest of the United Kingdom has meant that in the past year alone 49,000 men and women have lost their jobs in local government. Under the compulsory competitive tendering regime, many now have poorer conditions of employment and, for the second year running, they have had no pay increase. To repeat such an abysmal experience of job losses and worsening conditions of employment in Northern Ireland, a region already seriously trailing the rest of the United Kingdom, would be nothing short of a disaster.

The Opposition want to see efficiency in those defined activities contained in part II of the order. That includes the cleaning of buildings, catering and the maintenance of grounds and vehicles. Improved efficiency means maintaining value for money and a high-quality service which is often best provided directly. However, for those services which are eventually provided, it should be for the relevant board to make the decision.

The Labour party does not want Northern Ireland's schools to experience the corner-cutting, slap-dash decline in quality of service and working conditions and, worse, the decline in jobs, that is all too familiar under compulsory competitive tendering.

I wish to ask the Minister some questions. Will he give further details of how contracts will be handled under the new arrangements? Will contracts be phased, and will all the services listed in part II under article 4 be tendered for on the same day, or will boards be given different commencement dates? What procedures will the listening Minister establish to ensure that full consultation takes place as to the way in which contracts will eventually be phased?

Included in the restrictions and conditions in part II is the requirement for a board to invite tenders. Will the Minister confirm that when the required number of invitations to tender has been issued the board will be under no further obligation to invite other contractors to tender?

Most important, the Minister will be aware that by putting previously public services out to tender in Northern Ireland he leaves the process open to particular and sinister abuse by organisations seeking to extend their influence into the listed activities contained in part II. Will the Minister assure the House that if a board has major reservations about a particular contractor, it will be able to exercise total discretion and use such reservations as a relevant factor in the evaluation of that contractor's tender?

Mr. Ancram: I will try to answer the hon. Gentleman's question more fully at the end of the debate. In my opening remarks I mentioned that three of the boards were already substantially contracting out, and that there were savings of £1·2 million last year. Is the hon. Gentleman suggesting that some of the fears and accusations that he has expressed have been realised during that voluntary contracting-out period?

Mr. Stott: Our experience of compulsory competitive tendering in Great Britain is that it is bad in principle. It has led to many local government workers losing their jobs, and people employed by the organisations that win the contracts find that their terms of employment are worse than they were hitherto.

Will the Minister ensure that during the tendering process his Department will require that a board must insist on obtaining information about potential employees—including their previous work history and national insurance status—as already happens in Northern Ireland during compulsory tendering for local authority work?

Part III of the order applies restrictions to the scope of the factors that boards can consider when awarding contracts. By prohibiting a board from asking detailed questions about the terms and conditions of employment of

a competitor's employees, the Government are removing a board's capacity to maintain high standards in employment and working conditions, a theme to which I continually return. Yet again, the Government are content to reduce working standards. Instead of looking at the overall picture, they are merely looking at the figures which the Minister outlined. That kind of attitude results in reduced employment protection and leaves the United Kingdom with the lowest paid work force in Europe and a high level of unemployment.

I fear that the Government's plans will be all the more devastating for Northern Ireland, which has traditionally relied on the public sector for employment. I warn the Minister that Northern Ireland cannot afford an increase in the only figure with which I am concerned—the unemployment figure—which is already obscenely high.

Part IV of the order provides for the amalgamation of two or more institutions of further education; it does not provide for any significant consultation process before such an amalgamation. Surely the listening Minister will wish to hear from those who work in the colleges, the parents of those who attend those colleges and the wider community, all of whom share a stake in their local institutions of further education. Will the Minister ensure that provision is made for a concerned party to make known its anxieties prior to any amalgamation?

To achieve the required standards and implement change, the education service ultimately depends on the quality of its teachers and lecturers. Although many such people have already positively responded to the added pressures of education reform, the onslaught of Government legislation is demanding so much of their energy and commitment that the quality of provision for pupils and students in schools and colleges is in danger of being lowered. If that is to be avoided, it will be necessary not only to employ the most effective forms of in-service training, advisory and support services to assist teachers in implementing change, but to win the vital endorsement and support of parents, teachers, employers and members of the local community.

It is regrettable that the order does nothing to bridge the ever-widening gap between the Government and those who work in and use the education service. Instead, the Minister and his colleagues are intent on selling our schools in the marketplace. The Minister should concentrate on supporting teachers and freeing them from the bureaucracy of previous reforms. Instead, the Government, through the order, consider that it is more important to give the education and library boards in Northern Ireland a lesson in free market philosophy.

I said earlier that the order is like the curate's egg. It is unfortunate that we do not have a proper procedure whereby we can amend it and fashion a better one. The problems contained in the order outweigh its benefits, and I therefore ask my right hon. and hon. Friends to vote against it.

7.46 pm

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): One of the great problems that faces Northern Ireland is the way in which legislation passes through the House. Here we have this massive order—77 pages of it—so how can we possibly deal with it in one and a half hours, particularly when no one is permitted to table an amendment to it?

Consultation is all very well, but we were elected to the House and we have the final responsibility for scrutinising legislation and seeking to amend it. This huge order has many ramifications, as outlined by the hon. Member for Wigan (Mr. Stott) and by other hon. Members in their interventions in the Minister's speech. The order should be subject to a great deal of care and attention, because parts of it disturb us and because it is difficult to understand the real meaning of other parts. I had great difficulty understanding it.

The order consists of 57 pages dealing with 50 articles, and another 20 pages dealing with schedules. The schedules repeal parts of many Acts, but they also significantly amend many others. It seems that the new way of passing legislation is to introduce a schedule to a particular order, and then to make some vast change to a previous Order in Council. Anyone who wishes to take part in the debate will find it difficult to deal adequately with what is before us tonight.

A provision in the order states that a maintained school can return to the voluntary sector. I shall ask the Minister again, how many schools qualify for that option? It has been mentioned that if a school were a voluntary school in 1967 it would qualify, but how many such schools in the Province are in that category and could take that option? How many are Roman Catholic maintained schools and how many are now generally called state schools? How many schools belong to some Protestant body and could be named as Protestant? We need to know who can opt out and how far that net could be cast.

I shall not deal with the issue of compulsory competitive tendering because I largely agree with what has been said. I know that CCT meant large redundancies in the Housing Executive in Northern Ireland; now we see that the Housing Executive is not capable of dealing with matters on its new basis, about which I am especially worried.

I should like to address some religious aspects of the order. The hon. Member for North Down (Sir J. Kilfedder) asked how much of the order was opposed by the Protestant Churches—the Church of Ireland, the Irish Presbyterian Church and the Methodist Church. The Minister said that some parts of the order were opposed by those Churches. Will he be more forthcoming and tell us exactly which parts?

Article 47 deals with collective worship and complaints about religious education, which is of grave importance in Northern Ireland. Do parents still have the right to make a complaint about the type of religious education that their child is offered? Do parents have the right to withdraw their child from that sector of religious education? Will the Minister give us a categorical assurance that practices that have arisen in some schools, whereby teachers tell children that when they get home they should not tell their parents where they were taken that day and then take the children to religious services other than their own religious services, will no longer occur?

I am absolutely opposed to that practice. Parents have the right to decide what religious service their children attend and they have the right to withdraw their children from religious instruction, education or whatever it is called—even if it is for mutual understanding, which I think is the correct term—if they so desire. That principle should be upheld. I want the Minister to tell the parents of Northern Ireland whether that principle will continue to be upheld because I anticipate great dangers in that matter.

[Rev. Ian Paisley]

I believe in a non-sectarian school system and believe that there should be a one-school system in Northern Ireland that is supported by the public purse and that should not be tied to any religious denomination. However, ministers of the various Churches whose children also attend school should have the right of access at certain times to the desired type of religious instruction for their children. If we began to move towards that approach, there would be a great difference in our education system. I want the Minister to explain what the amendments in article 47 mean and what their practical effect will be.

Will the Minister also tell us about the disciplinary procedures which are suggested in the order that concern those who attend various schools? Article 39 outlines the requirement to set up disciplinary arrangements in schools. Will the disciplinary arrangements that are to be made by the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools give the children in those schools the right of appeal to a tribunal which, it is suggested, is to be set up by the board?

The Council for Catholic Maintained Schools wanted to close one school in north Antrim, but the parents of the children at the school wanted to keep it open. When it came to a decision, the CCMS closed the school in opposition to all the families. When the families tried to lodge an appeal, the Minister concerned said that the council had made the decision, that was that and the school had to close.

That example covers one aspect of the right of appeal, but I am concerned about the idea of expelling children from the school. I understand from the order that if a child is expelled, the parents will have the right to appeal to a tribunal set up by the board. Will that right also cover the schools that come within the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools? I cannot find reference to that in the order. Perhaps I have read it incorrectly, but it seems that the appeals systems should be the same in both areas of education, especially when the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools moves towards full Government payment for all the services that it is to provide. If it is to be responsible for the entire subsidising and payment of all Catholic schools that opt out for this approach, surely the schools should come under the same tribunal disciplinary board. Will the Minister help me on that issue so that I can understand the order correctly and exactly determine what will happen?

Will the Minister also further explain how much schools will have to pay for library services? I fear that we are in an era leading to schools that were previously serviced by libraries having to pay in future, and that could be a heavy expenditure. I do not know how the system worked before, but I should like to know how the Minister envisages it will work in future and what price will have to be paid by individual schools for the service. On such serious matters of administration, and knowing the Government's attitude towards demanding payment, I should like to know how heavy that expenditure will be.

Will compulsory competitive tendering as it applies to the obligations entered into for the building and re-equipping of schools be applied to schools under the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools? Does it cover both sections or do the Catholic maintained schools not have to enter CCT? The Minister needs to make that point absolutely clear.

I know that many hon. Members want to take part in the debate. I have already made my protest about the shortness of the time available. I shall conclude because I do not want to prevent any Northern Ireland Member from having the opportunity to speak. I hope that if the Minister does not have time to reply fully at the end of the debate, he will promise to answer our questions by letter so that we have a firm answer to our queries.

Mr. Ancram *indicated assent.*

Rev. Ian Paisley: I see the Minister nod his head at that.

8 pm

Mr. Ken Maginnis (Fermanagh and South Tyrone): The Minister will be aware of my reservations about participating in debates on Orders in Council. I shall not repeat what I have said on many occasions. Suffice it to say that I hope that we are getting to the stage when my protestations and those of my colleagues about Orders in Council will no longer be necessary. In the light of the present situation in Northern Ireland, it is especially important that those who are being asked to eschew political violence and to adhere to the democratic path should not find anything in the procedures of this House that will disillusion them or make that plea seem meaningless.

Part II deals with competition. Article 4 defines the activities currently carried out by the education and library boards in Northern Ireland that the Government have initially earmarked for compulsory competitive tendering —cleaning, catering, ground maintenance, and the repair and maintenance of vehicles. Can the Minister elaborate on paragraph (2) and tell us which other activities are likely to be added to the list for CCT and what he envisages the time scale to be?

Will the Minister accept that the added burden of responsibility on the boards for managing changes in the education service is such that they would benefit from more time to phase in and monitor CCT, bearing in mind the restrictions and conditions with which the boards must comply in respect of those activities?

Article 7 requires boards to publish in at least two local newspapers and at least one trade publication a notice giving details of functional work that they intend to carry out. In the absence of any suitable widely circulating trade-related journal in Northern Ireland, would it not be more effective to require publication in all three Northern Ireland daily newspapers?

Articles 9 to 11 deal with accounts, financial objectives and reports for the financial year in respect of defined activities. Are the accounting arrangements outlined compatible with the current basis on which board accounts are prepared—that is, on the basis of receipts and payments rather than on income and expenditure—or will alternative accounting procedures be required as a result of CCT?

I note that under article 11 a board will be required to publish a report for the financial year by the following 30 September and that a copy must reach the Department by 31 October, after which an auditor will be appointed by the Department and will give his written opinion both to the Department and to the board. The financial report will be open to public scrutiny on request at a time and place published by the board, and copies will be available on request—and on payment, I believe. That is welcome and is a further step in public accountability, as is the

requirement that a copy of functional work specifications within a defined activity, whether the work is being carried out by the board or not, will be made available to interested parties.

I welcome the statement in article 16(3) that before making an order under article 16 the Department "shall consult the boards". But that statement will be taken with a pinch of salt and would be more welcome if it could be guaranteed that the Department would engage in meaningful consultation. We have had many examples of fairly meaningless consultation—on health matters and planning, for example—in which representations to departmental officials have too often been ignored.

There is no reference in the order to the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981, although CCT will almost certainly have serious implications in terms of the continuity and security of employment of board personnel. Difficulties will arise in the event of boards' bids being undercut and awarded to those who win contracts by engaging staff under poorer conditions of employment and at lower wages than those currently enjoyed by board employees.

What checks and balances can the Minister offer in the likely event of unscrupulous contractors having the opportunity to cut corners in a way that may bring the most undesirable people into close contact with vulnerable young children? The boards know what is required, but by maintaining their standards they will end up competing on an uneven playing field.

Part IV deals with amalgamations of institutions of further education. It has already been recognised that the Department of Education has the power to determine which institutions should be amalgamated, and progress on that issue has been made by voluntary arrangement and agreement between the boards of governors and the education and library boards. The Department should seek to ensure—this is especially important in a constituency such as mine—that students in rural areas do not become further disadvantaged by finding themselves at too great a distance from the institutions at which further education courses are provided.

It must be nonsense to propose that any new centre of higher education planned for Northern Ireland should be situated where it would almost certainly fail to attract the widest possible cross-community student enrolment. One hopes that the Minister will look carefully at the implications of some of the proposals being made in that respect.

On compensation costs for premature retirements, with the proviso:

"Where there appears to a board to be good reason",

the board or the Department in certain circumstances may direct that

"(a) a specified amount shall be deducted from the budget share of the school in any single specified financial year; or

(b) a specified amount shall be deducted from the budget share of a school in each financial year for such period (not exceeding 10 years) as may be specified, in respect of premature retirement compensation costs of the board in relation to a member of the staff of the school."

I do not know what that means. Will the Minister elaborate on that and give us an example of a good reason for deducting such costs from the budget of a school or a college?

On article 33, new article 119A is to be inserted in the 1989 order about the formation of companies in connection with institutions of further education. Can the Minister advise whether there are any restrictions on the period for which loans can be granted before repayment is required? Is the governing body or company when formed permitted to seek external finance in the commercial market, or will loans be restricted to a governing body to company arrangement?

Will the proposed changes in article 36 to article 6 of the 1986 order mean that boards will be committed to providing home tuition immediately a child ceases to attend school? Will the proposed changes make it more difficult to get a child back to school, where that is a better option?

My hon. Friend the Member for Belfast, South (Rev. Martin Smyth) earlier intervened in respect of the change to article 12 of the 1986 order reducing the number of boards of governors on which members can sit from five to three. The restriction will, I fear, cause difficulty in arranging for each school and college governing body to have a serving board member, thereby providing a direct link between the board and its schools and colleges—a retrograde step.

Will the Minister clearly indicate that there will be flexibility on that issue and that there is no hidden agenda to limit further the direct representation by board members on behalf of schools and colleges? The order seems to be full of ambiguities and there are many matters that are not clear. I hope that the Minister will realise that, if we had a Bill passing through the House, we would have had a much fuller opportunity to clarify the situation and perhaps put right any deficiencies.

In conclusion, I draw the Minister's attention to the fact that, through the order, he is taking the opportunity in schedules 4 and 5 to correct a deficiency in the Education Reform Order 1989 relating to grant-maintained integrated schools. We have had that deficiency for four years. I think that the Minister will agree that that is not good enough. I hope that, in future, Bills will be introduced so that such things do not occur.

8.12 pm

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Everyone is supposed to be interested in Northern Ireland at the moment. The media, newspapers and television are full of Northern Ireland concerns. Northern Ireland politicians and anybody who has a word of interest to speak on Northern Ireland are eagerly being interviewed.

Education is supposed to be a matter of major concern. Many people in the Labour party have educational backgrounds. When I came to the House, I found that, initially, it was impossible to get on the Education Reform Bill Committee, because there were so many hon. Members with educational backgrounds from which to pick. We are now dealing with Northern Ireland and education issues. We should have a massive concern for those matters, as they are not issues of minor significance. We are dealing with competitive arrangements, education and libraries, the issuing of contracts and funding arrangements, some of which arise from earlier legislation that has passed through the House. There are many items with which we should concern ourselves.

Some hon. Members present tonight represent constituencies in Northern Ireland. Other hon. Members are here on duty. They are doing their duty well, from the Front Benches and other positions, but Back Benchers are absent. Some hon. Members are here as Whips. There are

[Mr. Harry Barnes]

hon. Members here as Parliamentary Private Secretaries. There is only one hon. Member present, as far as I can see, from the Back Benches who is not associated with Northern Ireland. We are supposed to be in a situation where Northern Ireland is of overwhelming consideration.

We have seen 100 per cent. attendance from the Democratic Unionist party. We have had the entire Popular Unionist party here—we always have 0 per cent. or 100 per cent. We have seen nearly half of the Ulster Unionist party. We have not seen anybody from the Social Democratic Labour party—my sister party. It is supposed to be involved with social and economic affairs, but it is not here on this occasion.

I attempted to speak in last Friday's debate on Northern Ireland issues. I had to settle for three interventions and a point of order. I have come tonight to listen to what is taking place. I am no expert in terms of all the details that are contained in the measure. I came to find things out, because I have an interest in education and Northern Ireland. The opportunity is here for me to speak, whereas there was no opportunity on Friday. We are in a quite disgraceful situation as far as Northern Ireland is concerned. We should be concerned about the issues.

The procedures of the House, in which Northern Ireland issues are marginalised—the Order in Council procedure—means that we do not deal with the matters properly. There is no encouragement for people to be here. Should not people be here to try to change the situation and push for changes because they have an interest in Northern Ireland and educational matters?

Mr. Peter Robinson (Belfast, East): As the hon. Gentleman wants to change things for the better in terms of the way that legislation and other matters relating to Northern Ireland are dealt with, would he support the introduction of a Select Committee for Northern Ireland?

Mr. Barnes: I certainly would. If the Labour party was seeking not to involve itself in that, I would offer myself as someone who could be involved in that Committee. I should say to the Democratic Unionist party, and to other Ulster Unionists, that I should like to see their involvement in the British-Irish parliamentary body, because we would then have a cross-fertilisation on education in matters dealt with by that body and matters that could be dealt with by the Select Committee.

Education could not be a more important matter for us to discuss in the context of the situation in Ireland. The problems within Ireland—for example, the role of the Catholic Church in education—spill over into Northern Ireland. Teacher training colleges do not have a fair share of the communities because there is a Catholic teacher training college, and the state provision tends to be Protestant. Those are matters with which we should concern ourselves.

The leader of the DUP concentrated some of his remarks on article 47 which was about complaints relating to religious education and collective worship. In so doing, he mentioned the position of education for mutual understanding in Northern Ireland.

Perhaps I need more information about education for mutual understanding, but it seems to me that the Government are attempting a fruitful and worthwhile activity in that area so that there is understanding in education about the two traditions that exist, which spill over a great deal into education matters. But the hon. Gentleman suggested that the opt-out should apply also to education for mutual understanding. As I see it, education for mutual understanding is not just a matter of religious education; it concerns the cultural traditions that exist in Northern Ireland and is a matter of great social importance. Such education should be opted into rather than opted out of, because if it is conducted correctly, people will begin to understand each other's traditions and wish to share in and draw from them. I hope that the Minister will elaborate on that matter in his reply and help me to understand the hon. Gentleman's position.

Education and Northern Ireland are both matters with which we should concern ourselves. I hope that the message will percolate beyond these Benches and beyond the pages of *Hansard* and will be heard by hon. Members who are not present tonight, some of whom have very high profiles on Northern Ireland issues and some of whom were here last Friday. I will not mention their names, because I did not put letters on the board asking them to be here, but I hope that in future they will attend debates such as this. I am talking about people who have ideas about the role of Gerry Adams, about talks and other issues and who should have been here tonight to contribute, in interventions if the opportunity did not arise for them to do so in speeches.

8.22 pm

Mr. Ancram: I suspect that I shall not often find myself in agreement with the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes), but I agree with him that it is sad that not many mainland Members are present tonight. During my shortish period as a Northern Ireland Minister, it has struck me that the more our parliamentary colleagues who are not from Northern Ireland know about the life of the Province and its difficulties, the more understanding there will be of the major problems that exist there. I hope that, in the coming weeks and months, the hon. Gentleman and I will be able to encourage more of our colleagues to attend debates such as this.

It is a matter of some disappointment to me that, on this occasion, we have not heard anything from the Liberal Benches. The hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Foster), who has been in his place throughout, is not usually a reticent man and I should have thought that he would have much to say on the subject of education in Northern Ireland in particular.

Mr. Don Foster (Bath) *rose*——

Mr. Ancram: I see that I have tempted the hon. Gentleman to his feet.

Mr. Foster: Only yesterday, I had the opportunity to pay my first visit to Northern Ireland and to have a look at its education system. I knew that a number of Northern Ireland Members wished to speak and felt that on this occasion it would be somewhat impertinent of me to speak in the debate. A number of questions that I would have asked have been asked by other hon. Members.

Incidentally, I was delighted to see that only yesterday, in an interview in the *Belfast Telegraph*, the Minister pointed out that he recognised the considerable overload being experienced by teachers in Northern Ireland and

expressed his willingness to slow down the pace of reform. I only wish that the Secretary of State for Education in England would follow similar advice.

Mr. Ancram: The hon. Gentleman is being a little disingenuous. He knows that the Dearing report has made certain recommendations as regards the curriculum in England and Wales, and that that report does not apply to Northern Ireland. That is why I, as Minister responsible for education in Northern Ireland, have had to take decisions. If the hon. Gentleman reads carefully the words that I used, rather than those attributed to me in the first paragraph of the article, he will see that I said that there "could be" serious problems of overload and that because that suggestion had been made I had asked the Curriculum Council to look into the primary curriculum and, following consultation with schools and teachers, to make representations to me in April so that if there are problems, they can be resolved. I have made it clear all along that there is no difference between my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and myself in this and that we are both looking for a system that works.

Inevitably, many hon. Members have commented on the procedures by which we take orders such as this through the House. I repeat that the Government are always willing to listen to suggestions for improving legislative procedures, but there are good reasons—and hon. Members know them—why Orders in Council are used for Northern Ireland, and any changes would have substantial implications, not least for the House of Commons. I think that it can be said in general—and this has also been said before—that direct rule, under which the present system has grown up, was introduced as a temporary measure and that we would all wish to see responsibility devolved back to Northern Ireland in matters such as education. That is what we are all striving for, in different ways and from different directions.

Unfortunately, by the very nature of the order, which is detailed and technical, it is difficult to get a theme running through my reply. A number of specific and detailed questions have been asked and I will try to respond to them. If I fail to respond to any tonight, I will try to answer them in correspondence once I have had time to reflect on what hon. Members have said. I give that undertaking to the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley), who was right to see me nodding when he made that suggestion.

It was something of a disappointment to me, given that this is a major order covering many areas of education in Northern Ireland and matters of great importance to schools and children in Northern Ireland, that the hon. Member for Wigan (Mr. Stott) should have majored on the whole question of compulsory competitive tendering. His speech was a little off target because what we propose in the order is already being done by a number of the boards, without any of the fearful consequences that the hon. Gentleman predicted would follow from the proposals. There are dangers in going over the top, which I suggest the hon. Gentleman did this evening, without having closely examined what is happening.

The hon. Gentleman asked me a number of specific and serious questions and I will answer them as best I can. First, he asked whether all contracts will be phased. It will be necessary to consult boards before drafting regulations, so that proper account can be taken of the expiry dates of contracts that have already been competitively tendered. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that full consultation will take place with each board to ensure that the competitive tendering programme is practicable and in the best interests of the education service.

The hon. Gentleman also asked whether the services listed in schedule 1 would become subject to competitive tendering as soon as the order became effective. The answer to that is no, because the Department intends that competitive tendering should be phased in over time. As I said, boards have already competitively tendered a significant proportion of the four defined services and, for that reason, the phasing arrangements will need to take account of the expiry of existing contracts. I repeat that the boards will be consulted fully on this matter.

The hon. Gentleman asked a serious question about whether the process might be open to paramilitary influence. Part III of the order contains important provisions, which will bring the education and library boards into line with the operation of competitive tendering in district councils in Northern Ireland. In particular, article 22 will allow my Department to specify information that contractors will be required to provide if they wish to tender for work. That provision is specifically designed to counter the possibility of fraudulent exploitation of the tendering process and to act as a filter for any attempts by non bona fide contractors to win contracts. That safeguard will be available as required to meet any such threat. We are conscious of the danger, but I suggest to the hon. Gentleman that it is met in the order.

Mr. Stott *indicated assent.*

Mr. Ancram: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for nodding his assent.

The hon. Gentleman also asked whether provision would be made for any concerned parties to make known their concerns before amalgamations of colleges take place. Article 26 requires the Department to carry out wide consultation before making a determination that two or more colleges should be amalgamated. The bodies to be consulted include the governing bodies of the colleges, the education and library board that manages the colleges and the staff and students of the colleges. The hon. Gentleman will accept that most of the bodies to which he referred are covered. But if any other bodies or individuals wished to express any views about any proposed amalgamation of colleges, I should be happy to take them on board before any decisions were made. As I said in my opening remarks, however, we have extended consultation to the staff and students of the colleges and I hope that that will be welcomed.

The hon. Member for Wigan asked about the low pay of staff involved in contracts. The interests of the education service are being assisted by the savings that are being generated by the boards in the competitive tendering of the four defined services. Savings of £1·2 million a year are retained by the boards for use in enhancing education services. The boards are satisfied about the financial benefits and other advantages that CCT will bring, especially where there are real pressures on available sources. Moneys saved by the boards will be used in improving the funding of schools, colleges, libraries and youth clubs. The hon. Gentleman spoke of value for money, which I hope he will accept is one of the major purposes of the order.

[Mr. Ancram]

The hon. Gentleman also asked whether, during the tendering process, boards will be allowed to ask about the terms and conditions of employers' staff. The answer is no. Article 20 deals specifically with non-commercial issues that cannot be raised by boards in considering contracts for defined services. It is specifically designed to prevent discrimination against employers and to ensure a level playing field for all those who are interested in competing for this work. Efficiency, effectiveness and quality of service demand that this provision be applied on grounds of equity.

The hon. Gentleman asked a number of other questions, not least about the political affiliation of potential employers who might contract. I refer him to article 20(5)(6), which deals with the political, industrial or sectarian affiliations of contractors or their employees.

The hon. Member for Antrim, North made a number of significant and important points and asked a number of specific questions. He asked about maintained schools that might opt for voluntary status. No maintained schools have opted back to voluntary status and it is not likely that any will. The provision may be otiose, but it is appropriate to make it available until consultation has taken place with interested parties.

The hon. Gentleman asked how many schools might opt for 100 per cent. grant. Some 600 voluntary schools are potentially eligible for the new 100 per cent. arrangements. Of course, not all will necessarily decide to opt in this way. Existing schools can retain existing management arrangements, and if they do so they will still be entitled to only the capital grant rate of 85 per cent.

The hon. Member for Antrim, North asked about the new provision on appeals against expulsion applying to pupils in all schools. I can tell him that it does, including maintained schools, and I hope that that will reassure him.

Rev. Martin Smyth: I appreciate the Minister giving way on that point. Is he aware of the concern about children who have been suspended but not expelled? They have not been receiving an education, although it was suggested that they would receive home tuition, and, because they have not been expelled from school, they cannot attend another school. Has that been covered, because I have raised the issue with boards several times but have not received satisfactory answers?

Mr. Ancram: The main concern has arisen in connection with maintained schools, but the appeal provision applies to all schools, including maintained schools. Article 49(2), as revised by the draft order, requires the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools to prepare schemes for suspensions and expulsions in maintained schools.

Rev. Martin Smyth: Does that remove responsibility from the board? In future, will the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools be responsible?

Mr. Ancram: The appeal provision is being applied even handedly across all areas of education. I understood that to be the main complaint, but I shall study what the hon. Member said and if there are any differences of emphasis I shall write to him.

Rev. Ian Paisley: The point that the hon. Member for Belfast, South (Rev. Martin Smyth) is raising is important. Will maintained schools, including Roman Catholic schools, and state schools appeal to the same body?

Mr. Ancram: I have made it clear that the draft order requires the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools to prepare schemes for suspension and expulsions in maintained schools. I hope that hon. Members will write to me about their specific concerns, which I shall try to deal with.

Rev. Ian Paisley: The Minister does not get the point. Under article 49,

"the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools shall prepare a scheme specifying the procedure to be followed in relation to the suspension or expulsion of pupils from Catholic maintained schools."

It further says that every board shall make arrangements for an appeal system. Does that appeal system cover the Catholic maintained schools or only state schools?

Mr. Ancram: It covers both. I am sorry if I misunderstood the hon. Gentleman's earlier point.

The hon. Member for Antrim, North asked whether a parent has a right to complain about the type of religious education and to withdraw a child from attendance at a religious service. The answer to both questions is yes.

Mr. Barnes: The hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) asked about education for mutual understanding. Is that covered by religious education, or by some other heading?

Mr. Ancram: I should like, if I may, to write to the hon. Gentleman about that point. I should like to check before giving an answer, but I can confirm the categorical assurance that I have given on the two points asked by the hon. Member for Antrim, North.

The hon. Member for Antrim, North asked about the closure of schools. There are well-established procedures for the closure of schools, including maintained schools, which require full public consultation and any objections are carefully considered before a final decision is taken by the Northern Ireland Office and myself. I hope that that will reassure the hon. Gentleman.

The hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis) made a detailed and thoughtful speech. He is not in his place, for which he offered his apologies and I understand why he cannot be here. I undertook to write to him to answer the questions that I could not answer tonight. He asked whether competitive tendering would be extended to other professional services, as envisaged in Great Britain in the Local Government Act 1992. He asked me to identify such services. I refer him to the White Paper, "Competing for Quality", which sets out the framework for the development of competitive tendering within the public sector, including professional or white collar services. The policy applies equally to the education service in Northern Ireland and we shall consider the scope for extending the present programme in the light of a recent study by consultants. Of course, we shall consult the boards fully before embarking on this course.

The hon. Gentleman asked whether the boards' present accounting arrangements would be adequate for the introduction of compulsory competitive tendering. Boards will be required to maintain detailed trading accounts in respect of all competitive tendering contracts. The

Department will consult boards on the nature of those accounts and any changes required to present board financial accounts as a result of these provisions.

The hon. Gentleman went on to ask whether there would be a level playing field for all contenders in the compulsory competitive tendering process. The answer again is yes. Safeguards are built into the legislation to ensure that the private sector and boards' direct labour organisations are treated fairly and even handedly, which is important in any such system.

The hon. Gentleman also asked about the limitation on membership of boards of governors, which several other hon. Members also mentioned. It might be helpful if I were to outline the type of exception that I have in mind. The first point to emphasise is that I would expect to make such exceptions only rarely. The purpose of the provision is not to provide a back door for making wholesale exceptions, which would merely make a well-balanced policy ineffective. However, I accept that there may be exceptional categories, individuals or circumstances which would warrant approval.

For example, one category that I shall be prepared to approve is where a school's instrument of governance specifies the holder of a particular office as a governor and where such an appointment could be made only by appointing a person to more than three boards of govenors. Similar problems may arise in schools where individuals are nominated from among the transferor interests on the board of governors of contributory primary schools. There may be individuals for whom it would entail serving on more than three boards of governors. A case might be made for an individual with particular expertise and the time available to share it with a number of schools.

Those examples make it clear that I expect the exceptions to relate to the particular circumstances and needs of the schools, and I would need to be convinced that the needs cannot otherwise be met. The important point is that the power to make exceptions exists, and I would exercise that power if a justifiable case were made.

The hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone also asked me to ensure that amalgamations of colleges do not result in students in rural areas having to travel too far to receive further education. He made the valid point that were that to be the case, there would in fact be discrimination against such students. The amalgamations which have been announced and which are already proceeding will not result in the closure of any existing sites for the provision of further education. That should ensure that students in rural areas continue to enjoy easy access to further education. However, I shall certainly bear the hon. Gentleman's comments in mind.

The hon. Gentleman also mentioned retirement compensation and asked what would be deemed a good reason to recoup it, as the provision allows. As I said in my opening remarks, the situation arises because of the concerns expressed by the Public Accounts Committee about the high cost of operating the scheme. A number of measures had to be taken to increase cost consciousness. They include placing a limit on the number of added years to be awarded and cash limits on awards for efficient discharge grounds. A board of governors that ignores such limits would give an education and library board good reason, as defined, to recoup excessive awards from the school budget. I hope that that example is of some help to the hon. Gentleman in understanding how what I admit is a somewhat obtuse provision will work.

At the end of his speech, the hon. Gentleman also asked about the provision of a university site at Springvale and pondered whether it would further sectarianise higher education in Northern Ireland. I must point out that higher and further education in Northern Ireland has an outstanding record for providing facilities that attract students from all sides of the community. The Government would not want that tradition altered, and cross-community support must be an important criterion in any analysis. Any facility would have to be accessible to all communities in Northern Ireland.

Rev. Martin Smyth: I thank the Minister for giving way again. I agree that there has been a mix at that level of education, but the Minister's remit also includes sport. Does he accept that to do away with Paisley park, a recreational area which has produced many outstanding athletes and sportsmen, would not only be detrimental to that part of the city but would not enhance sporting provision?

Mr. Ancram: That is not a matter currently before me, but I shall look into what the hon. Gentleman said and write to him.

The only outstanding question asked by the hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone dealt with exemptions for board members. He asked why the exemption would not extend to board members themselves. Each case will be considered on its merits, but it is not essential for the education and library board representatives on boards of governors to be board members. They will have commitments to the board and its committees as well as up to three boards of governors. That is a heavy commitment at a time when the responsibilities of boards of governors have already increased. It is therefore reasonable to exclude them.

We have had a very full debate, but I appreciate the fact that hon. Members may have wished to deal with many other details. If they care to write to me about any matters that have not been raised, I shall try to give them a full reply.

It is an important order because——

It being one and a half hours after commencement of proceedings on the motion, MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Order [22 October]:—*

The House divided: Ayes 241, Noes 180.

Division No. 369] **[8.45 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*	Bowis, John
Alexander, Richard	Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*	Brandreth, Gyles
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*	Brazier, Julian
Amess, David	Bright, Graham
Ancram, Michael	Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Aspinwall, Jack	Browning, Mrs. Angela
Atkins, Robert	Burns, Simon
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*	Burt, Alistair
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*	Butler, Peter
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*	Butterfill, John
Baldry, Tony	Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*	Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*	Carrington, Matthew
Bates, Michael	Carttiss, Michael
Bellingham, Henry	Cash, William
Beresford, Sir Paul	Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Blackburn, Dr John G.	Clappison, James
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas	Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Booth, Hartley	Coe, Sebastian
Boswell, Tim	Colvin, Michael
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*	Congdon, David

Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Gill, Christopher
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Gryffs, Sir Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Hendry, Charles
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knox, Sir David
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and Mr. James Arbuthnot.

NOES

Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyce, Jimmy
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dixon, Don
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fyfe, Maria
Gapes, Mike
Gerrard, Neil
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Illsley, Eric
Jackson, Helen *(Sheffld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McCrea, Rev William
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
Mackinlay, Andrew
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Michael, Alun

Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Oiner, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Paisley, Rev Ian
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Thompson, Jack *(Wansbeck)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Wilson, Brian
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Alan Meale and
Mr. Jon Owen Jones.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1993, which was laid before this House on 18 October, be approved.

Teachers' Pay and Conditions

8.59 pm

Mr. Win Griffiths (Bridgend): I beg to move,

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Education (School Teachers' Pay and Conditions) (No. 2) Order 1993 (S.I., 1993, No. 1755), dated 15th July 1993, a copy of which was laid before this House on 16th July, be annulled.

At the start of the debate, I declare an interest as a paid parliamentary consultant to the National Union of Teachers. However, I want to point out that, in common with Conservative Members who have similar interests, I will not be speaking in a partisan way this evening.

The pay of teachers is yet another example of the Government's cavalier attitude towards teachers and the education of children in local authority and voluntary schools. The order which we prayed against in July and which we are debating this evening represents a further betrayal of teachers and is part of a death-by-a-thousand-cuts policy which the Government have had towards taxpayer-funded education services and those involved in providing them.

The House will recall the winsome words elaborating the Government's clear commitment by the former Secretary of State for Education and Science, the right hon. and learned Member for Rushcliffe (Mr. Clarke), in the debates on the Second Reading and the Third Reading of the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Bill on 29 April and 6 June 1991. I should like to remind the House of some of those words. The right hon. and learned Gentleman said:

"I also realise that, to get the high quality, well motivated and professional group of teachers that we require, teachers need a fair level of remuneration to reward ability and good performance . . . With the establishment of a review body to determine the pay and conditions of teachers, the Bill will pave the way for that aim."—[*Official Report*, 29 April 1991; Vol. 190, c. 34.]

The right hon. and learned Gentleman also said that it was the essence of this machinery that the Government were setting up an independent body that would give advice to the Government in the light of all the evidence that it received. He said that the Government would implement the recommendations unless there were clear and compelling reasons why they should not. He said, "To repeat what I said before, the Government will not be giving to the review body a financial remit of the type that the interim advisory committee had. We shall reject recommendations only for clear and compelling reasons."

The right hon. and learned Gentleman also said that one of the principal differences between the interim advisory committee and the review body was that the new body would not operate within a predetermined financial envelope. He said that the Government were submitting themselves to the objective judgment of a body which would recommend the right pay, terms and conditions for teachers. What a sick joke. However, that is par for the course for a Government prepared to say anything to win votes and raise hopes which so quickly and so often turn to dust.

Unfortunately, the pay review body has proved to be a spineless quango only too willing to straitjacket itself within the Government's own recommendations. When it has shown an air of independence, the Secretary of State has moved quickly to quash its recommendations, as he did this year over the review body's 1·5 per cent. increase for teachers which would have raised the total bill a further 0·3 per cent. because of a rounding-up exercise for teachers affected by the reduction of 243 salary combinations to 17.

[Mr. Win Griffiths]

It is therefore not a curious coincidence that last year the pay review body's recommendations were accepted unchanged in the run-up to the general election. During the previous two years, the Interim Advisory Committee on School Teachers' Pay and Conditions recommended reducing the overall pay bill by 1·5 per cent. in 1980 and 1·7 per cent. in 1991. Of course, that pay is permanently lost to teachers. Remarkably, as my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) mentioned on Second Reading of the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Bill, there had been no real-terms increase in teachers' pay since 1987, another election year. However, in paragraph 120 of its report, the pay review body, in making its recommendations for 1993, said:

"This is less than is needed in respect of recruitment, retention and motivation considerations taken as a whole".

Those are the very things that that body should have regard to—recruitment, retention and motivation. The pay review body is plainly in self-confessed dereliction of its duty in making recommendations which do not advance the cause of high-quality teaching and learning in our schools. Even its modest, inadequate pay recommendation was rejected by the Government, who forced their own deal on to teachers.

What price the independence of the pay review body? None whatsoever. Why should teachers' unions bother to submit evidence to a body which is not prepared to make recommendations in the best interests of teachers, children and schools and whose timid terms for teachers' pay in 1993 are rejected in any event by the Government in this order?

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): I take a very close interest in such matters. A few days ago, in my constituency I held a conference with all heads, chairmen of governors, and representatives of teachers, parents and children, with Sir Ron Dearing present. I was interested to hear what the hon. Gentleman appeared to predict—that is, by implication, unless teachers were paid at a level which he, by implication again, said that they are not being paid at, teaching would deteriorate. The evidence is to the contrary. Standards are rising for GCSE, A-levels and so on. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that teachers are teaching as well as and as conscientiously as ever?

Mr. Griffiths: Yes, teachers make every effort to be conscientious, but the Government's treatment of them does not help their morale. They are conscientious in spite of the Government's best efforts to undermine them. Their morale is certainly low.

A body which is not prepared to make recommendations in the best interests of teachers is hardly worth keeping in place. What are the clear and compelling reasons that force the Government to reject the pay review body's rather modest pay deal? Classroom teachers at every level of remuneration were worse off in April than they were last year by between £83 and £137. The hon. Member for Daventry (Mr. Boswell), the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Further and Higher Education, provided those figures to my hon. Friend the Member for Peckham (Ms Harman) in May. They are to be found in columns *497* and *498* of *Hansard*, if the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education would like to read them.

Do the Government believe that the bad old days of reducing the value of teachers' pay will herald the dawn of a new age of high-achieving pupils and schools inspired by poorly paid but somehow highly motivated teachers? Most people would answer that question with a resounding "No". But there is a horrible chance that a Government who believed that their election victory in April 1992 would see the recovery begin the next day actually believe that this teachers' pay order will raise the rock-bottom morale of teachers. It will not. There is more in the order to undermine any possible threads of confidence that teachers might have had in the Government's pay policy for them.

The proposal on performance-related pay is a disaster, although it is typical of the arrogance in power that has marked the regime of the Secretary of State for Education. The document on teachers' pay deliberately ignores the views of the pay review body which were expressed in its report last year. The review body believed that the best approach would be to conduct a consultative exercise based on the whole school approach to performance with additional funding to implement it.

In this year's report, a pilot scheme to examine performance-related pay for heads and deputy heads was announced. The Secretary of State has well and truly elbowed the pay review body out of the way with his performance-related pilot pay scheme, which is outlined in the 1993 school teachers' pay and conditions document. His scheme will be based on individual performance. Surely individual performance is already covered by part III, paragraphs 6 and 7, on responsibility and excellence where up to five points and three points respectively can be gained, with the latter being available especially for classroom teaching.

What clear and compelling reasons caused the Secretary of State to ignore the pilot scheme of the pay review body and set up a scheme of his own? Incidentally, some heads have demanded to withdraw from his pilot scheme because they were misled by him about its establishment. I look forward to receiving an explanation from the Minister.

I am concerned that the pay review body seems to have had virtually no impact on the Government's action over the huge shortfall of incentive allowances in primary schools.

Mr. Nigel Evans (Ribble Valley): Since 1979, teachers' pay has increased by 57 per cent. in real terms, after allowing for inflation. Does the hon. Gentleman believe that the fact that teachers' pay has increased so markedly is one of the reasons why standards have increased, more pupils are getting better GCSE results and more pupils are going on to further and higher education? The number of pupils going on to further and higher education has increased from 1:8 in 1979 to 1:4 now.

Mr. Griffiths: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman did not hear what I said earlier. I pointed out that teachers are paid less today in real terms than they were last year. The figures were provided by the hon. Member for Daventry. We might as well say that, since 1702, teachers' pay has increased in real terms. It is totally irrelevant to the fact that teachers' pay went down last year.

To return to the issue of the plight of primary school teachers, last year's report of the pay review body stated:

". . . despite the Government's acceptance of our recommendation for 26,000 extra incentive allowances in primary schools, only 4,000 such allowances were being paid."

What are the clear and compelling reasons for such a shortfall? When do the Government expect to honour their acceptance of the recommendation made by the pay review body last year?

Finally, I turn to the extremely important issue of remuneration for teachers who wholly or mainly teach children with special educational needs. About 2 per cent. of children with special educational needs have statements and about 18 per cent. of them have not. Under part III, paragraph 9, of the pay document that we are debating tonight, teachers of the 18 per cent. of children with special educational needs but no statements are excluded from any additional award. The recommendation of the pay review body in paragraph 99, appendix D, paragraphs 16-19, refers to an extra entitlement for teachers who "wholly or mainly teach children with special educational needs" without any reference to the specific need for the children to have received a statement.

Often the borderline between children who are with or without statements is thin. The Government's provisions in paragraph 9, limiting that extra point to teachers of children with statements only, is an extremely restrictive view of special educational needs. I hope that the Minister will explain why that straitjacket circumscribes the award to teachers of children with such needs when no such limits were mentioned in the pay review body's recommendations.

I know that it would be a miracle if the Minister were to respond positively to any of my requests. If he had the well-being of all teachers and children at heart, he would respond positively to all of them. Let him dare to be a Daniel and stand alone against the eccentric educational views of the Department in which he serves and thus win the praise of parents, pupils and teachers.

9.15 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education (Mr. Robin Squire): With the permission of the House, I shall refer later to the questions raised by the hon. Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) and will then seek to deal with each of them.

I must say immediately that, based on a significant number of visits that I have made to many schools, I refute utterly his allegation that teacher morale is at rock bottom.

Mr. Win Griffiths: I was being polite.

Mr. Squire: If that is being polite, I am enormously relieved that the hon. Gentleman was not being rude.

In all sincerity, having spoken to many teachers I can say that they are being let down by Opposition Members, who are spreading the word that morale is at rock bottom. That is not what I have found in the schools that I have visited, and that is important.

On 12 February 1993, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State published the second report of the school teachers' pay review body. As is now well known, that report was a watershed. It made recommendations about the level of pay increase for the coming year and how it should be distributed, as review body reports customarily do. However, it did far more than that; it recommended far-reaching changes to the pay structure for classroom teachers.

Let me remind the House what the recommendations were. The previous 10-point standard scale, incentive allowances, incremental enhancements and discretionary scale points were to be replaced from 1 September by a common 18-point pay spine for all classroom teachers. Teachers would move up the spine by earning points for experience, qualifications, responsibility and excellence —especially in the classroom. Extra points would also be awarded to teachers of children with special educational needs, and to those holding posts that were difficult to fill. Teachers' points scores would be reviewed every year.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): When they are reviewed at the end of the year, is a ratchet in place, or can teachers slide back down the spine?

Mr. Squire: A safeguard is built into the initial spine to ensure that no teacher has lost out as a result of its adoption. Clearly, I cannot forecast the procedure for future years at this stage, but I think that I have dealt with my hon. Friend's query.

Mr. Stephen Byers (Wallsend): Can the Minister confirm that the order mentions a new pay spine of 18 points, with a difference of about 6 per cent. between them, whereas his Department's evidence for the pay review body recommends for next year a spine of 35 points with a difference of 3 per cent. between each? Can the Minister tell the House why his Department has recommended a totally different spine for next year?

Mr. Squire: One of the problems with debates in this place is that we can sometimes be a little behind the action. I am unable, and for that matter unwilling, to speculate about any aspect of the settlements for next year, not least because neither the hon. Gentleman nor I is aware what resources may be available.

Mr. Byers *rose*——

Mr. Squire: Hold on, let me finish. The order relates to the first year of the 18-point scale. I cannot say what the circumstances will be next year, any more than the hon. Gentleman can. It would be foolish to speculate.

Mr. Byers: The cavalry may be coming over the hill. The Department's evidence, which has already been submitted to the pay review body for next year, talks about a 35-point scale because such a scale will be workable and flexible. By implication, the scale that the Minister proposes this evening is unworkable and inflexible.

Mr. Squire: I resent that completely. The hon. Gentleman must be living in another world. We are talking about a new scale. We expect there to be further changes as it develops over the years. Of course, there will be changes. The suggestion that it is possible with such a revolutionary change to get everything right first time is strictly for the birds.

As recommended by the STRB, adjustments were to be made in two stages, on 1 April and 1 September. My right hon. Friend accordingly made two pay and conditions orders. The first, simpler, order gave effect to the changes in salary rates from 1 April; the second brought in the new pay structure from 1 September. It is this second order to which the Opposition have objected. I believe that they are wrong to do so. Let us look at what the order actually does.

First, the order maintains teachers' pay at a very competitive level. Average teachers' pay is now nearly £21,000. Good honours graduates now have starting salaries of at least £12,600. In inner London their salaries could be more than £15,000. A typical department head in

[Mr. Squire]

a London secondary school now earns more than £26,400. Forty-five per cent. of teachers will be on or above point 11 of the spine, earning at least £21,400.

Mr. Nigel Evans: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Squire: I will not give way too often as I know that other colleagues wish to speak.

Mr. Evans: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. He has just given the figures for the average pay of teachers. Does he agree that these are the very people whom the Labour party would soak through higher taxation if ever it got back into government?

Mr. Squire: My hon. Friend reminds us of last year's discussions.

It is true that the overall increase in teachers' pay in 1993 was limited to 1·5 per cent., and that this will slightly reduce teachers' pay compared with the average pay of non-manual workers. But it will remove only a small amount of the relative increase of some 12 per cent. over the years 1990 to 1992. Teachers have done very well under this Government.

The order also brings in a pay structure which opens up new possibilities for the best classroom teachers. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State described the STRB's proposals last February as "imaginative and far reaching". He went on to welcome

"the emphasis the STRB has placed on identifying and rewarding good classroom teaching".

He was right to do so. Prospects for those promoted to headships or deputy headships have always been good. The head of a typical primary school will now earn about £30,000, and the head of a typical secondary school outside London about £40,000. The salaries of the highest paid head teachers outside London will be well over £50,000, while heads of large secondary schools in London could earn £53,000, or even more if their responsibilities or performance are exceptional.

Similar opportunities now exist for high achievers in the classroom. The new pay spine which we introduced last month has 18 points. Experience and qualifications on their own will take teachers automatically to point 9 on the spine, £19,062, but they need not stop there. For those prepared to take on extra responsibilities, those who demonstrate excellence in their work, notably their classroom teaching, or those whom the school particularly wants to recruit or retain, there are further points available on the spine—18 in all, the highest of which brings a salary of £30,441.

I can think of no better way to bring about the improvements which we all want to see in our schools than by giving teachers a real incentive to improve their performance. I believe that the new structure will give governing bodies ample opportunities to exercise their discretion and reward good classroom performance.

Local education authorities will also have their part to play, by ensuring that enough funds are made available to schools. *[Laughter.]* It is interesting to detect a note of humour from the Opposition Front Bench. All hon. Members know—this does not divide the parties—that LEAs could make more rapid progress on the elimination of surplus places. On the basis of a survey carried out by the Department in 1991, it is estimated that there were then about 1·3 million surplus places in England. I am told that the cost of maintaining those places is about £255 million a year. To put that in context, the review body has estimated that the pay bill for 1993-94 will be about £10·63 billion.

Mr. Byers: Will the Minister confirm that the local education authority with the highest number of surplus places is Essex? Will he also confirm that the LEA with the most pupils in grant-maintained schools is Essex? How can he reconcile those two facts?

Mr. Squire: Without notice, I am reluctant to confirm any such figures, but I can certainly confirm that Essex has a very large number of GM schools. As the hon. Gentleman knows, from 1 April the Funding Agency for Schools will have the power to review those schools and make recommendations about removing surplus places. I expected the hon. Gentleman to point out that what has happened in his own authority in the past few weeks provides the answer to those who ask about schools opting out and surplus places. The Ralph Gardner school, with the agreement of North Tyneside LEA, is to close, despite its application for GM status. I should have liked the hon. Gentleman to make that clear, if only to calm some of the more nervous brethren sitting near him.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Is my hon. Friend aware that Lancashire county council always funks taking away surplus places in Labour areas and does its best to imagine them in Conservative-controlled areas, thus attacking our outstanding good village schools and doing its best to close them?

Mr. Squire: If Lancashire LEA is prepared to take on the ire of my hon. Friend, it is a strong LEA indeed. But I can assure her that any proposals from LEAs, including Lancashire's, are given the greatest study by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. If they are not reasonable in all the circumstances, closure proposals will be resisted.

The cost of maintaining surplus places at the moment is roughly 2 per cent. of the whole pay bill. If even a fraction of that were made available by LEAs, it would be extremely good news for teachers.

Most teachers in our schools are working extremely hard to ensure that their pupils receive the best possible education. Theirs is a difficult and challenging job, and I believe that they are worthy of the highest respect and praise. I have been very impressed by the teachers whom I have met and by the exciting things happening in our schools. I want to support teachers; I want the pay structure to be reformed to provide better rewards for the good teacher in the classroom. That is what I believe the new structure will achieve.

We now need to give schools time and space to learn to use the new structure. It may not be perfect in every detail and it will surely need refining in the light of experience, but we have taken an important step forward——

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South) *rose*——

Mr. Squire: I am coming to the end.

The Government are immensely grateful to the STRB and to its founding chairman, Sir Graham Day, for its imaginative approach. We are also grateful for the thoughtful and constructive approach of the local authorities and teaching unions to the fundamental revision that was needed to the statutory school teachers' pay and conditions document.

I commend the order to the House and I resist this prayer.

9.29 pm

Mr. Gerry Steinberg (City of Durham): Having listened to the Minister, I am sure that many schoolteachers will not be impressed by his arguments when they read the debate. On 6 June 1991, during discussions on the Third Reading of the School Teachers Pay and Conditions Bill, I predicted to the House and warned the teaching profession of the consequences of trusting the Government and the then Secretary of State, the right hon. and learned Member for Rushcliffe (Mr. Clarke), who had already, when Secretary of State for Health, betrayed the health workers.

With the order, my worst fears have been realised. In the Secretary of State's summing up of that debate on 6 June 1991, he accused Labour Members of showing

"their true colours by voting against one of the most welcome and important Bills that the education service has seen in a generation."—[*Official Report*, 6 June 1991; Vol. 192, c. 463.]

The Government showed their true colours that day when they attempted to deceive the teaching profession into believing that they were getting the only statutory truly independent pay review body.

Typically, the Government have broken their word, as they have done on many other occasions in the past 14 years. The pay review body, like its predecessor the interim advisory committee which was set up in 1987, is anything but an independent body. It is purely a front created by Governmnent to ensure that the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State could determine teachers' pay and conditions.

In the debate on 6 June 1991, I told the House that the Bill allowed the Secretary of State to choose the chairman and members of the review body and decide what it discussed, and also enabled him to amend its recommendations or to ignore them completely and implement his own. The review body is anything but independent. In a radio interview earlier that day, the Secretary of State denied that he had such powers. In the debate he said:

"if the Secretary of State wishes to make a substantial modification to the review body's recommendations, he can do so only by obtaining Parliament's consent so to act."—[*Official Report*, 6 June 1991; Vol. 192, c. 454.]

I would argue that he has failed to do that, or even bothered to attempt to do that. On Second Reading, the then Education Minister, the hon. Member for Enfield, North (Mr. Eggar), said:

"The review body has to have regard to whatever directions the Secretary of State gives, but it does not have to abide by them."—[*Official Report*, 29 April 1991; Vol. 190, c. 112.]

The order makes a mockery of that statement.

Who is telling the truth and predicting the consequences accurately? I leave that for hon. Members to decide, but the pay review body's recommendations were ignored by the Government and today's debate is at the insistence of the Labour party. So much for the promises and words of the then Secretary of State and his Ministers of the time.

On that fateful day, teachers' negotiating rights were finally stripped away, with the expected consequences. Only our demands to debate the order can bring the Secretary of State to account for his decision to ignore his review body's recommendations and impose his misguided dogma, as we predicted at the time. He has imposed a derisory pay increase of half a penny in the pound for teachers. Having encouraged the review body to develop one method of performance-related pay, he rejected its recommendations and imposed his own system through the designation of pilot schools for performance-related pay.

Interestingly, the Secretary of State said on Third Reading:

"one of the principal differences between the interim advisory committee and the new review body is that the new body will not operate within a predetermined financial envelope."

He also said:

"The Government are submitting themselves to the objective judgment of a body which will recommend the right pay, terms and conditions for teachers."—[*Official Report*, 6 June 1991; Vol. 192, c. 433-34.]—

[Interruption.] I think that my hon. Friend the Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) said that that was a joke. When I prepared my speech, I wrote down the same words. What a joke—the words could have been said by a comedian, and they probably were. The Government never had any intention of allowing a truly independent pay review body. The teachers' pay increase of 1·5 per cent. in 1993 was imposed dictatorially by the Government on the pay review body, which did not have the guts to oppose the Government. That is not surprising because its members —every one of them—are appointed by the Government. Even the pay review body's recommendation, which would have meant a mind-boggling increase of 1·8 per cent., was overruled.

All the Government's fine words of 1991 have meant nothing, and the review body has proved to be just a puppet of the Government. Teachers' pay continues to be eroded. The hon. Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Evans) gave statistics about pay increases in real terms since 1979. I can tell the hon. Gentleman that in 1974 the average pay for teachers was 136 per cent. of non-manual earnings. At the end of the interim advisory committee era in 1990, it had dropped to 104 per cent. of non-manual earnings. By the time the next increase is due, it is projected that teachers' pay will have declined to 102 per cent. of non-manual earnings. In other words, teachers have seen their pay eroded over the last 10 to 15 years under the Government.

Mr. Nigel Evans: Can the hon. Gentleman explain why it was that between 1974 and 1979, under the last Labour Government—let us hope that it was indeed the last—teachers' pay increased by 6 per cent. in real terms, while between 1979 and today it has increased by 57 per cent.?

Mr. Steinberg: Teachers' pay has increased during the period of the Government's misrule of the economy, but their pay has not risen by as much as that of other non-manual earnings.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Steinberg: The hon. Lady has been on her feet about three times tonight—she might as well make a speech.

So much for the Government's so-called commitment to teachers and education. The sad facts are that, while teachers become more and more undervalued by the Government, standards cannot hope to be raised.

We are told that more teachers have been recruited into the profession. However, I will give a warning and I give it with great sincerity. There is no doubt that the recession has acted as a recruiting agent, but once the recession has ended—we are told by this hapless Government that it is

[Mr. Steinberg]

ending now—many of the recruits will leave to get better paid, less stressful jobs and teacher shortages will again become a major problem.

Even now we have unqualified temporaries from overseas being used as teachers in our schools. We still have teacher shortages, and the situation will get worse. On the whole, teachers have taken on more work and had their pay and conditions worsened by the latest reforms. Having shown great commitment in their attempts to make the Government changes successful, they are then stabbed in the back by the Government. Teachers suffer from the underfunding of education, but so do our children who are penalised by the Government's hypocritical approach to education.

I wish to comment next on performance-related pay. Again, the pay review body's recommendations—that only deputy heads and heads should be considered for performance-related pay—were overruled. The Secretary of State has dictatorially ignored the recommendations and designated 14 schools as performance-related pay pilot schools. Incidentally, I understand that some of those schools have asked to be withdrawn from the scheme as they feel that they have been deceived.

I strongly oppose performance-related pay in any shape or form for teachers. Performance-related pay is divisive, it de-motivates and it demoralises. Against the advice of professionals and of the review body, the Government have arbitrarily enforced their dogmatic and bigoted beliefs which will further demoralise the teaching profession. Whatever one's opinion may be about performance-related pay, it is clear that the pay review body did not see it as the answer to teachers' pay. It was not an option that the pay review body favoured, even given its recommended rise, which it admitted was

"less than is needed in respect of recruitment, retention and motivation".

Contrary to what the previous Secretary of State said, a Secretary of State can impose pay settlements and working conditions for teachers which do not result from the pay review body recommendation.

Today's order proves that the Secretary of State has dictatorial power over pay levels, pay structure and conditions of service for teachers. It proves conclusively once and for all that the pay review body is a sham and no substitute for free collective bargaining and agreements. The order should be vigorously opposed.

9.39 pm

Mr. Don Foster (Bath): I begin by declaring an interest as a consultant to both the National Union of Teachers and the Association of Teachers and Lecturers. Although I do not speak for them, I suspect that members of those unions and of all other teacher unions would have been surprised to hear the Minister's comments about the state of morale in the profession. I have met many teachers in the past 18 months. I assure the Minister that morale within the profession is at a low ebb.

Mr. Robin Squire: I wish to add a coda, to which the hon. Gentleman may be coming. There has been a significant sea change of opinion in the past few months, for reasons of which the whole House will be aware, with the interim report of Sir Ron Dearing. I was referring to that when I spoke about morale.

Mr. Foster: I am more than willing to acknowledge that there has been a change in attitude as a result of what Sir Ron Dearing has done. That is because Sir Ron has demonstrated the great benefits of consultation—something which the Secretary of State and the Government Front-Bench team have been unwilling to do.

Mr. Oliver Heald (Hertfordshire, North): Who set up the Dearing committee? What the hon. Gentleman says is absolute poppycock. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Foster: These comments backwards and forwards across the Chamber are of no great benefit. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is well aware that the reason it was necessary to set up the Dearing review was the strife that had been created in our education service as a result of the proposals and actions of the Government and, in particular, the Secretary of State. Many people in the teaching profession still feel at a low ebb despite what Sir Ron Dearing has done.

I entirely agree with the Minister on one thing: he said that teachers deserved the "highest respect and praise". I am sure that the whole House agrees with that. It has to be said that the excellent work that we still see in our schools occurs despite the Secretary of State's and the Government's proposals, not because of them.

The order is about the pay-round proposals. The comments that were made when the proposals were first announced were very critical. I did a trawl of the newspapers. "Derisory", "a con", "abysmal", "a recipe for conflict" and "an insult" were just some of the reactions that were reported. Why were people so worried? One of the reasons, as other hon. Members have said, was that the announcement demonstrated the complete lack of independence of the review body. It is interesting to note that the Public Finance Foundation, a branch of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy, pointed out that teachers had fared worse than other professions with review bodies. It concluded that the review body's work to address the problems—this is worth hearing—of low teacher morale and the need for a pay structure in line with the changing needs of the profession had been "nipped in the bud".

One of the most obvious demonstrations of the lack of independence of that pay review body is in paragraph v. of the summary of its report, which says:

"Inevitably, our review has been coloured by the Government's announcement in November that public sector pay increases over the coming year should be in the range zero to 1·5 per cent."

The review had been coloured. The same paragraph refers to the body's likely constraint by the Government's policy.

As other hon. Members have mentioned, one of the major problems for teachers at present, and one of the obvious reasons for low morale, is the work load. It is interesting that before this debate we discussed education in Northern Ireland. The Minister, the hon. Member for Devizes (Mr. Ancram), acknowledged the problems of the heavy work load for teachers. Only yesterday he was quoted in an interview in the *Belfast Telegraph* as referring to that very subject. He said:

"Overload is a very serious problem because it is very debilitating to teachers and teaching. I would like to have a resolution to this problem . . . within a reasonable timescale."

I hope that, for the sake of the people teaching in Northern Ireland, he is successful.

The order will actually increase the work load for teachers in England, because even the review body

acknowledged that the implementation of its recommendations would lead, as a result of the already overstretched budgets of local education authorities, to

"a deterioration in staffing levels".

That obviously has implications for the remaining staff in the profession.

The award gives the wrong signals to those working in the education service. It does nothing to restore morale or to enhance motivation. For that reason, it is especially important that the Minister makes it clear to the House tonight that neither he nor the Secretary of State has in any way pre-empted the review body's recommendations for 1994. I am sure that the whole House will wish to hear that assurance.

I hope that the Minister will also assure us that in future he will take more notice of the review body's other recommendations. Reference has already been made to the lack of acknowledgement of the recommendations about performance-related pay. Like other hon. Members, I am concerned about performance-related pay, especially as I acknowledge that teaching is a co-operative venture. It is about partnership among teachers, not competition between them.

The review body said, in effect, that one should not divert current appraisal work towards PRP, that one should not even think of going ahead before much more work had been done on developing acceptable indicators and that one should not think of introducing a scheme unless one were willing to make extra money available to fund it.

In spite of those three key warnings, the Government have gone ahead and, as we notice in paragraph 7 of the document, the Secretary of State ignored that advice and went ahead with 14 pilot schools. Other hon. Members have referred to the fact that some of those 14 schools have already dropped out, but I think that the House would like to know how many of those 14 schools have dropped out. My understanding—I look for confirmation from the Minister—is that five out of 14 schools have dropped out. *[Interruption.]* The Minister is saying two from a sedentary position. I am sure that the way in which he was indicating two will not be recorded.

It will be interesting to know whether the Minister agrees with the opinion that was expressed by the chairman of the governors of a school in Berkshire, who said that they had been conned into joining those trials and that

"The Government well and truly stepped over the mark."

I wonder whether the Minister agrees that that is what they have done.

I also accept that the Government have given themselves—sadly, I believe—the right to ignore or amend the review body's recommendations, but if they do so in future I hope that they will consult more widely first. The hon. Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) referred to the worries, for instance, about teachers for pupils with special educational needs. I wish that he had looked more closely at the advice from the British Association of Teachers of the Deaf.

I hope that the Department will recognise the difficulties that are imposed on schools by the implementation of major changes. That may seem obvious, but it is worth reflecting that the notification that was given to heads and governors to implement the changes and assimilations by 1 September last year was sent out in a letter dated 15 July. That allowed very little time to do all the necessary work. The order shows a lack of regard for the review body and for heads, teachers and governors of our schools.

9.51 pm

Mr. Nigel Evans (Ribble Valley): I hope that the hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Foster) is not on performance-related pay from the teachers' unions that he represents. If he is, heaven help his income.

Time and again, we hear from the hon. Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) about low teacher morale or about how teachers were much better off under the last Labour Government. That is not true. One has only to look at teachers' pay between 1974 and 1979 to see that they were far more poorly paid than they are now.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: I was fascinated by the highly selective statistics given by the hon. Member for City of Durham (Mr. Steinberg)—I cannot see him in his place now. Like most members of the Labour party, he is behind the times. He drew his conclusions from statistics up to 1990 when the relative pay of teachers compared to non-manual workers was 105. He omitted to mention, not surprisingly, that in 1991 the relative pay was 112 and in 1992 it was 118—as compared with 106 when we took office.

Mr. Evans: That does not surprise me. I am sure that the hon. Member was burning the midnight oil trying to work out some statistics to make the Labour party's shabby little case look better.

We have seen teachers' pay rise remarkably in real terms since 1979 and, at the same time, we have seen standards in our schools improve. Far too often we look at the input in education as opposed to the output. We have seen GCSE results improve and far more of our youngsters are staying on for A-levels, either in their own school or in further and higher education. Many of them have done extremely well and have gone on to university. The number going to university has risen from one in eight to one in four and the Government are determined that, by the end of the century, we will see one in three of our youngsters going to university. That is superb.

Mr. Don Foster: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that as more and more students go into higher education—and that is worth supporting—one in eight is dropping out because of a lack of funding?

Mr. Evans: All I can say is that we are seeing more of our youngsters going on to further and higher education and benefiting from it. We want to ensure that our youngsters are taking relevant courses that will benefit them. Perhaps in too many cases our youngsters take courses that are not right for them and drop out because of that. We need to pay more attention to that.

Ms Estelle Morris (Birmingham, Yardley): The hon. Gentleman's speech so far seems to have been about comparative wage rates for teachers between now and some time in the past. Has not the hon. Gentleman realised that we are concerned because of the Government's attitude to the review body and because in three of the past four years the Government have ignored the recommendations from the pay review body? It is the breaking of the pledge that the Government made to accept the recommendations from the review body that is causing a downward trend in morale.

In the rest of his speech, will the hon. Gentleman give us fewer statistics comparing one year with another and address the real concern of Labour Members, which is that

[Ms Estelle Morris]

his Government and Ministers have proved that they are not prepared to accept the recommendations of the review body? It was the Government's pledge to accept such recommendations that enabled teachers to go along with the idea in the first place.

Mr. Evans: Of course, I do not accept what the hon. Lady says about morale in our schools.

Before I became a Member of Parliament for Ribble Valley, I was a county councillor in West Glamorgan. I was the chairman of a governing body for a couple of years and a member of many other governing bodies, as was the practice in Labour-controlled county councils in those days. During those six years as a governor, I witnessed an absolute sea change when we, through Government policy, depoliticised those governing bodies. If the Opposition want to talk about low morale in the teaching profession, they need only remember when Labour councillors were sitting on the governing bodies of schools and dictating to them exactly what their policies should be. That is when there was low morale.

The mood has changed since then, because we have taken power away from the politicians on the governing bodies and given it to those to whom it belongs—the parents, teachers and the professionals in the teaching profession. We have taken it away from the politicians, and the Opposition do not like it.

The pay of teachers has increased by 57 per cent. in real terms between 1979 and 1993. The Minister also stated some of the amounts that teachers are currently earning. At one stage, I intervened to say that the average pay of some of our teachers is not what we would call extremely high, but, had the Opposition won the election, teachers would have been in the very sector of society that would be caught by the higher taxes that the Opposition would have introduced.

During the period that the Conservatives have been in government, we have seen the tax on teachers' pay come down remarkably, because, since 1979, the basic rate of tax has dropped from 33 per cent. to 25 per cent., and, in certain sectors, to 20 per cent. Teachers are the very people who would have seen their taxes increase if Labour had won the general election.

Mr. Derek Enright (Hemsworth): Will the hon. Gentleman speculate on what pay rise the teachers should have if the Chancellor of the Exchequer puts VAT on books? Does he agree that it should be considerable and will he promise to fight for such a rise if VAT is slapped on books?

Mr. Evans: The hon. Gentleman is mistaken if he thinks I will speculate about what will be in the Budget on 30 November. I will speculate about what would happen if there were a return of a Labour Government. I do not really need to speculate, because one has only to remember what the shadow Chancellor said during the general election campaign, when he made the great mistake that many people feel caused Labour to lose the general election. What did the Labour party then do? It promoted him to be its leader. That is what happens in the Labour party; it promotes failures rather than gets rid of them.

Opposition Members are concentrating on one narrow aspect of teachers' pay and incentives when they should be looking at their gamut. We have seen an increase in standards and incentives. We want to drive standards up, and time and again that is what we are seeing in education in our schools.

We have seen the introduction of grant-maintained schools, and 1,000 schools have opted for that status. The Opposition would take the rights of the parents away from those schools and they would be trawled back into local authority control, which would be an absolute disgrace. They should listen to parents on that issue, but they will not do so.

Through the local management of schools, governing bodies now have more control over their budgets so that they can spend the money on those items that they think will be of benefit to their youngsters. When Opposition Members talk about performance-related pay and comparisons with the private sector, is not it amazing that they want the teaching profession—which we believe is doing a superb job—to have the rewards of the private sector but not the demands?

Mr. Devlin: My hon. Friend may be aware that I am the governor of a private school in my constituency which is one of the highest performing newly formed private schools in the past few years and gets a high percentage of boys into Oxford, Cambridge and other universities. Is he aware that I find it extraordinary that the hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Foster) suggested earlier that performance-related pay is inimical to the co-operative nature of teaching children? In our school, which out-performs nearly all of the state sector, there is performance-related pay and the teachers work extremely well together. The value of the Secretary of State's work is of great benefit to the future of the teaching profession.

Mr. Evans: I can only accept everything that my hon. Friend has said on that subject. I am sure that he makes an extremely good governor who contributes well to that governing body.

The Government have seen many changes over their period in office. During the time that I was a governor of a school in my area, I saw some of those changes coming in and it is right that we are determined to continue with the process of ensuring that youngsters in our schools get the best education.

Money has been invested in the technical and vocational educational initiative to ensure that youngsters with a more vocational aspect of their education will get the sort of education that they deserve. General national vocational qualifications have been introduced alongside those initiatives to ensure that youngsters who are not academic are able to concentrate on those lessons that will be of benefit to them when they leave school.

Mr. Don Foster: I share the hon. Gentleman's pleasure at success of the initiatives to which he has just referred. He will be aware that those initiatives were available for pupils in all state schools. Does he agree that, in the further development of that process through the new technology initiative, it is therefore right for the Secretary of State to make the money available only for children in grant-maintained or voluntary-aided schools?

Mr. Robin Squire: There is now flexibility.

Mr. Evans: As the Minister has said, there is now flexibility and that is what we want to see in our schools.

Mr. Matthew Banks (Southport): If I might briefly take my hon. Friend back to something that he mentioned earlier, does he agree that it is of paramount importance, when discussing matters relating to conditions of service and pay, that we constantly state that under this Government teachers' pay has risen dramatically in real terms and that, no matter what Opposition Members say, teachers' pay under the last Labour Government barely rose at all?

Mr. Evans: That is one of the reasons why my hon. Friend the Member for Southport (Mr. Banks) was elected and why the Liberal Democrats lost that seat.

Mr. Nick Hawkins (Blackpool, South): My hon. Friend the Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Evans) has just mentioned the technical and vocational educational initiative. Opposition Members should recognise that many of their colleagues in local government, especially in the Kirklees local authority, bitterly opposed the introduction of TVEI in the teeth of the support for TVEI consistently made clear by many Labour-supporting teachers and head teachers throughout the middle and late 1980s.

I was heavily involved in a number of those battles when I was the parliamentary candidate for Huddersfield. Many socialists in west Yorkshire opposed TVEI tooth and nail and continued to do so against all educational common sense.

Mr. Evans: It would not be the first time that Opposition Members have done a U-turn on a policy that was introduced by the Government and in which they now see some merit.

I shall bring my comments to a close, as many other hon. Members wish to speak. The Government are absolutely committed to the teaching profession and are proud of the work that they are doing and we will ensure that that work carries on in the future.

10.3 pm

Mr. Stephen Byers (Wallsend): I am grateful to have the opportunity to make a contribution to this debate, because, before my election in April last year, I had the pleasure of serving as chairman of the national employers' organisation for school teachers, which is the body that represents the local authority employers. Before that, I was a member of the Burnham committee which was later abolished by the Conservative Government.

I shall make one comment about the need to restore negotiating rights to the 400,000 teachers in England and Wales and I shall then make some detailed comments about the order. It must be a matter of great regret to the House that we have such a large body of workers who are unable to enjoy the basic democratic right of negotiating their own pay and conditions of service. It is a right which many in the House argued should be enjoyed in other countries when it was denied to people there. I am thinking especially of Solidarity in Poland. Many Conservative Members were keen to extol the virtues of that trade union and to give it the ability to negotiate freely with the Polish Government of the day. Many of us feel that the time has come to give teachers the right to negotiate freely with their local authority employers.

Mr. Devlin: Does the hon. Gentleman consider that the Burnham machinery was successful? It was clear that, year after year, the employers and unions agreed a pay increase that they then expected someone else—the Government—to fund. That position was clearly unsatisfactory. Either the Government had to have some role in the negotiating procedure, because they were footing the bill, or the whole machinery had to be changed. That is why the machinery was scrapped.

The value of the present system is that the Secretary of State at least has some say in the way in which the negotiations are carried out and he is doing a great deal through the order and the proposals that will come forward for next year to enable good teachers to stay in the classroom.

Mr. Byers: To say that the Secretary of State now has some say in the matter is rather an understatement. He appoints all the members of the review body. He gives them the remit under which they have to operate and, once the report has been received, he modifies it by order so that it cannot be identified as the original submission from the review body.

The Burnham committee had the benefit of, for example, the negotiators being people with practical experience who would know the practical difficulties to which certain proposals would give rise. One of the reasons why teachers had a fair deal throughout the 1980s was precisely that for seven of the 10 years pay was determined by the Burnham committee. The teachers' present difficulty is that in three of the past four years, the Government have changed the review body's recommendations, not for the better, but by reducing or delaying the amount that teachers would have got as a result of the review body's recommendations.

There is a democratic principle at stake when considering free nogotiations. There are also practical reasons why negotiations are important. There are people with expertise and with day-to-day experience who can bring those qualities to bear on the proposals that come forward.

Mr. Heald: Does the hon. Gentleman propose bringing back the Burnham committee? Is it not right to say that in three out of the last four years of its operation it could not agree?

Mr. Byers: I agreed with the Burnham committee's recommendations to the then Secretary of State. It is a matter of regret that the Secretary of State chose to ignore them. The Burnham made two main proposals. The first was that the size of both sides of the committee should be reduced. The second was that there should be a deadline by which the committee would have to make recommendations which it would then put to the Secretary of State. The committee would then not have had the difficulties that it experienced in the previous three to four years. Its proposals to the Secretary of State were practical. If he had looked at them rationally and less dogmatically, he would have been able to agree to them. For political reasons, the then Secretary of State decided that he wanted to remove negotiating rights from teachers. That is a matter of deep regret and that is why we are now dealing with the order.

The order does not reflect the recommendations that came from the schoolteachers' pay review body. It modifies it substantially, as the memorandum before us clearly demonstrates.

The schoolteachers' pay review body, even though it had been given a remit by the Secretary of State, proposed

[Mr. Byers]

an end-loaded settlement that would have cost 1·8 per cent. in a full year on the total pay bill for teachers. That was unacceptable to the Government because they had to bring it within the 1·5 per cent. public pay policy envelope. It is because of the Government's need to achieve that overriding political objective that we have some of the difficulties that are created by the order.

What is even worse, though—to add insult to injury—is that even though only 1·5 per cent. is being made available to teachers pay overall, the Government are not even funding the 1·5 per cent. increase. The Minister will be aware that the increase in the education standard spending assessment for local education authorities is only 0·25 per cent. in 1993-94, compared with the actual spend on education last year.

The Minister may live in a never-never land where actual spend does not mean much. It clearly means that it is money that was spent in the previous financial year. That, of course, is ignored by the Government because they see it as Labour local authorities committing the cardinal sin of overspending on education. The Government ignore that and are only prepared to increase the education standard spending assessment by the amount that they believe should have been spent, which is substantially less than what Labour local authorities are spending.

Mr. Robin Squire: The hon. Gentleman is taking me back to a previous role, which is always a dangerous trip to make. My memory is that the increase year on year—a legitimate comparison for the adjusted services of education—is approximately 3 per cent. If that is not so, I shall make that clear elsewhere. Against the background of inflation conditions that we had, I think that that is a reasonable settlement.

Mr. Byers: Because of his previous portfolio, I think that the Minister knows full well that that does not compare with what is happening in reality. That may be all right as far as the Treasury is concerned—we know that the Treasury dominates exactly what his Department can now do—but in terms of what is being spent in our schools, which must concern the House, there has been an increase of only 0·25 per cent. year to year as a result of the decisions that the Government have made. Financial difficulties will be experienced by local education authorities and individual schools as a result of the paltry increase that teachers will get. We should have had a reasonable and responsible increase properly funded by the Government.

On the question of structure, the hon. Member for Bath (Mr. Foster) said that the document was not published until 15 July, which, in practice, has meant that governing bodies, which will implement many of the structural changes, have simply not had the time to put those changes in place. If we experience the same procedure next year, there will be a strong argument—I suggest this in a constructive way—for the document to be published earlier so that governing bodies in the summer term can consider the modifications to which the order will give rise.

The order allows the Secretary of State to designate individual schools to introduce performance-related pay on a pilot basis. We understand that, originally, 14 schools volunteered. Were they really volunteers or had they merely expressed an interest in a letter at some stage and found themselves, in the full glare of publicity, described as having volunteered? Can the Minister confirm that, of those 14, five have indicated that they do not want to proceed? It would be interesting to hear the Minister say whether it is five or fewer.

When he chaired the review body, Sir Graham Day heard much evidence about PRP. Because of his industrial background, he was a man of great experience of the benefits, in certain sectors, that can come from the introduction of PRP. Sir Graham Day knew very well that it was almost impossible to introduce performance-related pay into the schools sector. That is why he wanted to proceed with caution, and why the review body was prepared to do no more than start some feasibility studies of how performance-related pay could work; it was not prepared to go any further than that, because it realised the difficulties that were involved and the need to proceed with caution. There is great concern that, by introducing the order, the Government are moving towards a system under which pilot projects can be set up through designation by the Secretary of State.

Many of us disagree fundamentally with the whole idea of performance-related pay in schools. Who is to judge? Who is it to be awarded to? Is it to be awarded to the whole school, an individual department, a group of teachers or individual teachers? Those are difficult issues, which need to be tackled sensibly and sympathetically. As I said, Sir Graham Day, a highly experienced industrialist, was not prepared to embark on pilot projects because of the difficulties that he envisaged. The order represents the triumph of political dogma over education reason.

I have questions about two specific points that arise from the order, the first of which concerns the 18-point pay spine for qualified teachers. As I told the Minister, I should be interested to hear why it is that, in his Department's own evidence, which has now been submitted to the pay review body for next year, a 35-point pay scale is recommended for qualified teachers. The reason given is that, in the Department's view, such a scale will be workable and flexible. By implication, that means that the 18-point spine proposed in the order is unworkable and inflexible. I shall be interested to hear why the Minister's own Department has made such a substantial change.

My second specific point concerning the structure changes before us relates to the windfall earnings that will come to certain individual teachers. I hope that the Minister will consider that matter. The provision affects those teachers who were in service under the old Burnham structure, which was abolished in 1987. The order states that they are to receive one spine point for each year of service, in the same way as all other teachers. But it will give a windfall gain to teachers who have had a break in service since 1987 and have not yet reached the top of the standard scale.

We are not talking about small amounts. The sums will be substantial, and the employers have calculated that, for some local education authorities, the provision will mean an additional 0·25 per cent. on the salary bill. That may not seem much to hon. Members, but it is the equivalent of 1,000 teachers, so the issue is crucial.

What does the Minister intend to do about those windfall earnings? They will be random in nature: they will turn up in individual schools—perhaps more than one teacher in a particular school will be eligible for them. What will the Minister do to help schools one or two of whose teachers experience a windfall increase as a result of

the order? Will there be additional support? How will the arrangements operate under the scheme of delegation under local management of schools, bearing in mind the fact that it is not the actual salary that is covered under the local management arrangements but the average salary for the local authority as a whole? How does the Minister intend to tackle that point?

The order represents the worst of all possible worlds. It will create financial difficulties for individual local education authorities and schools because of the chronic underfunding of the education service by this Government. It will do nothing to raise morale among our teachers. It will not retain, recruit and motivate any of our teachers. We need an order that will reward and ensure that we keep high-quality teachers and so invest in high-quality education for our children. It is because the order fails to achieve those objectives that it should be opposed.

10.18 pm

Mr. Win Griffiths: It is worth reminding the Minister of the point with which my hon. Friend the Member for Wallsend (Mr. Byers) finished, because, in setting out the Government's stall, the Minister emphasised what he felt were the positive aspects of the award—the 18-point spine, the opportunities for extra points based on excellence and responsibility, and so on. He gave the impression that any successful school, with teachers diligently carrying out responsibilities and performing excellently in the classroom, would be able to claim up to five extra points for responsibility and up to three points for excellence. He suggested that a headmaster would recommend teachers for points because of the excellence of their performance. The truth is that everything depends on the resources that are made available through the national pay award, which percolate down to local authorities and then to schools.

There is a severe limit on any flexibility in the system. Will any head teacher have total carte blanche to reward a member of staff in exactly the way in which he or she would want? The truth is that the money is not there.

I do not want the Minister to advance well-rehearsed arguments about the history of pay increases since the year dot, but as the pay review body is likely to be in existence for some time, I should like him to consider its independence. Unfortunately, it has been rather supine in accepting the financial limits that have been placed on it by the Government, even though in previous debates Ministers and the Secretary of State made it quite clear that no financial limit would be placed on its consideration of teachers' pay. It has admitted, however, that its recommendations are less than is necessary to ensure a well-motivated profession of teachers who want to stay in schools or to attract others with good qualifications to the profession.

None of those issues has been tackled by the Minister. Is he prepared to say that the pay review body will be directed not to pay heed to any financial limit placed on it by the Government but to respond honestly with the recommendations that it believes to be necessary to ensure a well-paid and well-motivated teaching force, providing our young people with a quality education? One of the great disappointments this year has been the way in which the pay review body has meekly accepted the financial limits that the Government have placed on it.

I hope, too, that the Minister will explain clearly why even the modest recommendations of the pay review body have not been accepted, why the special educational needs sector is limited only to teachers who are teaching with statements and exactly when primary schools will get all the allowances that were recommended by the pay review body. We look forward to the answers and hope that there will be a positive response to the needs outlined by the pay review body which were, unfortunately, rejected by the Government.

10.26 pm

Mr. Robin Squire: This has been an enjoyable if short debate to which hon. Members from both parties have made important contributions. I am sure that they will accept that if I cannot deal with every issue raised now, I shall write to them about any outstanding matters.

I listened carefully to see whether I could learn why Labour Members think that it would be right to annul the order and create administrative chaos in schools and local education authorities which have made good progress by putting it into effect. I listened, but I confess that I have not found the answer.

A variety of reasons were advanced. I do not think that it is too much of a caricature to summarise them as follows: Labour Members object to the independent review body system; they object to the Government adjusting the recommendations so that all public sector employees were this year affected in the same way by the Government's approach to pay—in other words, they object to fair treatment; they object to the notion that good teachers might be paid more than bad; and they object to schools that have developed their own arrangements for rewarding good performance being permitted to continue to do so.

I deal now with specific questions. The background to the 1993-94 settlement was mentioned by the hon. Members for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) and for City of Durham (Mr. Steinberg), among others. The Government did not put a financial constraint on the schoolteachers pay review body, which was directed to have regard to the 0 to 1·5 per cent. overall limit. I remind the House that the pay restraint policy applied to all public sector groups without exception. The 0·35 per cent., to which the hon. Member for Bridgend referred, did not affect the salary settlement for 1993-94, but it would have affected the settlement for 1994-95. In fairness to all other public sector workers, the Secretary of State saw no reason to depart from the practice which was affecting every other public sector employee. I think that most hon. Members would agree with that.

In answer to the hon. Members for Bath (Mr. Foster) and for Bridgend, I confirm that there is no specific financial constraint or percentage limit on pay settlements for 1994-95. We have, of course, consistently said that we shall accept the recommendations of the review bodies unless there are clear and compelling reasons to the contrary, but the review bodies will have to be realistic about the context in which they operate, which will not be clear until after the forthcoming Budget statement.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stockton, South (Mr. Devlin) helpfully wondered about an alternative. I suspect that a number of Labour Members would like to return to what they term "collective bargaining". Many people would argue that the performance of collective bargaining in the 20 years up to the 1986 settlement, which produced only thre negotiated settlements for teachers, has done

[Mr. Robin Squire]

more than almost anything else to downplay teachers' reputations in the eyes of the public. I submit that teachers are better off with the body that they now have.

As for performance-related pay, our view is that across all public services, regular and direct links should be established between a person's contribution to the standards of service provided and his or her reward. We are determined to raise standards in the public sector.

On the issue of schools dropping out, I can confirm that two have dropped out and that one further school rumoured to have dropped out is carrying on, as are all the other schools.

Time does not allow me to deal with every issue, but I shall use the balance of the time available to answer the hon. Member for Bridgend. The important comparison to bear in mind is that the Opposition presided over an unparalleled decline in teachers' salaries until 1979. They do not like being reminded of it, but it happens to be true. The average pay of schoolteachers, as my hon. Friends the Members for Ribble Valley (Mr. Evans) and for Southport (Mr. Banks) reminded us——

It being one and a half hours after commencement of proceedings on the motion, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Order [22 October]:—*

The House divided: Ayes 175, Noes 237.

Division No. 370] **[10.29**

AYES

Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Barnes, Harry
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Boyce, Jimmy
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dixon, Don
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fyfe, Maria
Gapes, Mike
Gerrard, Neil
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie *(Tottenham)*
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Gunnell, John
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Illsley, Eric
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kirkwood, Archy
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCrea, Rev William
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
Mackinlay, Andrew
McMaster, Gordon
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Mahon, Alice
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Paisley, Rev Ian
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Tipping, Paddy
Tyler, Paul
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Jack Thompson and
Mr. Dennis Turner.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Bates, Michael
Bellingham, Henry
Beresford, Sir Paul
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Clappison, James
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Day, Stephen
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold

Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Gill, Christopher
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Hendry, Charles
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knox, Sir David
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David *(Taunton)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David *(Wavsney)*
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Sackville, Tom
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. Robert G. Hughes.

Question accordingly negatived.

St. Philip's Sixth Form College, Birmingham

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Lightbown.]*

10.41 pm

Ms Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): I am taking the unusual step of raising the future of St. Philip's sixth form college in my constituency because I am very concerned that a popular, happy and academically successful college is being undermined by a very small group of trustees who will not listen to parents, students, staff, or mainstream Catholic opinion in Birmingham. I ask the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Further and Higher Education and, through him, the Secretary of State to intervene to preserve that fine educational institution, as happened in the case of the school in Stratford in London, which was being undermined by a small faction that had taken control of the governing body of the school and was undermining the education of the children at that school.

I am very sad indeed to have to bring this matter to the attention of the House and to make this unusual request. I myself attended St. Paul's then grammar school, which was a sister school of St. Philip's. One of my brothers and many of my uncles and cousins attended St. Philip's school. Unfortunately, those who are now in control of the governing body seem not to be as wise or as concerned for Catholic education in Birmingham as their predecessors were.

St. Philip's, which was a grammar school, is now a sixth form Roman Catholic college. It is extremely popular. It has more than 900 students, and it has had to turn away students this year and in previous years. Indeed, it has turned away Catholic students. Its academic results are excellent. It recently won a prestigious academic award. It is a very happy and popular college. It is a Catholic college with a Catholic ethos. All students receive Catholic education, but within an ethos that is multicultural and shows deep respect for other world religions. The result is that the parents of students committed to other faiths are keen for their children to attend St. Philip's because there is a religious ethos and deep respect for religions at that college.

I should explain as background that Roman Catholic education in Birmingham, of which I am a product, has had to face up to the multicultural nature of our city. It used to be the case that all Catholic schools in Birmingham were all-white. As our population changed, our black populations came mainly from the Caribbean and the Indian sub-continent and had very few Catholics. Schools such as St. Clare's, in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker), which also recently won a prestigious award and at which my sister used to teach, started to be all-white in a multicultural city. Wisely and sensibly, such schools said that they would give priority to Catholic children but invite children from all faiths in the city. They would show respect to all faiths and be a beacon of high-quality Catholic education in our city. Catholic education in Birmingham has been respected for that contribution and has learnt that lesson.

Sadly and suddenly, the oratory fathers have decided to break that tradition. Because one third of the students at St. Philip's college are Catholic, the oratory fathers decided that they must close the college. The first preference announced was to turn the college into a boys' Catholic secondary school. Obviously, that was a ridiculous proposition because we have surplus places in our secondary schools in Birmingham and the demand is for girls' schools, if there is to be any change. There is no demand for a boys' secondary school.

Having failed in that endeavour, having consulted the staff and parents, and having been opposed by everyone who was consulted, they decided, extraordinarily, to hand the college to the Anglican Church and arrange for it to be transferred to another site. That is an extremely odd decision. It is disturbing for the Catholic staff at the college who wonder whether they will be told one day that they must cease to teach in a Catholic ethos and teach in the Anglican ethos. The proposal is extraordinary—it is an argument for those concerned with Catholic education—and is causing enormous anxiety among mainstream Catholics in Birmingham.

That is not the issue that I raise in the House tonight. My concern is to secure the future of this fine academic institution and ensure that current students at the college do not have their education undermined. Because of the way in which the unrepresentative governing body is managing the college, I am concerned that the college might be undermined and might not survive to be transferred to another site under Anglican authority. It seems that those who are managing the college know nothing about education, care nothing about education, and do not have respect for academic traditions and the decent management of such a fine college.

Since the decision was made to move the college, a pattern of ugly behaviour by the governing body has developed. The governing body ceased to act democratically. It would not allow the elected staff representative to be on the governing body—it chose its own community representative, who was part of its faction. It called all sorts of confidential meetings, it would not circulate minutes, and it started to behave in a deeply undemocratic way. It also ceased to meet or consult parents and students.

Since the governing body consulted parents about the closure of the college, parents who are worried about the education of their children have written to the college—there was a massive meeting at which total opposition to the proposed closure was expressed—but have received no response or information. There is an absolute refusal to consult the staff or even keep them informed about plans.

There is an atmosphere of intimidation in the college. Staff are too frightened to speak, ask questions or continue to teach in the fine way that they have until now. There is an enormously sad and immoral, if not illegal, question about the use of public funds. Large sums of money have been spent on parts of the building that are not being used by the college. We know that the plan is to transfer the college elsewhere, so that the way in which public funds which have been raised and given to the college for the purposes of education are being used is questionable.

Most painful of all is the mistreatment of students of other faiths. Recently it was decided that Muslim students, who had been recruited as equal students in the college and who had always been treated with respect, could not pray in private in their classroom. Buildings elsewhere had to be rented at a cost to the college, and Muslim students were told that they had to go elsewhere to pray. The governors and trustees argued that that decison was made because corporate acts of worship of other faiths are not allowed

under the trust deed of the college. These are not corporate acts of worship; this is private prayer by Muslim students. That decision is ugly and prejudiced—even racist—in its consequence, and it is disturbing people in Birmingham.

My request to the Minister is simple. For the purposes of this debate, I accept the decision to transfer the college to the Anglican authorities and to another site. However, I am concerned that, if things continue as they are, the college—the staff and students—will be undermined and there will not be a college to transfer.

Part of the problem arises from the Government's reorganisation of the management of education. They devolved power to governing bodies and sometimes, as in the case of the school in Stratford in London and now St. Philip's, a small unrepresentative faction will not listen to staff, students, parents and mainstream Catholic opinion and destroys and undermines a fine educational institution.

This is where the Secretary of State and the Minister have a duty. It takes years to build an educational institution of such high quality; it cannot be created overnight. This college has been nurtured and built. Everyone is proud of it and its academic results are spectacular. It is a valuable institution in inner-city Birmingham. We need fine institutions to give our children a chance of succeeding and going on to higher education.

We need the Government's help. They thought that they were devolving power to local communities, but in this case a small faction has got control of a college and is in danger of undermining the education of current students and the future of the institution. I ask that the Secretary of State use his powers to appoint governors to the governing body and to ensure that the college is run properly and an orderly transfer takes place for the sake of existing and future students.

10.51 pm

Ms Estelle Morris (Birmingham, Yardley): I wish to add briefly to the comments made by my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms Short). The college lies in her constituency and my constituency is some miles away. I emphasise that this problem is not just an issue for my hon. Friend's constituents; it spreads throughout the city of Birmingham.

St. Philip's is a success story. These days, when it is difficult for our children to learn in our schools, we should celebrate our successes, build on them and conserve them. It is a great sadness for all of us that one of our great success stories in terms of academic work as well as social and multiracial integration has come upon these problems. I, too, plead with the Government to take action to solve this problem, for two reasons.

First, while all this is going on, a group of young people is trying to continue and to complete their education. They have only one chance. They cannot wait for us to sort out the quagmire and introduce new rules and regulations. As my hon. Friend said, it is the Government's fault and our fault as politicians that we have allowed a structure to exist whereby this kind of abuse can take place. The onus is on the Government quickly to improve the situation before the education of more young people is jeopardised.

The second reason why we need a speedy resolution is that the problem is tainting education throughout our city and not just in the one school. Too much energy is being used to try to solve this problem when it could be better used by Government, Members of Parliament, councillors, parents and the local city council to address some issues that we want to be addressed in Birmingham.

My only reason for intervening in the debate is to emphasise as much as I am able that this problem faces the largest education authority in the country. It does not affect just a few children and parents. We need a speedy resolution to it so that parents, teachers and pupils at St. Philip's as well as the rest of us in Birmingham can get on with what we are trying to do, which is to provide a decent standard of education for our young people.

10.54 pm

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr) *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. Does the hon. Gentleman have the permission of the hon. Member for Ladywood to speak?

Mr. Rooker: Yes, Sir.

I support everything that my hon. Friends the Members for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms Short) and for Birmingham, Yardley (Ms Morris) have said. Earlier this year I met more than 60 members of staff at St. Philip's college, and I can confirm that there is a climate of fear there. They are fearful about speaking out about what is happening at the college. Fear is rampant throughout the institution. It can only be dealt with by major changes in the governing body.

10.55 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Further and Higher Education (Mr. Tim Boswell): I congratulate the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms Short) on her good fortune in securing this Adjournment debate. She has spoken with characteristic passion and concern about what she sees as a matter of public interest and in the interests of the students of St. Philip's college.

I fully appreciate the strength of feeling aroused by the uncertainty surrounding the future of the college. I have seen press reports that raise various issues, including those on which the hon. Lady touched tonight. I am also aware of correspondence from those with a close interest in the matter.

I should, however, make it clear that these are essentially local issues which those at the local level must work together to resolve——

Dame Jill Knight (Birmingham, Edgbaston): I should perhaps explain that, until fairly recently, the college was in my constituency. I urge my hon. Friend to recognise that there are two sides to the problem.

First, the trust deed under which the college operates clearly lays down that the college exists to perpetuate and maintain the Catholic religion. I am not a Catholic, but that is what it says.

As for the allegations about Muslims, my hon. Friend should be aware that only yesterday the chairman of the governors received a letter of staunch support from the chairman of Birmingham's Muslim liaison committee:

"It gives me pleasure to confirm that we are in agreement with the arrangements that have been made for the prayers of muslim pupils at the college. We further confirm that this matter is now settled between yourselves and the muslim community . . . We re-iterate our gratitude for your cooperation in bringing this matter to a pleasant end and satisfactory conclusion."

[Dame Jill Knight]

I ask my hon. Friend to bear those important points in mind when he comes to weigh up the rights and wrongs of the argument.

Mr. Boswell: I am most grateful to my hon. Friend. I can readily give her the assurance that all relevant matters will be carefully weighed up.

Institutions in the further education sector are autonomous and Parliament has deliberately and properly made it difficult for Ministers to intervene in the affairs of individual colleges. I call on all the parties involved to co-operate with one another to achieve a satisfactory conclusion. As the hon. Member for Birmingham, Yardley (Ms Morris) said, uppermost in our minds must be the interests of the students involved. The Department for Education will have a role to play once the local players have put forward a proposal on the future of the college. The Department will, of course, be happy to offer advice if called upon.

I should make it clear at the outset that the governing body has the right to take decisions about the future of the college. I am aware of its decision to transfer the college to premises elsewhere in Birmingham under the Anglican authorities, and that the transfer is intended to take place by the end of August 1995. I am also aware that if the transfer cannot be accomplished, the governing body intends that the college should close. While this may be an unpopular decision in some quarters—including Opposition Members—the governors are acting within their powers.

The governors, as trustees, have a duty to ensure that the aims and objectives of the college trust deed, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight) referred, are furthered. The principal objective of the trust deed under which St. Philip's is administered is the advancement and maintenance of the Roman Catholic religion in England. The governors have taken the view that, with the number of Catholic pupils on roll at the college declining over the years, they are not meeting that objective. For that reason, they have decided to close the college. That is not to say that the governors have no responsibilities. Their actions must accord with the college's instrument and articles of government regulating the institution and they also have a duty to act reasonably.

There is no specific mechanism of closure set out in the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 which must be followed. The various interested parties, the oratory, the Anglican authorities and the Further Education Funding Council are actively considering how best to proceed.

Ms Short: If there is a duty to promote Catholic education, can it possibly be legal to close a college with a Catholic ethos and hand it over to the Anglican faith? One suggestion is that the Anglicans might run it on the current site. Is that legal under the trust deed?

Mr. Boswell: As I am not a lawyer, I would be reluctant to give the hon. Lady a legal opinion from the Dispatch Box. I shall refer later to what might happen in specific circumstances. If the hon. Lady is not satisfied with that, I shall be pleased to communicate with her later on the issue. She will appreciate that there are important issues of legal process and I am anxious not to give any misleading advice to the House.

Various technical difficulties need to be overcome before any transfer can proceed. Uppermost in our minds —particularly in this context—must be the need to protect the interests of the students. It is important that they be able to complete their courses. Under the transfer option they would be able to do that, and all concerned would need to ensure that that was achieved with a minimum of disruption.

I shall explain what would happen if the proposed transfer did not take place. There is no guarantee that the transfer proposed by the governors would be possible because the process is by no means straightforward, as I believe all parties recognise. It requires those involved in any decision to work together in a co-operative way. Should the transfer not go ahead and St. Philip's closes, a decision will need to be taken as to whether there is a need for alternative provision in the city of Birmingham.

The Further Education Funding Council is under a statutory duty to ensure that there is sufficient provision of further education in that city. It would fall to that organisation to consider, in the first instance, whether there would be a need for additional or replacement further education provision in Birmingham. The Secretary of State has a statutory role in considering any proposal for the establishment of a new further education corporation. I owe it to the House to set out how that procedure might take place within the governing body's proposals.

Issues have been raised, both in the House and in other contexts, about the process so far. There have been reports, which the hon. Lady mentioned, that the governing body has spent considerable sums of money—£100,000 has been mentioned—on the refurbishment of parts of the present oratory buildings. It has been alleged that that work was carried out in the full knowledge that the college was to close. It was argued that, as a result, the refurbishment could only have been for the benefit of the governors themselves, who would use the buildings as a museum to Cardinal Newman or for some other purpose.

To respond to the hon. Lady's intervention, may I say that the property of the trust is vested in the governors in their capacity as trustees. As trustees they have a duty to ensure that at all times they act in the best interests of the trust. It is a collective responsibility and no individual could be deemed to have a personal financial interest.

I understand that the building project has been financed from funds provided by the former maintaining local education authority, Birmingham city council. It is for the city council to satisfy itself that any conditions attached to funding which it has provided are complied with. I believe that some audit process is currently under way.

On various occasions people have raised the issue of public funds which were made available to the college before it joined the FE sector. They have asked whether those funds would be recoverable in the event of closure of the college. As a voluntary-aided sixth form college, St. Philip's has received capital grant from the Department over the years.

There is no current statutory provision for assets which have been provided or enhanced by grant aid to be so recovered. Any assets released in the event of closure would be subject to the charitable trust deed under which they are held and would need to be reapplied for the purpose of the charity. In the case of St. Philip's, the object of the trust deed is the advancement of the Roman Catholic faith. The assets would need to be reapplied for this purpose.

Funds have been provided by the Further Education Funding Council since 1 April 1993. There is in place a

financial memorandum between the Further Education Funding Council and each institution in the further education sector. It places upon colleges certain duties and obligations, one of which is to ensure that funds provided by the council are spent for the purposes for which they were given. The Further Education Funding Council could require the college to make capital repayments if assets acquired or enhanced with FEFC grant were disposed of or if the college closed.

As for financial probity, St. Philip's satisfied the Further Education Funding Council's pre-incorporation scrutiny conducted by Coopers and Lybrand. That is on the same basis as the other further education colleges in Britain. In common with all colleges in the sector, St. Philip's is required to have internal and external audit procedures and in due course it will be required to produce a statement from its external auditors confirming that funds are being used appropriately. The hon. Member may be interested to hear that the Further Education Funding Council is currently conducting a review of the college's audit procedures. However, that is as part of the council's rolling programe for further education colleges.

I turn now to claims, including those by the hon. Member for Ladywood, that the governing body has not conducted itself in a proper manner. Irregularities in the conduct of governing body meetings have been suggested. It has also been suggested that the governors have knowingly withheld information from the college staff.

I am aware that there is currently a vacancy on the governing body for a staff governor. The Department has urged the governing body to fill the vacancy as soon as possible. I should explain that St. Philip's, in common with other colleges in the sector, is also obliged to have a nominee from the local training and enterprise council on its governing body. I understand that that position is currently vacant. I gather that the training and enterprise council nominated an individual who was obliged to resign due to pressure of other commitments. It is for the training and enterprise council to nominate a replacement governor.

Claims have also been made that the governing body has not published minutes and papers relating to meetings. Under the terms of the instrument of government, governors are required to make available at the institution minutes of their meetings as soon as practicable. They are not, however, obliged to include material which they consider to be of a confidential nature. It would appear that where the governing body has not published minutes or sections of minutes, this is because it has decided that the issues covered are confidential. I assure the House that if any evidence is presented that the governing body has acted improperly, the Department will investigate it.

The hon. Member for Ladywood asked that the governing body be replaced. Certainly the Secretary of State has powers under the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 to replace any or all of the governors of an institution in the further education sector. He can do this only if he is satisfied that the affairs of the institution have been or are being mismanaged. Furthermore, such action can be taken only on the recommendation of the Further Education Funding Council. No such recommendation is in place. Indeed, there is no evidence of mismanagement yet. Any allegations that are made, including those sent to us in correspondence, will, of course, be thoroughly investigated by us.

I should make it clear to the House that St. Philip's is not a school like Stratford—the case to which the hon. Member for Ladywood referred. St. Philip's will be dealt with under the Further and Higher Education Act 1992, which I mentioned. The Secretary of State does not have a completely free hand in the appointment of governors at St. Philip's. The Act requires that, in the case of former voluntary-aided schools such as St. Philip's, colleges be conducted in accordance with their trust deeds and that a majority of governors be persons appointed to ensure that the established character of the institution be preserved. If governors were to be replaced, those requirements would need to be satisfied.

The hon. Lady and my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Dame J. Knight) referred to Muslim worship. I should make it clear to the House that for denominational colleges the act of collective worship must be in a form which complies with the provisions of the college trust deed. Governors are not obliged to make provision for acts of worship which reflect the practices of other religious traditions represented in Great Britain.

I have made it clear to the House that the key question —the future of the college—is for the governing body to decide. I have listened carefully to the hon. Lady's concerns. I can sympathise with all those who have a stake in the college's future, although I am sure that the hon. Lady will acknowledge that that they do not all have the same view of that future. I realise that this is an unsettling time for parents, staff and students.

If the airing of the various issues has helped—I have done my best to clarify them for the benefit of the House —the debate, even if it has not concluded the matter, for the reasons that I have given, will have served a useful purpose.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at eleven minutes past Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 27 October 1993

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

BRITISH RAILWAYS (NO. 4) BILL

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That the Promoters of the British Railways (No. 4) Bill shall have leave to suspend proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office not later than the day before the close of the present Session of their intention to suspend further proceedings and that all Fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid;

That, on the fifth day on which the House sits in the next Session, the Bill shall be presented to the House;

That there shall be deposited with the Bill a declaration signed by the Agents for the Bill, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill at the last stage of its proceedings in this House in the present Session;

That the Bill shall be laid upon the Table of the House by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office on the next meeting of the House after the day on which the Bill has been presented and, when so laid, shall be read the first and second time and committed (and shall be recorded in the Journal of this House as having been so read and committed);

That since no Petitions remain against the Bill no Petitioners shall be heard before any committee on the Bill save those who complain of any amendment as proposed in the filled up Bill or of any matter which arises during the progress of the Bill before the Committee;

That no further fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which fees have already been incurred during the present Session;

That these Orders by Standing Orders of the House.—*[The Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

BRITISH WATERWAYS BILL [LORDS]

Motion made, and Question proposed.

That the Promoters of the British Waterways Bill *[Lords]* shall have leave to suspend proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office not later than the day before the close of the present Session of their intention to suspend further proceedings and that all Fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid;

That, if the Bill is brought from the Lords in the next Session, the Agent for the Bill shall deposit in the Private Bill Office a declaration signed by him, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill which was brought from the Lords in the present Session;

That, as soon as a certificate by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office, that such a declaration has been so deposited, has been laid upon the Table of the House, the Bill shall be read the first and second time and committed (and shall be recorded in the Journal of the House as having been so read and committed);

That all Petitions relating to the Bill presented in the present Session which stand referred to the Committee on the Bill, together with any minutes of evidence taken before the Committee on the Bill, shall stand referred to the Committee on the Bill in the next Session;

That no Petitioners shall be heard before the Committee on the Bill, unless their Petition has been presented within the time limited within the present Session or deposited pursuant to paragraph *(b)* of Standing Order 126 relating to Private Business;

That, in relation to the Bill, Standing Order 127 relating to Private Business shall have effect as if the words "under Standing Order 126 (Reference to committee of petitions against Bill)" were omitted;

That no further Fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which Fees have already been incurred during the present Session;

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House.—*[The Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

CROYDON TRAMLINK BILL *[Lords]*

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That the Promoters of the Croydon Tramlink Bill *[Lords]* shall have leave to suspend proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office not later than the day before the close of the present Session of their intention to suspend further proceedings and that all Fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid;

That, if the Bill is brought from the Lords in the next Session, the Agent for the Bill shall deposit in the Private Bill Office a declaration signed by him, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill which was brought from the Lords in the present Session;

That, as soon as a certificate by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office, that such a declaration has been so deposited, has been laid upon the Table of the House, the Bill shall be read the first and second time and committed (and shall be recorded in the Journal of this House as having been so read and committed);

That all Petitions relating to the Bill presented in the present Session which stand referred to the Committee on the Bill shall stand referred to the Committee on the Bill in the next Session;

That no Petitioners shall be heard before the Committee on the Bill, unless their Petition has been presented within the time limited within the present Session or deposited pursuant to paragraph *(b)* of Standing Order 126 relating to Private Business;

That, in relation to the Bill, Standing Order 127 relating to Private Business shall have effect as if the words "under Standing Order 126 (Reference to committee of petitions against Bill)" were omitted;

That no further Fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which Fees have already been incurred during the present Session;

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House.—*[The Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

LETCHWORTH GARDEN CITY HERITAGE FOUNDATION BILL

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That the Promoters of the Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation Bill shall have leave to suspend proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office not later than the day before the close of the present Session of their intention to suspend further proceedings and that all Fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid;

That on the fifth day on which the House sits in the next Session the Bill shall be presented to the House;

That there shall be deposited with the Bill a declaration signed by the Agents for the Bill, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill at the last stage of its proceedings in this House in the present Session;

That the Bill shall be laid upon the Table of the House by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office on the next meeting of the House after the day on which the Bill has been presented and, when so laid, shall be read the first and second time and committed (and shall be recorded in the Journal of this House as having been so read and committed);

That all Petitions relating to the Bill presented in the present Session which stand referred to the Committee on the Bill,

together with any minutes of evidence taken before the Committee on the Bill, shall stand referred to the Committee on the Bill in the next Session;

That no Petitioners shall be heard before the Committee on the Bill, unless their Petition has been presented within the time limited within the present Session or deposited pursuant to paragraph *(b)* of Standing Order 1226 relating to Private Business;

That in relation to the Bill, Standing Order 127 relating to Private Business shall have effect as if the words "under Standing Order 126 (Reference to committee of petitions against the Bill)" were omitted;

That no further Fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which Fees have already been incurred during the present Session;

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House.—*[The Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

London Local Authorities Bill [Lords]

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That the Promoters of the London Local Authorities Bill *[Lords]* shall have leave to suspend proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office not later than the day before the close of the present Session of their intention to suspend further proceedings and that all Fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid;

That, if the Bill is brought from the Lords in the next Session, the Agent for the Bill shall deposit in the Private Bill Office a declaration signed by him, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill which was brought from the Lords in the present Session;

That, as soon as a certificate by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office, that such a declaration has been so deposited, has been laid upon the Table of the House, the Bill shall be read the first and second time and committed (and shall be recorded in the Journal of this House as having been so read and committed);

That all Petitions relating to the Bill presented in the present Session which stand referred to the Committee on the Bill shall stand referred to the Committee on the Bill in the next Session;

That no Petitioners shall be heard before the Committee on the Bill, unless their Petition has been presented within the time limited within the present Session or deposited pursuant to paragraph *(b)* of Standing Order 126 relating to Private Business;

That, in relation to the Bill, Standing Order 127 relating to Private Business shall have effect as if the words "under Standing Order 126 (Reference to committee of petitions against Bill)" were omitted:

That no further Fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which Fees have already been incurred during the present Session;

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House.—*[The Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

London Underground (Green Park) Bill

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That the Promoters of the London Underground (Green Park) Bill shall have leave to suspend proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office not later than the day before the close of the present Session of their intention to suspend further proceedings and that all Fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid;

That on the fifth day on which the House sits in the next Session the Bill shall be presented to the House;

That there shall be deposited with the Bill a declaration signed by the Agents for the Bill, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill at the last stage of its proceedings in this House in the present Session;

That the Bill shall be laid upon the Table of the House by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office on the next meeting of the House after the day on which the Bill has been presented and, when so laid, shall be read the first and second time and committed (and shall be recorded in the Journal of this House as having been so read and committed);

That all Petitions relating to the Bill presented in Session 1991-92 or the present Session which stand referred to the Committee on the Bill, together with any minutes of evidence taken before the Committee on the Bill, shall stand referred to the Committee on the Bill in the next Session;

That no Petitioners shall be heard before the Committee on the Bill, unless their Petition has been presented within the time limited within Session 1991-92 or deposited pursuant to paragraph *(b)* of Standing Order 126 relating to Private Business;

That in relation to the Bill, Standing Order 127 relating to Private Business shall have effect as if the words "under Standing Order 126 (Reference to committee of petitions against Bill)" were omitted;

That no further Fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which Fees have already been incurred during the present Session;

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House.—*[The Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

Oral Answers to Questions

SCOTLAND

Economy

1. **Mr. Salmond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met the chairman and chief executive of Scottish Enterprise to discuss trends in the Scottish economy; and if he will make a statement.

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Ian Lang): I regularly meet the chairman and chief executive of Scottish Enterprise to discuss a range of issues relevant to the Scottish economy.

Mr. Salmond: At one of those regular meetings, will the Secretary of State take time to discusss the position of the local enterprise companies in the Scottish economy? Does he accept that the serious problems—indeed, chaos—that have been encountered in a number of local enterprise companies, including Dumfries and Galloway, indicate that something is deeply wrong with the structure that was established a few years ago—a structure which the Secretary of State will recall was meant to introduce a high-wage, high-skill economy and eliminate Scottish unemployment? Specifically, does the Secretary of State support the view of Forth Valley Enterprise that there should be a mandatory declaration of all directors' interests in any company that is being assisted? In a break with normal practice at Question Time, will the Secretary of State address and answer that question?

Mr. Lang: I do not recognise the picture of the Scottish Enterprise network of local enterprise companies described by the hon. Gentleman. Nor do I think it necessary to issue directives of any kind in the sense that he suggests. Matters of that kind are a matter for Scottish Enterprise. I am confident that, under its new chairman, its responsibilities are being well fulfilled.

Mr. Gallie: Is my right hon. Friend aware that over recent months unemployment in my constituency has fallen month by month? Does he recognise that, with the recent announcement of redundancies by Jetstream, that happy trend may change? Will he ensure that, in the future, Jetstream can compete in the world market on a level playing field?

Mr. Lang: I agree with my hon. Friend that unemployment has fallen in his constituency and is substantially lower than it was at the peak a few years ago. However, I share his concern to ensure the welfare of the major employers in his constituency. I note his concern over Jetstream and British Aerospace, and I am keeping in touch with developments there. I hope that the world market for the aircraft produced by BAe will improve in a way that will be beneficial to the company.

Mr. McAllion: Is the Secretary of State aware that if we look backwards we can see that the net result of 14 years of Tory Government has been to add more than 100,000 Scots to the doll queues? If we look forward, even his Department's economic bulletin forecasts a further reduction in the Scottish labour force of 34,000 over the next 10 years. Does he not understand that his stewardship of the Scottish economy has caused a whole generation of our most talented and highly skilled youngsters to despair of ever finding a job in their own country? Does he not understand that if the Scottish economy is ever to be made to serve the needs of the Scottish people, it will require an elected Scottish Government set in a powerful Scottish Parliament, and with decisive powers of intervention in the Scottish economy?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman's question bears little relation to the facts. The fact is that unemployment is lower in Scotland than in any of the other countries of the United Kingdom. It is below the European Community average. Employment has risen by 169,000 in the past decade. The hon. Gentleman need only look at *The Scotsman* today to see the confident forecasts of the Confederation of British Industry on manufacturing, investment, exports, construction and a great many other sectors of the Scottish economy.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: May I ask my right hon. Friend, who is sitting beside Lord James Douglas-Hamilton, to intervene in the expenditure of the enterprise companies? They have spent nearly £500,000 on tweeifying a roundabout at Turnhouse airport. My right hon. Friend's Department is about to build a palace in Leith, bringing in extra bureaucrats at a cost of £65 million. In the present difficult climate for expenditure, could we not stop Government Departments spending so grotesquely?

Mr. Lang: I begin by welcoming my hon. and learned Friend back to the House, fully restored in health and vigour and as colourful as ever.

I hope that the term "grotesque" was not a subjective judgment on the architectural merits of the new Scottish Office building in Leith, which has been widely praised. I assure my hon. and learned Friend, however, that the financial implications of that building were rigorously scrutinised before the decision to go ahead was made.

The budgets of local enterprise companies are a matter for Scottish Enterprise, but I do not think that my hon. and learned Friend is telling me that its budget is too high. I note his comments nevertheless.

Mr. Wallace: Will the Secretary of State confirm that during the 14 and a half years of his party's Administration, unemployment among newly qualified graduates has rocketed? Quite apart from the frustration that that must cause, will he agree that it amounts to a tremendous loss of skills and abilities from the Scottish economy? When he meets the chairman of Scottish Enterprise, what proposals will he have to ensure that there are jobs for these graduates?

Mr. Lang: The point that the hon. Gentleman misses is that the proportion of people going into higher education under this Government has doubled—from 17 to 34·5 per cent.—during the 14 years of which he speaks. Thus, if the number of people going into higher education doubles, inevitably the number of people who have difficulty finding jobs afterwards will also increase in the shorter term. We now have a higher trained, more highly qualified work force than we had under the Labour Government—a work force which wins praise from countries all around the world, as I discovered on my recent trip to the far east.

Mr. Bill Walker: When my right hon. Friend meets and talks to Scottish Enterprise will he draw its attention to the fact that key industry in Germany is working one week in four? The work force performs one week of work and spends three on the equivalent of the dole. Does not that show how Government policies and Scottish Enterprise have brought Scotland through a world recession in much better shape than the former leading country of the European Community?

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. What is also important is the focus and attention given to training by Scottish Enterprise. That is one of the keys to economic success. Germany benefited enormously from it in the 1960s and 1970s. By following its example, we are now in a position to benefit similarly in the 1990s.

Mr. George Robertson: When the Secretary of State meets the board of Scottish Enterprise and other Scottish industrialists who rightly look to the Government to create the conditions for growth and for business confidence, how will he explain to them what they have witnessed—the betrayal and destruction of an industry as vital and necessary as coal mining? Will the right hon. Gentleman recognise that, by conspiring directly through a dodgy privatisation of the electricity industry and then artificially rigging markets, the Government have not only blitzed thousands upon thousands of jobs and livelihoods but virtually annihilated a whole industry? Does not that industrial vandalism give a clear signal to industrialists who want conditions for growth and investment that, when it comes to the bit, the Government do little and care less?

Mr. Lang: I start by welcoming the hon. Gentleman to the Front Bench of Scottish politics, and I congratulate him both on his success in the shadow Cabinet elections and on his richly deserved appointment as shadow Secretary of State.

The hon. Gentleman has overlooked the fact that the Government's policies have ensured the lowest inflation rate for some 30 years, the lowest interest rates for a generation and a competitive exchange rate. As a result, confidence is rising, investment and manufacturing output are increasing and orders are growing. All of those things can happen only if we are competitive in the sources of all our energy consumption. That is as applicable to coal as to any other energy source. If coal is competitive, coal prospers—if coal is uncompetitive, it cannot.

Trust Hospitals

2. **Mr. Kynoch:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many applications for trust status hospitals are currently being considered in Scotland.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Allan Stewart): Following the announcement by my noble and learned Friend the Minister of State on 15 October, nine third-wave NHS trust applications remain under consideration. An announcement on these will be made shortly.

Mr. Kynoch: I welcome the information that further hospitals are seeking trust status, which brings great benefits to large and small hospitals alike.

Is my hon. Friend aware that in Kincardine and Deeside, since Grampian Healthcare took on trust status there has been a 5·1 per cent. improvement in utilisation and a 7·1 per cent. increase in the use of maternity beds in community hospitals? Those hospitals are important to communities such as Torphins, which I will be visiting on Saturday. Will my hon. Friend join me in encouraging Grampian Healthcare to pursue a policy of further development of community hospitals in rural areas?

Mr. Stewart: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend. I am aware that, since becoming a trust in April, Grampian Healthcare has increased significantly the services that it provides to patients. There are other examples in addition to those raised by my hon. Friend, such as the eating disorder and drug abuse services which the trust has introduced.

My hon. Friend is right to emphasise that local flexibility, which is, of course, a feature of trusts, is the key to improving patient services.

Mr. Wray: Does the Minister agree that bringing trusts to Scotland has brought no benefit at all? Since 1990, the Government have spent £120 million for the additional costs of trust status. The Greater Glasgow health board has spent 21 per cent. of its funding on treatment care, and Lothian health board is offering BMWs to its consultants.

Does the Minister also agree that, from 1970 to 1980, the number of people on waiting lists for treatment care was never more than 60,000, and yet, with all the money that has been spent by the Government in Scotland, that figure has increased to 80,000?

Mr. Stewart: I am afraid that I must wholly disagree with the hon. Gentleman. [HON. MEMBERS: "Why?"] I am about tell Opposition Members why.

If the hon. Gentleman looks at the figures, he will see that the evidence is overwhelming. As a consequence of the establishment of the first wave of trusts, including the Aberdeen royal hospital trust—which received a charter mark aware today—and the South Ayrshire trust, more patients are being treated than ever before. Better services and facilities are being provided, and services are better adapted to patient needs. That is the reality.

Mr. John Marshall: Does my hon. Friend agree that the news from Foresterhill House shows how inaccurate the scaremongering of Opposition Members is? Will my hon. Friend remind the House that Opposition Members said that Aberdeen infirmary would go down the drain if it became a trust? Is not the infirmary doing well, and should not it be congratulated?

Mr. Stewart: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend. As usual, there were all sorts of forecasts of doom and gloom from Opposition Members which have been shown by the facts to be compietely invalid.

Mrs. Fyfe: Does the Minister recall John Chawner, the chairman of the British Medical Association consultants committee, saying:

"The introduction of Trusts has been an extremely costly exercise without proven benefit. Nothing that has happened under the NHS reforms has provided more money for services."

Does the Minister think that Mr. Chawner is ill-informed?

Mr. Stewart: The facts about the established trusts and the improvements that have been achieved are clear. I can give example after example. If the hon. Lady wants examples from North Ayrshire and Arran, I can tell her that a new day surgery unit and open access X-ray services have been provided. Also, the patients' friend welcoming

service initiative and improvements in accommodation and services for terminally ill patients and their families have been implemented. I should have thought that Opposition Members would welcome those improvements.

Local Government

3. **Mr. Welsh:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussions he has had with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities on his proposals to reorganise Scottish local government; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: I have had no discussions with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities on the issue of local government reform since it decided to adopt its policy of non-co-operation. I and my colleagues have, however, held useful meetings over the summer with representatives of a number of individual authorities.

Mr. Welsh: Will the Secretary of State rule out any form of domestic water supply disconnection in Scotland and ensure that unelected and unaccountable water boards do not use self-disconnection and water meters as a reason for cutting off domestic supply, thus creating a liquid poll tax that hits the poorest hardest? Will he bear that in mind in his deliberations?

Mr. Lang: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman is not aware that, at present, the law does not allow disconnections. I have no plans to change it.

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the so-called policy of non-co-operation adopted by the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities has had as many relaunches and comebacks as Frank Sinatra? Will he urge COSLA to drop all pretence of non-co-operation, for the benefit of those local government employees who provide such sterling services, and for the people of Scotland who are the beneficiaries of those services?

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend is right. The word "non-co-operation" has been redefined so many times as to lose its meaning. At present, some 28 local authorities support the convention, some 29 are against it and eight are undecided. That is hardly the way for the convention to unite local government in Scotland or to represent its interests or the interests of those who rely on its services.

Mr. Canavan: How is it that relatively minor local government boundary changes are referred to an independent commission, yet here we have the Government hell-bent on major surgery without any reference to an independent commission? Could it have anything to do with the Government's desperate desire to carve up the political map of Scotland to prevent the Conservative party from being virtually wiped off that political map, as the Conservative party in Canada was the other day?

Mr. Lang: I remember the hon. Gentleman's rhetoric before the general election, so nothing that he says surprises me. We are restructuring local government. Once local government is restructured, the Local Government Boundaries Commission will go to work on that in the usual way.

Mr. Home Robertson: Has the Secretary of State yet found anyone in COSLA or anywhere else who believes his assertion that the transitional costs of restructuring local government will come to less than £196 million, let alone anyone who accepts his naive idea that any savings for council tax payers will arise from the restructuring? Has he yet grasped the fact that the folk of East Lothian want nothing to do with the folk of Berwickshire and the folk of Berwickshire want nothing to do with the folk of East Lothian?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman might like to know that his hon. Friend the Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) expressed the view during a television interview with me a couple of weeks ago that the cost might be £126 million. More to the point, the small cost that will be incurred in the first few years of reform will be cancelled out and compensated for many times over by the savings in the longer term.

Mr. George Robertson: I thank the Secretary of State for his cordial words of welcome. I also had cordial and personally good relationships with the Minister for Europe in my last job.

Will the Secretary of State tell us this afternoon how he can possibly justify telling the Scottish people that he intends to pick the pockets of millions of ordinary families throughout Scotland by putting VAT on their heating bills to solve the Government's self-created budget deficit? On top of that, he intends to finance local government reorganisation by putting his hand in people's pockets again, to the tune of about £180 on every council tax bill in Scotland to pay for an unwanted, unnecessary, politically corrupt shake-up of local councils in Scotland. If this pick-pocket Government go on displaying an attitude of complacency and contempt for the electorate, what happened yesterday to the Tory party in Canada will happen to the Tory party in this country.

Mr. Lang: If that were so, I expect the hon. Gentleman would wish us to proceed with the policies that we have announced. The cost of reforming local government over the first five years will amount to 0·5 per cent. of the total funding that we give to local government. That sum will be rapidly recouped and more than compensated for by the on-going savings that will result, year after year, from the reduction in the number of local authorities and their reorganisation in a more coherent and efficient way. The residents of the local authorities will be the beneficiaries.

4. **Mr. Beith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received about his proposal to remove Berwickshire from the Borders for local government purposes.

Mr. Stewart: Some 400 individual letters have been received commenting on the proposal to unite Berwickshire and East Lothian in the new unitary authority. In addition, around 660 postcards, pro-forma letters and petition signatures have been submitted from Berwickshire.

Mr. Beith: Will the Minister confirm that the vast majority of those representations are against the Government's proposals? Does he recognise that we in the borough of Berwick rely on close co-operation with the Berwickshire district and the Borders region to promote the good of the Borders? That will be much more difficult to achieve if Berwickshire is booted into East Lothian,

against the wishes of its inhabitants. How can the Government go on ignoring the wishes of the vast majority of the people of Berwickshire to stay in the Borders?

Mr. Stewart: I thought for a moment that the right hon. Gentleman was going to recommend that Berwick be moved into Berwickshire from across the border in England. Combining Berwickshire and East Lothian will produce a new authority with many common features——

Mr. Home Robertson: What?

Mr. Stewart: Coastal fishing villages, an agricultural hinterland and tourist development potential. We have listened to the representations—indeed, I am meeting the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) on 5 November—but there is a very strong case for our proposals.

Mr. Kirkwood: Will the Minister acknowledge that the proposal to take Berwickshire out of the Borders region has caused more consternation in Berwickshire than anything else in living memory? Can he say how many of the 417 letters that he has received about the proposal were actually in favour of it? Will he advise the good people of Berwickshire and tell them what they have to do to get him to change his mind?

Mr. Stewart: I can certainly confirm that the great majority of the letters received were against the Government's proposals. In my experience, it is much more usual for people to write to the Government if they are against what is proposed. Berwickshire has been a part of the Borders region only since 1975. There is an historic parliamentary constituency of Berwickshire and East Lothian which, independently of the Government, the Boundaries Commission is recommending should be reintroduced.

Forestry

5. **Mr. Lidington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he now expects to announce the conclusions of the Government's review of forestry policy; and if he will make a statement.

7. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the progress of the Government's review of forestry.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Sir Hector Monro): The forestry review group is continuing its work, and has recently appointed consultants to assist it. The group expects to present its advice to Ministers early next year. Thereafter, Ministers will consider what action, if any, should be taken.

Mr. Lidington: As my right hon. Friend's review will cover the whole of the United Kingdom, will he take note of the substantial concern in my constituency that any changes in the administration or management of the Forestry Commission should not lead to a reduction of public access to areas such as Wendover woods in my constituency, which is very greatly valued by local people?

Sir Hector Monro: I certainly give my hon. Friend an assurance that the review group is considering the issue very carefully. The forest authority currently places tremendous emphasis on recreation, access to walks and picnic sites and so forth. Such matters will be given careful consideration, and Ministers will consider what action to take when they receive the report next year.

Mr. Ian Bruce: Will my hon. Friend pay tribute to the work of the Forestry Commission in my Dorset constituency? It is centred in Wareham, and has increased timber production and provides Dorset with a wonderful leisure and educational resource. May I echo my hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Lidington), and ask my hon. Friend to confirm that he will keep such matters very much in mind when reading the review? Whoever owns the forests, all local people want to retain the access that has been expanded under the present Government.

Sir Hector Monro: I welcome what my hon. Friend has said. Production from Forestry Commission forests is now very high, which helps our processors and others who have long-term contracts in this country. After the group has reported, we shall certainly give every encouragement to access, education and the other aspects that my hon. Friend has mentioned; they will not be overlooked.

Mr. Foulkes: Does the Minister admit that, in the forests that the Commissison has already sold off, there have been 69 access agreements, none of which has worked? That is exactly what will happen if the Minister persists with his misguided proposal to sell off the whole of the forestry owned by the Commission. Given that the proposal is opposed by those who work for the commission, by those who represent constituencies with forestry interests and by all the hikers and ramblers, will he abandon it completely? Not only was it not included in the Conservative party manifesto; it was specifically excluded.

Sir Hector Monro: As usual, the hon. Gentleman is going off the rails. I wonder how many of the 69 access woodlands he has been to see.

It is important for the hon. Gentleman to realise that we have no preferred option, and have given no indication of intending to privatise the Forestry Commission. We have merely set up a group to review the whole issue and report back next year.

Mr. Eric Clarke: May I draw the Minister's attention to the existence of a world-renowned research establishment on the Bush estate, in my constituency? Those involved in forestry research there are worried about their future. Will the Minister guarantee that establishments connected with forestry will continue to exist, and explain how that will be possible?

Sir Hector Monro: I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's concern for his constituents, and for the high-quality work that they do on the Bush estate. However, we must wait until next year, when the group will have reported and Ministers will have had time to consider the way forward. We shall then make an announcement to the House.

I have a high regard for the work done by the Forestry Commission, its authority and enterprise. We shall have to see how things go next year.

Mr. Bill Walker: My hon. Friend will be aware that my constituency contains vast forest areas. Some are owned by private landowners; a substantial number are owned by the Forestry Commission. He will also know that there are no access problems in the privately owned areas: I regularly walk my dog there, as well as in the Forestry Commission

areas. Does my hon. Friend accept that we shall expect the same to apply if any change is made in the Forestry Commission?

Sir Hector Monro: I note what my hon. Friend has said about "one man and his dog". There are many very good private landlords who welcome access to their woods, organise education programmes and in every way help the community. That contribution is equalled by the Forestry Commission, which has a broad and encouraging attitude to access for all forms of recreation. There is no reason for anyone to feel that that will not continue in the future.

Mr. McFall: Unlike the Secretary of State, I spent the summer visiting people in the forestry industry and spoke to environmentalists, recreationalists, local authorities and industrialists in the Caledonian Paper Mill Company, Irvine. All those people told me that wholesale privatisation will be a disaster for the industry. Given that the Secretary of State is in charge of the review, he has a chance here and now to give an unequivocal commitment that millions of people will have public access and enjoy the right to roam in forests. We wish to know whether the 15 per cent. of Scotland that is owned by the Forestry Commission will remain in public hands for the benefit of this and future generations.

Sir Hector Monro: The Secretary of State and myself live in the most afforested region in Britain so we are constantly in the forests, meeting foresters, and know what we are dealing with. We are well aware, too, of the importance of the production by the Forestry Commission to the major processors such as that which the hon. Gentleman mentioned. I must tell the hon. Gentleman, if he bothers to listen, that he and the rest of the Labour party got it wrong about water privatisation and probably will do so about the Forestry Commission as well.

Local Government

6. **Mr. Watson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to meet representatives of the voluntary sector to discuss funding arrangements following local government reform.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton): The subject of the implications of local government reform for the voluntary sector was among the subjects discussed at the first meeting, on 11 May, of the new joint forum comprising Scottish Office officials and the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations. That topic is also on the agenda for the next meeting, which is to be held on 16 November.

Mr. Watson: The Minister will have to do a bit better than he did in previous meetings, because the voluntary sector in Scotland is very worried. What reassurances can he give to organisations such as Strathclyde Elderly Forum, One Plus and Strathclyde Poverty Alliance about their continued funding if local government reform goes ahead? Those organisations and many like them throughout Scotland—not just in Strathclyde—operate and are funded on a region-wide basis and have genuine fears for the future that are communicated to me and to other Opposition Members. The organisations want to know what transitional arrangements are to be made to ensure that their funding is secure after local government reform so that the essential services that they increasingly provide and the jobs of the dedicated staff are maintained.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I can tell the hon. Gentleman that the general provisions of the Bill will provide for the transfer of rights, liabilities and obligations of the old authorities immediately prior to 1 April 1996 to either one or more of the new authorities. That reinforces the statement in the White Paper that existing funding arrangements for the voluntary organisations which extend beyond the date of reorganisation should be honoured. I am glad to say, however, that we shall be exploring, at the meeting on 16 November with the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations, issues involving initial costs because initial costs are difficult to quantify. We shall consider that subject thoroughly at the meeting and we shall bear in mind the point that the hon. Gentleman mentioned.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: The Minister, like myself, is a former councillor and was probably involved in the last major reorganisation of local government. He knows that massive funds were spent in that reorganisation on finding premises, and on senior officials who sought redundancy rather than a move to the new local authorities. That will cost, as my hon. Friends have stated, at least £180 per ratepayer in the whole of Scotland. He must know that that means that there will be fewer funds available for the voluntary sector. Why go on with a reform of local government when, historically speaking, it has been only 20 years since we last had a major reform and we have not recouped the benefit of that reform?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I recall that after the last reform of local government the number of local authority officials increased by about 18,000 in two years. We are going from two tiers to one tier in this case and it is important that the difficulties which the hon. Member mentioned should be settled at local level. I expect the existing authorities, the new councils and the voluntary sector to co-operate in that connection to achieve appropriate solutions for the local circumstances.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: May I ask the Minister to remind Opposition Members about the last local government reforms? The only region in Scotland that did not alter was Fife, which is a socialist region, and they all awarded themselves a salary which rose from £6,000 to £18,000 overnight for doing nothing more.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My hon. and learned Friend makes a very relevant point about the Kingdom of Fife. As far as this particular issue is concerned we believe strongly that the new local councils should determine their own priorities for funding voluntary sector activities, ensuring as much continuity as possible.

8. **Mr. McAvoy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many representations he has had regarding the proposed local government boundaries published in his White Paper.

Mr. Lang: Since the publication of the White Paper "Shaping the Future—The New Councils" in July, about 1,300 individual letters commenting on the reorganisation proposals have been received. In addition, about 25,000 postcards, pro-forma letters and petition signatures have been submitted.

Mr. McAvoy: The Secretary of State cannot point to any demand for the abolition of Strathclyde region, which is one of the best run councils in Britain. In my constituency, he cannot point to any demand for the removal of Toryglen from Glasgow. Does the Secretary of State accept that his proposals are unwanted, gerrymandered and expensive and will lead to substantial increases in the payments made by Scotland's council tax payers? Why does he not just scrap the White Paper?

Mr. Lang: On the contrary, I can find very few people prepared to stand up and defend Strathclyde. Any local authority that embraces half the population of Scotland cannot, by the normal definition, be regarded as local government. All the local authorities within that area welcome the fact that they will now have the freedom to exercise responsibility for all local authority functions on a scale that is more commensurate with the interests of local population. Toryglen is an issue about which we have had representations and at which we are looking closely. We shall be able to carry these matters further when we bring forward the Bill.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: Do not the citizens of the great Scottish cities such as Edinburgh, Glasgow and Aberdeen want their unitary authorities to be restored?

Mr. Lang: Yes, Madam Speaker, my hon. Friend is right. I find warm enthusiasm for the prospect of single-tier, all-purpose authorities in Scotland's great cities.

Sir David Steel: If the Secretary of State has had 1,300 individual letters from all over Scotland and more than 400 of them concern the removal of Berwickshire from the Borders, does not that indicate a high level of feeling in the Borders region about the proposal? Earlier this afternoon, we were told that Berwickshire had been part of the Borders region only since 1975. Is not that a fatuous statement since the region did not exist before 1975? It has been part of the Borders for many centuries. Will he please leave it there?

Mr. Lang: In parliamentary terms, it has been part of the Berwick and East Lothian parliamentary constituency for a considerable time. The number of letters suggests to me an orchestrated political campaign being run in that area.

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: Is my right hon. Friend aware that in Aberdeen all four political parties have been campaigning for a single-tier Aberdeen since 1974? Is he aware that when he visits Aberdeen on Friday he will be visiting a city which cannot wait for the new authorities in 1996?

Mr. Lang: I am grateful to my hon. Friend and I look forward, as I always do, to visiting Aberdeen again. I am sure that I shall find strong support for our proposals.

Mr. Graham: Will the Secretary of State take cognisance of the vote that took place in the constituency of his hon. Friend the Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart), the Under-Secretary of State, among the people of Barrhead? They voted massively and overwhelmingly to remain with Renfrew district council. It was a democratic vote, higher than any other local authority vote. Will the Secretary of State give his assurance that the people of Renfrew can remain with the people of Barrhead?

Mr. Lang: I believe in the democratic process. That process can express itself in the House when the Bill comes before Parliament.

Mr. McKelvey: Is the Secretary of State aware that there has been a series of well-attended meetings throughout Ayrshire and that, after earnest discussions, three main points are coming through from the public and the associations attached? First, they will not accept the partition of Ayrshire because it is seen as a gerrymander to create a Tory enclave. Secondly, historically, Ayrshire has always been known as Ayrshire and we do not wish to be divided into a poor north and rich south. Thirdly, overwhelmingly opinion is opposed to this, apart from a small group attached to the hon. Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie). Does the Secretary of State agree that the majority of representations made from Ayrshire want Ayrshire to remain united?

Mr. Lang: I have had a variety of representations from people in Ayrshire about its future and it is not as clear cut as the hon. Gentleman suggests. The representations vary between those who want one Ayrshire, those who want two Ayrshires and those who want three Ayrshires. At present, we are proposing two authorities in Ayrshire and the boundary is the one drawn from the Wheatley Commission proposals. I am sure that the matter will be debated further when the Bill comes before Parliament.

Mr. McLeish: Does the Secretary of State accept that the issue of cost has turned the local government reorganisation into a tragic farce? Would the Scots have to pay with money that they do not have, for proposals that they do not want, from a Government that they simply despise? The question of who pays should be answered. Will the Treasury pay, in its £50 billion mess? Will services and jobs go, or will the council taxpayers pay? The reorganisation is a piece of pure political fraud which should be brought to an end at the earliest opportunity.

Mr. Lang: May I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on remaining on the Front Bench and on his promotion? He was never very good at figures and in his question he got them wrong. The reform of local government will lead to long-term savings of considerable substance that will far outweigh the cost of implementing them. It is not a question whether we can afford them, but whether we can afford not to implement them.

Licensing Laws

9. **Mr. Maxton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to introduce legislation to change the laws on licensing in the next Session of Parliament.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. Friend has no immediate plans to amend Scots liquor licensing so soon after the major reforms introduced by the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Act 1990.

Mr. Maxton: Does the Minister agree that it is absurd that the Government turn a blind eye to supermarkets opening illegally in England? Part of that illegal operation is the selling of a full range of alcoholic drinks, whereas in Scotland, supermarkets open legally, but are not allowed to sell any alcohol whatever. Will he introduce changes to the law that will allow all off licences to open on Sunday?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I agree that the position is somewhat anomalous, as the hon. Gentleman says, but there are strong arguments from both sides. In October 1986, the Scottish Office conducted a consultation and the results were that 43 per cent. wanted the statutory prohibition relaxed, but 57 per cent. did not. So there is a deep division in Scotland on that subject and there are no immediate plans to change the law.

Mr. Gallie: Is my hon. Friend aware that the lobby for off-licence trading on Sunday in Scotland is very much advanced by the trade? Will he assure the House that there will be no further erosion of the quality of Sunday in Scotland?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: It may be that in the fullness of time the matter will come before the House and be put to a vote. My hon. Friend is correct that the churches continue to express strong opposition to the Sunday opening of off-sales premises and the Scottish Retailing Licensing Law group has made representations in favour of the point that was made by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton).

Mr. Menzies Campbell: Since an important feature of the existing licensing law is to allow local authority licensing boards to determine many applications at their own discretion, would not it be appropriate for the Government to introduce legislation that allows local licensing boards to determine whether in their own areas Sunday opening of off-sales premises is legitimate?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: As I mentioned to the hon. Member for Cathcart, we have no immediate plans, but I have little doubt that in the fullness of time the House will consider the matter again. I say to the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell), who is a known specialist on the subject as a Queen's counsel, that the tightening up of late-night licenses, which he spoke about in Standing Committee, has had a beneficial effect. Fewer late-night licenses are being awarded and that has resulted in less trouble that requires police involvement. I am sure that the hon. and learned Gentleman will welcome that result.

New Towns

10. **Mr. Ingram:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what financial targets he has set each of the new town development corporations for the disposal of their industrial and commercial assets.

Mr. Lang: I am publishing the financial targets for the disposal of the new towns' industrial and commercial assets in the *Official Report*. All the new towns are on schedule to meet those targets and are progressing successfully towards maturity. I therefore now intend to consult on the basis that the wind-up of Livingston and Irvine new towns should take place on 31 December 1996. That would be two years and three years respectively ahead of earlier plans. The timetable for the other three new towns would remain as already announced.

Mr. Ingram: Why does the Secretary of State not simply admit that he has been told by the Treasury to asset strip the new towns? Is he aware that the business community and the wider community in East Kilbride and in the other new towns are frankly appalled by the mess that has been made of the wind-up proposals? Why does not he just accept that he is wrong? Why does he not use the talents and assets in the new towns to regenerate the Scottish economy?

Mr. Lang: I do not agree with the hon. Gentleman that the development corporations have made a mess of the wind-up of the new towns. They are handling the matter extremely efficiently and professionally, and I commend them for that. Asset stripping does not enter into the matter. The assets created in East Kilbride will remain in East Kilbride. The capacity of East Kilbride to continue to attract new investment and new employment will be maintained.

Mr. Norman Hogg: Can the Secretary of State explain how the following problem will be dealt with? The proposal for Scottish local government reform in my area is to put the new town of Cumbernauld into North Lanarkshire, which would take the town out of Dunbartonshire Enterprise. That would be a serious change taken with the loss of the drive for jobs that goes with the development corporation. Anything that upsets the special relationship with the local enterprise company cannot be good. What is the Scottish Office view on that?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman raises a fair point which must be addressed. We are considering the position there and we shall be able to develop our thoughts and to make our view plain as the local government Bill moves through Parliament. For the hon. Gentleman's benefit, I add that the responsibility for local authority services such as planning and the management of community assets will pass to the new local authority from the new town development corporations on 1 April 1996.

The following is the information:

Financial targets

	£ million
East Kilbride	43·55
Glenrothes	15·23
Cumbernauld	14·50
Livingston	7·00
Irvine	2·35

Pensioners (Housing)

11. **Mr. David Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his best estimate of the numbers of pensioners in Scotland living in houses which are (a) affected by dampness and (b) classified as difficult to heat.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Information is available from the Scottish house condition survey only for houses affected by dampness. An estimated 70,000 dwellings affected by dampness had heads of household of pensionable age.

Mr. Marshall: I thank the Minister for visiting my constituency during the recess and for seeing for himself the dreadful conditions in which some people have to live. Does he agree that the figure he has just announced to the House is an affront to his Government? Does he further agree that the evil imposition of VAT on heating bills will force thousands of pensioners and poor people to choose

between eating and heating? How many people does he estimate will die sooner rather than later as a result of his Government's policies?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The hon. Gentleman is naturally expressing a view before the Secretary of State for Social Security takes all relevant factors into account when he makes a statement about benefits being increased for next April, before the higher bills arrive. The details of that uprating will be announced as soon as possible after the Budget statement in November. The hon. Gentleman has made a significant point and his hon. Friend the Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) also referred to it. As well as the automatic increase in pensions by the retail prices index rate, which will include and reflect the increase in the cost of domestic fuel and power, such pensioners are also likely to receive housing benefit and/or council tax benefit. Our plans for extra help through such earnings-related benefits will assist them further. We sincerely hope that the dire circumstances that the hon. Gentleman envisages will not happen.

Mr. Robert Hughes: Instead of relying on the Minister's verbiage, would not it be much better to look at the facts? Do not the facts tell him that there is a great problem in Scottish housing with dampness and with condensation because houses were not built to proper heating standards? On every occasion, we are told that the problems are exacerbated by people's failure to afford proper heating. Why does not the Minister understand the damage that he is doing? Why does not he insist that the Government drop the VAT, and that they put more money into home insulation and into improving standards, rather than repeating the nonsense that everyone who is on a low income will be magically protected because he says that they will be?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I should make it clear that the house condition survey also records that some three quarters of houses in Scotland have central heating, that more than half have satisfactory insulation of tanks and pipes and that more than three quarters have satisfactory loft insulation. As for the uprating of benefits, the Department of Social Security benefits—including the cold weather payment—for the elderly and those on low incomes are regularly reviewed, taking all relevant factors into account. The DSS will take all these matters into account before it makes a full statement about reviewing the benefits in due course at the end of the month.

Health Care

12. **Mr. Fabricant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what analysis he has made regarding the recent trends in per capita expenditure on health care in Scotland.

Mr. Stewart: Between 1979-80 and 1993-94, real per capita gross spending on the national health service in Scotland has grown by 50 per cent. This represents an average annual growth rate of 3·8 per cent. over and above prices over the past 14 years.

Mr. Fabricant: I thank my hon. Friend for that reply. How is that sustained growth in spending on the health service in the past few years translated into patient care in Scotland?

Mr. Stewart: My hon. Friend is right to emphasise that what matters is the effective use of those increased resources. Every year since the Government took office, record numbers of patients have been treated under the NHS in Scotland. An average of 22,500 extra in-patients and day case treatments have been given every year between 1979-80 and 1991-92. Those and a range of other statistics prove the consistent and steady improvement in the standard and quality of patient care under the Government.

Mr. Dunnachie: Is the Minister aware that in the six hospitals serving the city of Glasgow, one of which also serves his area, when a nurse reports sick she is not replaced, thereby making the staff shortage even greater and putting patients at risk? What is he going to do about it?

Mr. Stewart: The hon. Gentleman will be aware that the Greater Glasgow health board is currently examining its acute service strategy, and we shall consider the proposals when they are put to us after consultation. I emphasise that steadily increased resources have been made available to the national health service in real terms over and above the increase in prices.

House Condition Survey

13. **Mrs. Ewing:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what action he intends to take following the publication of the Scottish house condition survey 1991 report by Scottish Homes; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Local authorities have been asked to set out strategies and targets for tackling below tolerable standard houses and housing subject to condensation and dampness in their housing plans and housing capital programmes from 1994-95 onwards. In addition, the improvement and repair grant system, which is a major tool in tackling poor housing, is currently under review.

Mrs. Ewing: Does the Minister realise that the question was what he and the Scottish Office were going to do to tackle the appalling condition of approximately 30 per cent. of Scotland's housing stock, which is subject to dampness, condensation or mould? Not one hon. Member who represents a Scottish constituency does not have to deal daily with such problems. Is it not most important that the Government should wipe out the housing capital debt, thereby releasing capital for our local authorities to renew and renovate their housing stock and bring it to a proper level of energy efficiency?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The hon. Lady's request would result in either a great deal more taxation or a great deal more borrowing, which is not our policy. We have asked all district councils in Scotland when drawing up their housing plans and strategies to give top priority not only to dampness but to below tolerable standard stock and homelessness, which is precisely what they are doing. We want a concerted strategy as soon as possible and substantial funds will be allocated in due course. Indeed, some have already been allocated, for example, the £513 million for capital investment in housing for this year.

Mr. Kynoch: In the context of surveys of housing conditions, can my hon. Friend give us some idea when the results of the radon survey in Deeside may be forthcoming?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Scottish Office has commissioned the National Radiological Protection Board to make further surveys in the Dee valley and along a stretch of the Caithness and Sutherland coast. I understand that the board expects to publish the findings of the second survey into radon gas before the end of October. I should mention that radon is a natural radioactive gas whose presence is determined by local geology, especially by the existence of more uranium than usual in the rocks. The matter is being followed up quickly.

Mr. Connarty: I wonder at the Minister's complacency. Can he really mean it when he boasts about housing conditions in Scotland, when 392,000 houses suffer from condensation, and the survey reported that 267,000 are suffering from dampness? I hope that he does not mind if I correct his figures, but if we add the 52,000 senior citizen households with dampness to the 65,000 with condensation, we see that one in five of all Scottish households that include a pensioner have either dampness or condensation. I do not know how the Minister can possibly boast when, after 14 years of the Government's bungling, less than three quarters of Scottish houses have decent central heating and less than half have double glazing.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I am not boasting at all. Of course there are problems, but I am trying to put the matter in perspective. Thoroughly thought-out planning and strategies are required to deal with it. The percentage of houses with severe dampness is relatively small, and, of course, top priority must be given to dealing with such houses throughout Scotland.

Points of Order

3.31 pm

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I realise that the timing of statements is no responsibility of yours, but has the Prime Minister given you any idea when he intends to report on the Commonwealth Heads of Government conference in Cyprus?

Madam Speaker: The Prime Minister has not been in touch with me on that matter, but I believe that a written answer will appear in today's *Hansard.*

Mr. John McAllion (Dundee, East): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. As a general rule, motions proposed in the House require notice, unless they are of a formal or uncontentious character. Will you advise me whether a motion proposed by me, welcoming a decisive vote by the civil service trade unions, in a big turn-out, in favour of strike action against the Government's market testing proposals in the civil service, would be regarded as uncontentious as there is general support in the House for civil servants' right to take industrial action? May I therefore propose such a motion without giving formal notice?

Madam Speaker: We take motions in the normal way, and the hon. Gentleman is putting a matter to me concerning a motion that I have not had the chance to see for myself. He should give me that chance first.

Mr. Ian Bruce (South Dorset): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Have you had any representations from hon. Members about security in the House? I am sure that it has come to everyone's notice that it is no longer seen as fitting to leave documents around this place, as we all share photocopiers, offices and other such facilities, and Opposition Members are keen on ensuring that confidential documents are placed in the public domain. Can you, Madam Speaker, do anything either to separate honourable colleagues or to improve security in this place?

Madam Speaker: All that is required is for hon. Members in all parts of the House to show a little more care when making duplicates of documents.

Summer Time (Amendment)

3.33 pm

Mr. Nigel Waterson (Eastbourne): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to amend the Summer Time Act 1972; and for connected purposes.

If my Bill were enacted, instead of turning our clocks back as we did last Sunday, we should remain on British summer time—that is, Greenwich mean time plus one hour—throughout the year but would advance the clocks a further hour between March and September. That would give us all an extra hour of evening daylight throughout the year. To quote Monday's leader in *The Times,* it

"would add an hour of daylight to the part of the day when almost everyone is awake and active."

I am a relatively recent convert to single-double summer time, or central European time, as it is also known. However, one has only to recite its advantages to wonder how on earth we have managed to avoid introducing it for so long. I would like to pay particular tribute to the efforts of the Daylight Extra campaign, particularly its chairman, Angus Crichton-Miller—a good Scottish name—in arguing the case for double summer time. It would mean saving many lives on our roads, put British industry and commerce on an even footing with our European competitors and bring substantial benefits to the lifestyles of young and old alike.

There are many good reasons for the change, and I will concentrate on three of them. There is now clear evidence, particularly from the Policy Studies Institute, that, in a full year, there would be about 140 fewer deaths on our roads if we were to introduce double summer time. In all, 2,000 or more road casualties would be avoided, with an annual saving, including national health service costs, of £200 million.

Available evidence from bodies such as the Transport Research Laboratory indicates that darker mornings are less of a risk to life and limb than darker evenings are. In the morning people are more alert, but in the evening they are less so. That is no doubt why organisations such as the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents are in favour of my proposal.

Only last Sunday I led a torch-lit march down Whitehall and through Parliament square in support of my proposal. We had a minute's silence outside St. Stephen's entrance in recognition of the 140 unnecessary deaths that could occur in the next 12 months.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): What about the situation in the north?

Mr. Waterson: I am coming to that matter.

British industry and commerce also suffer under the present system. Except for a brief period during the year, our business men are hampered by a time difference of an hour or even two hours when they fly to Europe for a meeting. Even conducting business by telephone is made more difficult.

Nowhere are the advantages more clear cut than in the tourism industry. I take a particular interest in that subject as joint secretary of the Back-Bench tourism committee. Moreover, tourism matters a great deal to my constituency, among others. In Eastbourne, it brings in about £100 million a year and supports 6,000 jobs. The British Tourist Authority and the English Tourist Board fully support the proposal, and the Policy Studies Institute estimates that

more than £1 billion would be gained by the British tourism industry if we were to be on the same time as the continent.

Just imagine the extra jobs that could be created. It would make it easier for travel between this country and the rest of Europe and make for easier scheduling. I stress that that will be particularly important as the channel tunnel comes on stream. It would also lengthen the tourism season in many parts of the country and allow longer opening hours for tourist attractions. Many more British and overseas residents would consider taking their holidays in Britain.

Another very powerful reason for the change is the effect that it would have on the lives of our citizens, particularly older people. It is a sad fact of modern life that in many parts of the country, including my constituency, older people are often unwilling to venture out after dark or even answer their doors. The current system acts as an unofficial curfew for many people and affects the quality of their lives. That point is borne out by the four British crime surveys that were conducted by the Home Office between 1982 and 1992 and by the 1989-91 national travel survey.

My proposal would mean more hours of daylight throughout the year and it would allow pensioners and others to go out and about until later in the day. Nor is the potential benefit limited to older people in our population. Younger people would have more time to engage in sports and other activities before dark. There is some evidence that, with more daylight, crime figures would improve. It must be an advantage for women walking home alone that they are more likely to do so in daylight.

There is also likely to be a significant saving of at least £250 million in energy costs. No doubt that is one of the major reasons why we had the system during the war years, although, sadly, it was abandoned thereafter. There was also, of course, a half-hearted experiment with single summer time between 1968 and 1971.

Nor is this some wicked attempt by our European colleagues to erode the British way of life. I yield to no one in my Euro-scepticism. The plain truth is that Europe is about to follow our lead. In a recently published EC directive, it is proposed that our European friends should change their clocks at the same time as Britain—at the end of October. Harmonising of the clock change should abolish the anomaly that, for a period in October each year, we are on the same time as the rest of Europe, causing inevitable chaos for airports, and so on.

I firmly believe that double summer time is an idea whose time has finally come. In the past, there has been some opposition from certain sections of the community, especially in Scotland. However, on this occasion, that opposition is more muted. If we have a vote today, I suspect that the result will be somewhat exaggerated because it happens to fall on the same day as Scottish questions.

The Policy Studies Institute found that there would be an overall reduction of about 60 deaths and serious injuries in Scotland each year, which is proportionately greater than the reduction for England and Wales. Traditionally, farmers have had their reservations about the proposal, as have builders. According to a recent report in *The Independent on Sunday,* opinion in all nine regions of the National Farmers Union is moving in favour of my proposal.

The building industry, farmers and others could follow the lead of Scandinavia by starting work an hour later in the winter months only to limit any problems caused by darker mornings. As Mary James, a dairy farmer near Bristol, was quoted as saying:

> "The new time system would be an inconvenience, but it would not kill anyone—it could save someone's life, which is what is most important."

A Gallup survey recently found that 68 per cent. of people were in favour of the change and that the figure in England and Wales was 73 per cent.

The proposal is sponsored by various organisations such as the BTA, the ETB, Age Concern, the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents, the Police Federation, the Sports Council, the ADC and the BMA. I am pleased to have support from both Government and Opposition Members in presenting my Bill.

The proposal contained in the Bill has an irresistible momentum behind it. As the EC has made up its mind about the harmonisation of clocks, there is no good reason for further delay. I hope that the Government will adopt my Bill and that we will see its rapid progress on to the statute book. The matter has been discussed for years. The time for action is now. In the words of the Daylight Extra campaign, "It's about time." Indeed, it is. I commend my Bill to the House.

3.42 pm

Mr. Peter Hain (Neath): I wish briefly to state the strong objections to the Bill which have been skated over by the promoter, the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Waterson). Many of my hon. Friends from Scotland have voiced their objections, especially my hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson), who has pointed out that the sun would not rise until 10 am in many parts of Scotland. A Government survey in 1971 showed that 61 per cent. of Scots opposed the reform, with only 6 per cent. being in favour of it.

My primary objective is to speak on behalf of Post Office workers. I do so as a sponsored Member of Parliament representing the Union of Communication Workers, together with my hon. Friends the Members for Falkirk, East (Mr. Connarty) and for Vauxhall (Ms Hoey). I can say on good authority that Postman Pat and Postman Dai are upset about the proposed change. If they are upset, I am sure that Postman Jock is absolutely livid.

There are between 80,000 and 90,000 delivery postmen and women. Most of them must be out the door at 7 o'clock in the morning. Scottish postmen and women will need to deliver in the dark for more than three hours if this proposed reform goes through. Therefore, if the change is made, they will be disproportionately penalised, together with farmers, milk deliverers and construction workers who will bear the consequences of the increased accidents that will result from a change that will bring about increased darkness while they work.

During the 1968-71 experiment in reforming the hours along the lines proposed by the hon. Member for Eastbourne, the number of accidents to postal workers more than doubled. He did not mention that. Before British standard time was introduced in 1968, between the months of September and February between the hours of 7 am and 9 am there were 1,104 accidents to postal workers. After the change, there were 2,287 accidents. In other words, the figure nearly doubled; and in the 23 years since the experiment road traffic in the United Kingdom has also doubled.

[Mr. Peter Hain]

Even if one assumed that the accident ratio to postmen and women would remain the same, a further 2,300 accidents would still be likely to happen to them each year, which means that nearly 5,000, or 6 per cent., of all delivery postmen and women would be so affected. It is absolutely vital to take that into account when the reform is considered, because Department of Transport evidence shows that accidents in the dark are twice as likely to kill pedestrians. In the early hours, especially in Scotland, pedestrians will include many schoolchildren.

The Department of Transport figures also show that 83 per cent. of accidents occur in darkness. Despite the fact that there is less traffic in the winter months, road casualties increased by 13 per cent. at the time that the Department of Transport investigation was carried out in 1986.

Postmen and women already face problems with crime which would massively increase during the dark hours that they have to go about their work. There are already many no-go areas where they refuse to deliver because they are the subject of muggings and attacks, and that problem would undoubtedly increase. In addition, they would have to work through dark mornings in the winter months, and with the poorer lighting they would be unable to read the addresses on envelopes as easily, slowing down their work. Bad paving and bad roads would also pose a greater problem and as a result their efficiency and safety would be impaired. In general, the change would have a deleterious effect on the quality of service provided by Royal Mail workers.

Another serious concern is that people who work during the dark, early morning hours suffer from decreased alertness. Research by doctors shows that instances of lapses in drivers' attention increase massively between the hours of midnight and dawn and as a result the number of accidents increases.

It is important to note that it is not merely delivery postmen and women, milk delivery workers, construction workers and farmers who would suffer; 70,000 postmen and women also perform night duties. If the change is made, they will have to go to and from work in darkness.

In conclusion, I must refer to the report by the Policy Studies Institute, as did the hon. Member for Eastbourne. He forgot to mention that the report made only glancing reference to the impact on postal workers. On page 17, it states that postal workers' lives would be made "more difficult." On page 35, it also states that the postal service would suffer

"some discomforts and possibly diseconomies".

But it ignores the fact that the number of accidents doubled when the change was last introduced between 1968 and 1971. Hon. Members who wish to support the change must remember that that experiment was hastily dropped as a result of a number of Scottish schoolchildren being killed on the way to school.

My opposition to the Bill is based not simply on self-interest on the part of postmen and women, although we are entitled to take that into account, but on the interests of all people who are out and about in the early hours.

Question put, pursuant to Standing Order No. 19 (Motions for leave to bring in Bills and nomination of Select Committees at commencement of public business:—

The House divided: Ayes 103, Noes 86.

Division No. 371] **[3.48 pm**

AYES

Ainger, Nick
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Ashby, David
Austin-Walker, John
Bayley, Hugh
Bell, Stuart
Benton, Joe
Betts, Clive
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Coffey, Ann
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Duncan, Alan
Durant, Sir Anthony
Eastham, Ken
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Enright, Derek
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fatchett, Derek
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Gordon, Mildred
Gorst, John
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Hannam, Sir John
Hanson, David
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harvey, Nick
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Heppell, John
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Keen, Alan
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Khabra, Piara S.
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Livingstone, Ken
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Martlew, Eric
Michael, Alun
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Morgan, Rhodri
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
Olner, William
Oppenheim, Phillip
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Radice, Giles
Rathbone, Tim
Rendel, David
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Sedgemore, Brian
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Spink, Dr Robert
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Sykes, John
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thurnham, Peter
Tyler, Paul
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Wilson, Brian
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mrs. Jacqui Cait and
Mr. Matthew Banks.

NOES

Adams, Mrs Irene
Allen, Graham
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Barnes, Harry
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Canavan, Dennis
Carttiss, Michael
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cummings, John
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Dixon, Don
Dover, Den
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Galloway, George
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Graham, Thomas
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Hain, Peter
Hardy, Peter
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross, C&S)*
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kirkwood, Archy

Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Lewis, Terry
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
Madden, Max
Maginnis, Ken
Mahon, Alice
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Patchett, Terry
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Raynsford, Nick
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Salmond, Alex
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Snape, Peter
Spearing, Nigel
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Stott, Roger
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Wallace, James
Wareing, Robert N
Welsh, Andrew
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Phil Gallie and
Mr. David Trimble.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Nigel Waterson, Mr. Alan Haselhurst, Mr. Barry Field, Mrs. Jacqui Lait, Mr. Nigel Griffiths, Dr. Tony Wright, Mr. Phillip Oppenheim, Mr. Alan Duncan, Mr. David Willetts, Mr. John Sykes, Mr. Matthew Banks and Mr. Nick Hawkins.

Summer Time (Amendment)

Mr. Nigel Waterson accordingly presented a Bill to amend the Summer Time Act 1972; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 29 October and to be printed. [Bill 258].

Early-day Motion 1726

4 pm

Mr. Rod Richards (Clwyd, North-West): I seek your guidance, Madam Speaker, on a matter that has caused concern to my constituents and me. I wish to refer you to early-day motion 1726 on Benzodiazepine (Tranquilisers) Claims and Legal Aid. The sponsor of the early-day motion was the hon. Member for Brent, South (Mr. Boateng). I have notified him by letter that I would raise this matter, but I see that he is not in his place. My name appeared among the first six sponsors of the early-day motion. The Table Office told me by letter that the hon. Member for Brent, South took those names to the Table Office.

I did not give the hon. Member permission to use my name in that way, nor did he seek my permission to do so. How can an Opposition Member go to the Table Office and claim to have the support of a Conservative Member and, furthermore, take with him a document purporting to have my signature on it?

Early-day motions are read widely in the House and outside and if Members are allowed to get away with such activity it undermines that valued and valuable barometer of Back-Bench opinion.

Madam Speaker: I understand the hon. Gentleman's deep concern. It is the first intimation that I have had of the matter. I had no idea that he was about to raise it. If he will allow me, I shall look into it thoroughly, have it investigated, and be in touch with him.

Opposition Day

[19TH ALLOTTED DAY]

Coal Industry

Madam Speaker: In view of the number of Members seeking to take part in the debate on the coal industry, I have had to limit speeches between 7 pm and 9 pm to 10 minutes.

4.2 pm

Mr. Robin Cook (Livingston): I beg to move,

That this House notes that not one extra contract for coal has been obtained from the electricity generating companies as a result of Her Majesty's Government's White Paper, The Prospects for Coal; deplores the abject failure of ministers to fulfil their promise to use their best endeavours to carve out a wider market for coal; is concerned by the warning of the Chairman of British Coal that all ten remaining pits which were reprieved in March are now at risk again; observes that all of these pits have many years of coal reserves and most of them are already producing coal at a price competitive with imports; regrets that closure of these pits will destroy the economies of the coalfield communities, increase the redundancy costs to the taxpayer, and switch electricity generation to sources that will be more expensive to the consumer; and calls upon the Government to avert a further round of pit closures by implementing those recommendations of the Trade and Industry Select Committee in its Report on British Energy Policy which would ensure fair competition for coal against other fuels and secure a wider market for coal.

I am glad to see that the President of the Board of Trade is in his place for this debate. He will acknowledge that there could be no more fitting debate in which to welcome him back than one on the future of the coal industry. As he will recognise, the single biggest impact that he has made on public consciousness in his period in office as President was his announcement, a year ago, of the closure of 31 pits. He is on record as saying that in the following six months the greatest part of his effort was in drafting the White Paper. The past six months have been marked by the unravelling failure of that White Paper. We meet today without a single one of those 31 pits on the hit list last October having a secure future.

I say the "failure" of that White Paper to be charitable, because to assume that the President's strategy in the White Paper has failed is to do the Government the justice of believing that they seriously expected it to work and that they are as concerned as we are that the White Paper has failed. I doubt that is the case. I do not believe that the Government are the least bit surprised that it has failed.

If our motion were to be brutal, it would make the accusation not of failure but of fraud—fraud on the miners who were asked to improve their productivity, to test the market, and who produced a heroic improvement in productivity, only to find that it made no difference to the future of their pits; fraud on the nation, which was assured that the Government had listened to public outrage and scaled down the closure programme, only to find that the only thing that had changed was not the number of pits to be closed but the timetable for the closure of those same pits; and fraud on the Government's own Back Benchers, who voted for the White Paper in the belief that it would save 12 pits, only to find that it paved the way for the closure of those pits.

The President's White Paper did not save a single miner's job, and it was not intended to do so. The only jobs that the White Paper was devised to save were those of the President and of his Minister for Energy. That is what it was all about. While they have kept their jobs, half the miners employed when we debated the issue last October have lost their jobs.

In our exchanges with the Minister last week, he took credit for a £1 billion subsidy to the coal industry. That £1 billion this year is not a subsidy. No operating grant has been paid to British Coal for 10 years. The overwhelming proportion of that £1 billion is accounted for by redundancy payments to the 20,000 miners who have gone on the dole—and more are about to go on the dole.

Two weeks ago, the chairman of British Coal said that he was pessimistic about the future of the 10 market-testing pits—so he expects a further round of closures. Last week, the Minister for Energy made a statement on closure procedures and redundancy terms—so he expects a further round of closures. The House needs to know how many pits the Minister expects to close. He must have discussed that matter with British Coal before he came to the House last week. He certainly discussed the timetable of the closures, which is why he changed the deadline for redundancy terms. Will the Minister discuss with the House the matters that he has discussed with British Coal? Will he tell us how many pits he expects to close by the revised deadline?

I will cheerfully give way to the Minister if he will answer the question that he consistently ducked when he made his statement last week. How many more pits will close—six, 10, 12 or 15? Will he say how many more pits will go by next April?

Mr. Graham Riddick (Colne Valley): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Cook: At the moment, my net is set to catch not the sprats but the shark.

The words "modesty" and "reticence" do not leap to one's mind in association with the Minister for Energy, and I do not believe that he is suffering from stage fright. I assure the Minister that my right hon. and hon. Friends and I will give him a fair hearing. He has only to stand at the Dispatch Box and say how many pits British Coal advised him that it wants to close.

I will try to jog the Minister's memory. Lists circulating in British Coal show who is for the chop. The Coalfield Communities Campaign published that list last Tuesday. It shows that nine pits now face closure and that a further three pits will be taken out of production and mothballed —12 in all. Does that help to jog the Minister's memory? Does that figure ring any bells at the back of his mind, or is it wildly wrong? Would he like to correct the record and tell the House how many fewer pits or how many more pits he now expects to close?

The silent fit seems to have come upon the Minister again. Granted, the question of how many pits will close is an awkward one. The Minister does not want to talk about that subject. Let us take something that he does like to talk about—privatisation.

Mr. Riddick: Will the hon. Gentleman give way now?

Mr. Cook: Not to the hon. Gentleman, but I will give way to the Minister if he chooses to intervene. The House wants to hear from the Minister, because it is he who must answer on those figures.

A fortnight ago, the Minister said that privatisation would achieve the largest economically viable coal mining industry. As privatisation of the electricity industry created the problem for pits, it is difficult to believe that privatisation will provide the solution, but we shall debate privatisation when the Minister gets around to introducing a Bill on the subject.

In the meantime, let us be charitable—let us take him at his word and accept that he believes that privatisation will achieve the largest economically viable coal mining industry. How large will that industry be? How many pits will survive to privatisation? That is not a matter for British Coal. It is matter for the Minister who presents the Bill to privatise the pits.

How many pits will be left to privatise? Somebody in the Minister's Department knows. Somebody told *The Times* yesterday that "Ministers believe" that 20 pits will survive. *The Times* knows that 20 pits will survive because it quotes a "senior industry Department source". I wonder whether we have a senior industry Department source in the Chamber today. If that senior industry Department source is sitting opposite us, will he confirm whether *The Times* is right, or could that source correct the record and give a different figure? I can tell the House what is meant by the survival of 20 pits. It means that 10 pits will close —presumably, the 10 remaining of those that were reprieved last March.

Let us be clear about how good those pits are and about how much Britain would lose if they shut. First, we would lose a quarter of accessible coal reserves. None of those pits is near exhaustion. Any pit remotely near exhaustion has been shut down in the past 12 months. The average future life of the coal reserves at each of those pits is 16 years. Two of them have reserves that would last 30 years. Those are not my figures but Government figures taken from Boyds' report, which was produced during the coal review. Between them, the 10 pits have 165 years of life left in them. That is the scale of coal production that we shall be writing off if we shut those pits—coal reserves that would provide a secure, strategic energy resource that the nation will need in the next century.

Mr. Jonathan Evans (Brecon and Radnor): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Cook: I will give way to the hon. Member in the hope that he will answer the question that I put to the Minister: how many pits does he expect will close?

Mr. Evans: How many of the 277 pits that were closed in the six years to 1970 under a Labour Government had reserves that were totally exhausted?

Mr. Cook: I shall give the hon. Gentleman figures for comparison. Under the Labour Government of the 1960s, output in the coal industry fell by a quarter. Output has fallen by 60 per cent. under this Government. Under the Labour Government of the 1960s, jobs in the coal industry fell by a third. Under this Government, jobs in the coal industry have fallen by 90 per cent. The Labour Government of the 1960s shut 40 per cent. of the pits. This Government have shut 85 per cent. of the pits that existed in 1979. Those are the records for the hon. Gentleman to compare. The figures show the deplorable record of this Administration.

The question asked by the hon. Gentleman has been asked in every debate. The hon. Gentleman may have got it from a Conservative Central Office brief, but he need not pride himself on it being an original question. I say to him and to others who attended clutching that brief that I do not for one moment understand what they imagine miners facing redundancy will think is achieved by historic 30 or 40-year-old comparisons, which in any case rebound on the Government.

It is not only that these pits have such long coal reserves; they also have produced increasingly cheap coal.

Mr. Rod Richards (Clwyd, North-West): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Cook: No.

The White Paper promises a subsidy, which would allow time within which the price of our coal could be reduced to match that of imports. I have to tell the Minister that the 10 pits that are now threatened with closure are well on the way towards meeting the price of imports, without a penny of his subsidy. In the past month, the import price from the three main countries from which we import coal has been between £1·15 and £1·17 per gigajoule. In the past month, coal from six of the 10 pits has been produced at between 99p and £1·23 per gigajoule, which is comparable with the price of imported coal. I heard the Minister say this morning on the radio that he does not like my figures and that the calculations are wrong. The figures came from pits, and the figures for imports came from Customs and Excise, but the Minister does not like my figures. I can understand why, because they explode his case.

There is another way of measuring the viability of those pits. It is a measure that was chosen by the Government's advisers. The Boyds report produced a benchmark price for the 10 pits in its report to the Government; it was a benchmark price for 1995-96 that would measure whether those pits could be financially viable.

Eight of the 10 pits most at risk are already below that benchmark price, two years ahead of schedule. That is a remarkable achievement for all the people who work in those pits and who now face redundancy. I heard also on the same radio programme that today the Government have handed out 93 charter marks to institutions and bodies in the public sector that have achieved more output with no increase in costs. What about a charter mark for those 10 pits, which have achieved more output with a reduction in costs? Will they get a charter mark for that achievement? Will they even be thanked for that achievement? No, the workers will be sacked for that achievement as though it did not matter what productivity gains they had made. In that—and I give him this—the Minister is right. The market was rigged by his predecessors to squeeze coal out even when it is competitive.

I heard the Minister complain this morning that coal is more expensive than other fuels. Therefore, let us go through the figures. The current contract between British Coal and the generators provides for coal delivered at £1·33 per gigajoule. Seven of the 10 pits are producing coal below their contract price, but let us stick with that figure. The Select Committee calculated that the generators would produce electricity at 1·48p per kWh. That is less than we

[Mr. Cook]

paid in the contracts for the new gas power stations, which will produce electricity at 2·5p to 2·8p per kWh. That is less than the contracts that we have made to purchase imported electricity from France, at more than 3p per kWh. It is much less than Nuclear Electric would need to recover the costs at Sizewell, at some 4p per kWh. British Coal is now offering its coal for sale at an even lower price than £1·33 per gigajoule.

In the previous debate about the coal industry, after allowing for the subsidy promised in the White Paper, I told the House that British Coal was offering its coal for sale at 93p per gigajoule. At that price, coal could produce electricity at half the contract price of the new gas stations and as cheaply as Nuclear Electric could produce electricity from Sizewell, even if we gave it Sizewell free of any capital cost. Since that debate in July when I quoted those figures, British Coal has made a fresh offer to the generators—an even lower price—that could produce even cheaper electricity, yet still the generators will not buy it. I shall pose the question which I posed in July, but which went unanswered then. Why will the generators not buy a single extra bag of such cheap coal when they can produce electricity more cheaply than from any other source?

Mr. Richards: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Cook: I shall give way when I have finished this passage.

Neither Minister attempted to answer that question in July. That was not because of ignorance on their part. It was the fruit of wisdom. They know how damning the answer would be. They know that the fact that the generators will not buy coal when it can produce the cheapest electricity is the final proof that the market that they have created is rigged against coal.

Mr. Richards: If the hon. Gentleman has an alternative energy policy, and if that policy had been introduced in April last year—if the Labour party had won the general election—will he tell the House what proportion of Britain's energy needs would have been met by coal in the year 2000?

Mr. Cook: The Government cannot tell us what proportion of our energy needs will be met by coal then, but I can answer the hon. Gentleman's question with respect to the pits that we are discussing. If we had won that general election, we would immediately have taken steps to end the rigging of the market, and I am confident that, given a fair opportunity to compete, British Coal could keep the market, which in turn would keep open all the pits currently producing.

Pits that have the reserves and pits that can produce at the price that would meet the needs of consumers for cheap electricity would thus be in production. That is the difference between what would have happened had we won and what did happen under the Tories.

Mr. James Paice (Cambridgeshire, South-East) *rose——*

Mr. Cook: Some industrialists who may, for all I know, have supported the Conservatives in the general election last April view with incomprehension a market that encouraged the expansion of gas, of nuclear and of French imports—all at the expense of a contraction of coal, which provides the best value for money.

In our last debate on this subject I quoted ICI as asking how anyone could rationalise the economic behaviour of the generators. On Monday, the same question was asked again in a different form in a letter to the *Financial Times* from the energy intensive users group. On behalf of the major industrial users of electricity, the letter said:

"there is a growing surplus of coal-fired electricity generation capacity. The marginal cost of base-load electricity generation on this capacity is less than 1·5p/kwh, yet new generation capacity costing about 2·8p/kwh is being approved, built and prospering within the 'market.'"

The letter asks how that is possible.

Mr. Winston Churchill (Davyhulme): Is the hon. Gentleman aware of what the noble Lord Wakeham said in another place on 20 October last year? He said:

"as I made clear to the Energy Select Committee in another place in January—and I put it absolutely crudely so that there was no doubt about it—if the regional electricity companies have an interest in a gas-fired power station which is more expensive than electricity they can buy from another source, in my judgment they are in breach of their licence conditions."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 20 October 1992; Vol. 539, c. 673.]

Would the hon. Gentleman care to comment?

Mr. Cook: The hon. Gentleman astutely goes to the heart of the matter. I hope that he will remember that argument at 10 pm. His point is a fair one: the Government have allowed sweetheart contracts to be signed between the electricity companies and new gas power stations, most of which the former own themselves. In the contracts, the gas-fired power stations are guaranteed a price for all their output, however efficient they may be. That is not a market in competition. It is a cartel which is closing the doors on Britain's pits.

The hon. Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) has raised an aspect which helpfully leads me to my next point. Lord Wakeham had a hand in creating the market which is now causing the problem.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley) *rose——*

Mr. Cook: I have already given way several times.

I know that the President did not set up the rigged market. The person who presided over the privatisation of the electricity market is no longer with us—she is pursuing a second career in the book trade. A most extraordinary thing has happened since our last debate—something I never expected. The noble Lady has shown remorse. She has written to the Minister expressing her concern at pit closures and asking him to take action to avert them.

I know that the President of the Board of Trade has had his difficulties with the noble Lady in the past. However, they are both now at a mature stage—either in, or approaching, the memoirs stage of life. Surely this is the time to sink old differences. Surely the right hon. Gentleman could find at least one common cause with the noble Lady. Let me be a peacemaker between them. If the architect of the rigged market can recognise that it is unjust to coal, surely he is now free to say, "Yes, it was a load of cobblers. I an not going to go on defending what she created."

Once the President takes that liberating step, there are so many more opportunities that are open to him—opportunities to end the rigged market—all of which were in the Select Committee recommendations. The right hon. Gentleman could have accepted the Committee's request

for careful consideration of any new gas-fired power stations. Instead, he and the Minister go on approving even more such stations. Two more have been approved since the House last debated the matter. Another 2 GW of production has been added to the generating capacity, equivalent to the output of two pits that will shut when the stations come on stream. Indeed, so remarkable is the dash for gas that Britain now accounts for 43 per cent. of the total orders for gas-fired power stations in the world. We have 2·5 per cent. of the world's generating capacity and we account for 43 per cent. of the orders for gas-fired power stations—this in an island that is built on coal. The most ludicrous feature is that, while the price of coal is coming down, the price of gas is going up.

The President could have accepted the Select Committee's recommendation to ring-fence the nuclear levy. That would have meant that the levy could be used only for future decommissioning costs, and not as a subsidy to present operating costs. I see in this week's newspapers that the Government expect that the output of nuclear power stations will increase. I am not at all surprised that an increase in output is expected. The present arrangement provides a subsidy to nuclear power so large that, if it went to coal, British Coal could provide half the coal to the power stations free of any charge.

Mr. Paice: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Cook: This is the last time I will give way.

Mr. Paice: Will the hon. Gentleman tell the House how Britain could meet the reductions in carbon monoxide emissions to which we are committed, and which his party demands, if we were to maintain our coal-fired capacity and not expand nuclear power?

Mr. Cook: I can tell the hon. Gentleman without the slightest difficulty. I would fit to Britain's coal-fired power stations the technology for clean coal burn which has been developed in Britain and is currently fitted elsewhere. [HON. MEMBERS: "How much would it cost?"] Hon. Members ask how much it would cost. The figures are laid out in the Select Committee report, which made it clear that, even with clean coal technology, existing coal power stations are competitive with new gas-fired power stations.

Mr. Paice: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Cook: No, I will not. The hon. Gentleman may not have liked it, but that was the reply. I told the hon. Gentleman that that would be the last occasion on which I would give way.

The President could have taken a third course. He could have acted upon his own promise in the White Paper to consult the generators over stocks as a matter of urgency. That was six months ago, when we were promised those consultations as a matter of urgency.

I was shadow health spokesman long enough to know that urgency does not mean to Ministers what it means to many other people. Urgent cases are often left on waiting lists for six months. However, this is not something that I expected would be put at the bottom of the waiting list for the attention of Ministers.

The Government can act urgently on the matter of stocks when they want to do so. When the Minister speaks, he could perhaps say whether it was true that in 1990, under the powers contained in the Electricity Act 1989, Lord Wakeham wrote to the generators requiring them to keep 27 million tonnes of coal stocks as an insurance against a miners' strike. If the noble Lord found it proper to use those powers to give a direction that was designed to keep miners off a picket line in 1990, why cannot the Government find it proper to use those directions to keep miners off the dole queues in 1993? The generators may get a couple of years' supply of cheap coal while they run down the stocks, but that is all they will get—for the pits that shut in those couple of years when the orders dry up will stay shut, flooded and with the roof fallen in. The savings from running down the stocks will be temporary, but the cost to Britain's coalfields will be permanent.

Lastly, if the President were looking for ways of remedying the rigged market, he could have accepted the recommendation of the Select Committee that imports of French electricity should be conditional on the access of British electricity to other countries over the French grid. Instead, we continue to import French electricity. The French still do not import any electricity from us. They still will not give us access over their grid to countries such as Spain which are desperate to buy our electricity. It is six months since the White Paper——

Mr. Riddick: The Labour Government made the agreement with France.

Mr. Cook: The hon. Gentleman has raised another of the questions that have been raised in every one of our debates on the matter.

Mr. Riddick: Answer, then.

Mr. Cook: The answer is exactly the same as on every previous occasion. The trade across the channel was revolutionised by the decision of the British Government to give the French the subsidy that we pay to our nuclear industry whether or not their electricity comes from nuclear power stations. The previous Labour Government never thought that any Government would be daft enough to offer to subsidise the imports from France. In fairness to the French, I rather suspect that the French Government never imagined that it would happen either. The French must now think that we are mad. The rest of Europe must think that we are mad to close the most efficient pits in Europe.

On output per man hour, British pits are a quarter more efficient than French pits, a third more efficient than German pits and twice as efficient as Spanish pits. The Germans are providing a subsidy to keep open pits that provide coal at twice the price of coal produced by the pits that we threaten to shut down. As a result, next year, Britain may produce less coal than the smaller German coalfield even though it has the largest coal reserves in Europe.

Last week, I predicted that under present plans, if the pits close, the number of mining jobs would fall to about 10,000 by next April. I read in *The Times* that that "senior industry Department source" also expects the number of jobs in the industry to fall to 10,000. At 10,000 jobs, there will be one miner for every 18 accountants in Britain working on the bankruptcy of companies; one miner for every three economists in Britain charting the decline of the British economy; one miner for every four debt collectors policing the personal debt mountain created by the Government's policies.

With 10,000 jobs in the pits, there will be fewer people working in the pits than the 11,000 civil servants working

[Mr. Cook]

in the Department of Trade and Industry. I have no doubt that all the DTI civil servants do a useful job. I have no doubt that none of them would dream of going down a mine. But the President has got his priorities badly wrong when we end up with more people working in his Department than in one of the key industries sponsored by him.

I have met many of the men who will lose their jobs in the next few months. Overwhelmingly, they are aged between 25 and 35. They have young families—something on which the party that prides itself on being the party of the family might wish to reflect. They mostly have mortgages because they were encouraged by the Government to be part of a property-owning democracy. With only a couple of exceptions, the 10 pits which are most likely to close are in areas where unemployment is above average. Male unemployment in the other eight areas is between 15 and 20 per cent.

Once those miners are sacked, they may not get another job for a long time. Redundancy money goes very quickly when one has a family to support and no job to support them with. The best chance of a future for those miners is to give their pits a future, to keep the pits working to produce coal that provides a secure, efficient source of energy for Britain. This may be the last chance for the House to do that.

Some Conservative Members know that what the Government are doing is wrong because it does not make financial sense, it damages the national interest and it is unjust to those miners.

All it will take is for a handful of Conservative Members to join us in the Lobbies tonight. Their vote is their responsibility—it is not the responsibility of the Ministers who have dreamed up the policy, or of the Whips who will be standing at the doors—and they must decide which door to go through. I beg them to use their votes to keep Britain's coalfields working, and to keep those young men at work in those pits.

4.34 pm

The Minister for Energy (Mr. Tim Eggar): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

'reaffirms its approval for the White Paper "The Prospects for Coal: Conclusions of the Government's Coal Review" (Cm 2235) which accepted the principal recommendations of the Report by the Trade and Industry Committee "British Energy Policy and the Market for Coal" (HC 237) and in particular the offer of a transitional subsidy for additional sales of United Kingdom underground coal for electricity generation; welcomes the help provided by the Government to coal field communities affected by closures; welcomes the offer of subsidy, subject to EC clearance, to British Coal, for coal from the Ellington colliery; welcomes the fact that British Coal have offered to the private sector the pits that they do not themselves wish to keep in production; welcomes the Government's commitment that the present high standards of safety achieved by British Coal be maintained or improved; and welcomes the Government's intention to bring forward as soon as parliamentary time allows the legislation necessary to privatise British Coal since the best future for the coal industry lies in the private sector.'.

I shall start by addressing the important issue of safety, to which the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) did not refer. All hon. Members are determined to maintain and improve safety standards in the mining industry. That is our priority, and it should not divide us on party-political grounds. I pay tribute—particularly with you in the Chair, Mr. Deputy Speaker—to the safety record of the coal mining industry. British Coal's overall accident rate has been reduced by more than 50 per cent. since 1985, as a result of many years of consistent effort and commitment by management and employees.

Mr. Eric Clarke (Midlothian): And the trade unions.

Mr. Eggar: The Health and Safety Executive and its mines inspectorate have also played a critical role—as, indeed, have the trade unions. One should never be complacent about safety standards, but we can all be proud that Britain's coal mining industry has one of the best safety records in the world.

In planning for privatisation, the Government are determined to ensure that the right framework is in place to maintain or improve that fine safety tradition. With that in mind, I wrote to Sir John Cullen, the chairman of the Health and Safety Commission, in May last year to ask for the commission's advice on the safety implications of privatisation. The interim reply that Sir John sent me last year was placed in the Library.

More recently, I again wrote to Sir John to update him on our privatisation proposals in the light of the White Paper on the prospects for coal. I received the commission's full and considered advice on Monday of this week. As I promised the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) last year, I am making that advice public. It is now available in the Library and in the Vote Office.

The commission's advice is based on five key principles, which it believes should continue to apply after privatisation. The first principle is that employers have the responsibility for ensuring the health and safety of their employees and others affected by their operations. The second is that the commission should continue to be the health and safety regulatory body for the coal industry, and the Health and Safety Executive the enforcement authority. The third is that the framework of legislation must be sufficiently robust to command the continued confidence of the industry and to ensure that health and safety standards are maintained or improved. The fourth is that everyone who works in the industry should have equal protection under the health and safety laws, irrespective of the size of the mine in which they work. The fifth is that the commitment of all employers and employees will be of fundamental importance.

The commission's advice is that there is already a comprehensive and well-tested framework of law governing the mining industry, with a rigorous inspection and enforcement regime. The commission has been in the process of renewing that framework of mining safety legislation since 1983. That is work that it would have undertaken irrespective of the Government's privatisation proposals. The commission believes that it will make an important contribution to ensuring that the statutory framework is adequate to the demands of a privatised industry. A number of those measures have now been implemented after full consultation by the commission.

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Eggar: If the hon. Gentleman will bear with me for a while, I will gladly give way later.

The commission has also taken steps to ensure that the best practice in British Coal's existing owners' instructions

continues to be applied throughout the industry. The work to achieve that is now largely completed. Draft regulations were laid by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment on 1 October to give legal status to the requirements of 10 of British Coal's safety instructions. The commission does not propose to give the instructions legal status where it is satisfied that there is already a clear legal duty on employers, or where inspectors have full statutory authority to ensure that standards are maintained.

The commission has also recommended that there should continue to be a national mines rescue service. The commission will consult widely about the draft regulations.

I should like to express my thanks to the Health and Safety Commission and to the Health and Safety Executive for that advice and for the extensive work that has been, and will continue to be, undertaken. I am delighted to be able to tell the House that the Government fully accept the advice that has been submitted to them by the commission.

Mr. Dobson: Will the Minister deal with two matters? Will he confirm that yesterday the Government—apparently with the support and, they claim, the encouragement of the Health and Safety Commission; that self-same commission which is so concerned to secure consensus within the industry about safety—forced through, against the wishes of the bulk of the people who work in the industry, changes in the rules? Is not it the first time this century that mine safety regulations have been pushed through against the objections of the people working down the mines?

Secondly, does not what the Minister said today about the arrangements that the Health and Safety Commission and British Coal are making for the rules below ground clash with what his hon. Friend the Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) said in yesterday's debate?

Mr. Eggar: As the hon. Gentleman will recognise when he reads the paper—I think that I have written to him, giving him the full details of it—it does not clash. Secondly, with regard to his attempts to repeat the slur on the Health and Safety Commission which he perpetrated last night, the trade union representatives did not oppose the Management and Administration of Safety and Health at Mines Regulations package. They did not ask for a vote on the package and I am informed that, with regard to the advice which was sent to me and which arrived on Monday, the trade union representatives attended the relevant meetings, accepted the advice, passed it on to me and did not oppose that advice or ask for a vote about it. There has, therefore, been full consultation about the package.

I have done exactly what the hon. Gentleman asked me to do in his written question almost a year ago. I have made that advice publicly available within about 36 hours of receiving it. It is now in the Library of the House and in the Vote Office. I am not sure what extra action the hon. Gentleman wishes me to take.

Mr. Dobson: If what the Minister is saying is true, is he challenging the minutes of the Health and Safety Commission, which clearly record that the Trades Union Congress representatives said that they believed that the changes that were pushed through yesterday would not maintain or improve safety underground? Do not those minutes also record that the local authorities' representative expressed similar reservations?

Mr. Eggar: I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman still seems to be stuck on the debate yesterday. The announcement that I made today, which is important because it relates to advice which has only just been received, and which it is appropriate that I should bring to the House at the earliest possible opportunity, only relates to the MASHAM package in the most incidental way. He has already received from my hon. Friend the Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth), the Minister of State, Department of Employment, who answered for the Government yesterday, the answer to the points that he mentioned on the Floor of the House yesterday.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): During the past few months, the Minister has frequently appeared on television to defend the Government's safety regulation proposals —which expunge the statutory capacity of the colliery deputy, who ensures that precedence and priorities for safety persist in the pits—on the ground that the proposals represent a considerable improvement because everyone who goes down the pit will be made responsible for safety instead.

Who would have the statutory capacity on the coal face, in the face of an immediate hazard, to stop the job? Would people have to rely on a system of finding someone to report the peril to?

Mr. Eggar: The hon. Gentleman, whose association with NACODS is well known and who has been a regular contributor to our debates on safety matters for many years, explored that matter in considerable detail yesterday. The MASHAM package puts a clear obligation on all members of management of the mines to put the highest priority on health and safety matters. The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that under the existing regulations—pre-MASHAM regulations—the safety requirements do not apply outside the coal face. I think that the hon. Gentleman recognises that that, at least, is a major step forward in terms of the new recommendations made by MASHAM, even if he does not accept other features of the new regime.

Last Wednesday, the hon. Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill), the Opposition spokesman on energy matters, expressed surprise from the Dispatch Box that the modified colliery review procedure involved a review of all British Coal's pits. He expressed astonishment that when he rang British Coal it had confirmed that all the pits were going into the review. I think that he simply does not understand the modified colliery review procedure. It might be helpful if I explained exactly how it worked.

The procedure was agreed between British Coal and the unions more than 20 years ago; it has been used virtually uninterrupted since the early 1970s. It is well known and well understood throughout the industry. I must emphasise that, ever since 1972, the procedure has provided for the performance and prospects of all collieries to be reviewed at local level on a quarterly basis at general review meetings.

Mr. Ronnie Campbell (Blyth Valley): Is the Minsister aware that the colliery at which I worked, Bates colliery in Blyth Valley, went through the colliery review procedures and had a stay of execution of two years, but was still closed, and that many other collieries before it that had a stay of execution were still closed? I am entitled to say that the document which the Minister has on the review procedure is not worth the paper that it is written on.

Mr. Eggar: I hear what the hon. Gentleman has said, but he does not appear to be aware that the Trade and Industry Select Committee recommended that the modified colliery review procedure should be followed. It is no good his waving his hands and disowning the Select Committee —it was, after all, compered by his hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Central (Mr. Caborn). I suggest that the hon. Gentleman checks early-day motion 1143, because that motion, which was signed by 117 Opposition Members, called for the early reesumption of the modified colliery review procedure. It was not just Back-Bench mavericks who signed it; no fewer than 20 Members of the Opposition Front Bench signed that early-day motion. Not only did the Opposition spokesman expose his ignorance, but he appeared to ignore the recommendation of the Select Committee and the views of more than 110 of his colleagues in the same party.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): Is my hon. Friend aware that what is causing uncertainty, anxiety and deep distress throughout the coalfields is that pits that have appeared on no list whatsoever, such as Littleton in my constituency, are the subject of letters from the chairman of British Coal, saying that he cannot necessarily guarantee their future for even a few months? Does my hon. Friend accept that to have in charge of British Coal someone who does not believe in the industry and who is, on any standards, a half-hearted, pessimistic salesman does no good to the industry?

Mr. Eggar: My hon. Friend made clear last week his views about the chairman and I have replied to him forthrightly. The chairman is doing a difficult job with considerable care and fortitude. My hon. Friend talked about the modified colliery review procedure, Of course, as I have already said, every pit goes into that procedure. That has been the position since the early 1970s and it will be no surprise to anybody who knows about that procedure that that will continue now that it is being resumed by British Coal.

Mr. Churchill: In the past, how many pits have gone through the modified colliery review procedure and come out with any prospect of survival?

Mr. Eggar: All pits go into either the colliery review procedure or, since 1985, the modified colliery review procedure. The process involves, first, a general review meeting and then, sometimes, reconvened meetings that look at particular pits. This is a matter for British Coal, but I think that I am right in saying that some pits have reached the stage of the reconvened meeting and it has then been agreed that the pit can continue in operation to be reassessed on the general quarterly basis by the general review meeting. That is the established procedure and, as I understand it, it is one which British Coal will continue to follow.

Mr. Martin O'Neill (Clackmannan): I think that the Minister was trying to say that no pits have come out of the review procedure with any prospect of survival.

No matter how worthless the procedure may be, last year when the Government, in collusion with British Coal, tried to close the collieries, they did so without using that procedure. It was for that reason that we called for it to be employed. It took a court decision to force the Government to adopt the procedure. That is why I asked last week whether the Government were using the procedure for all the collieries and, therefore, creating uncertainty across all the coalfields. That is what they have done. That is why we asked last week about the significance of British Coal's resumption of the colliery review procedure. Prior to the court decision, it had shown complete and utter indifference to honouring the formal agreements to which the court forced it to return.

Mr. Eggar: The hon. Gentleman needs to have words with the 100 or so Labour Members who urged the resumption of the modified colliery review procedure. Are Opposition Front-Bench Members in favour of the procedure?

Mr. O'Neill: If it is the only thing that is available as an option instead of closure, we are in favour of it. However, we are under no illusions about it, since, in the past, it has given nothing to the colliers of this country.

Mr. Eggar: If Opposition Front-Bench Members are in favour of the review procedure, why are they critical of its resumption and why have they been adopting thoroughly irresponsible scaremongering about the future of large numbers of pits? The hon. Member for Clackmannan cannot go on having it both ways.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): The Minister began his speech with an announcement about health and safety and is now trying to clarify the modified colliery review procedure. The House and the country would rather he made an announcement or provided clarification on a much more important issue—how many pits do the Government intend to ensure remain open and what is the minimum size of the coal industry that the Government regard as viable? Will the Minister make either an announcement or clarify that core issue?

Mr. Eggar: I asked the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) and his party a question some months ago. The hon. Gentleman believes that the best way of generating electricity is with the construction of windmills. It would take so many windmills that 45 per cent. of the country would be covered by them. How many pits does he think would survive if that policy were to be adopted?

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey obviously did not pay attention to the answers that I gave in the House last Wednesday. I made it clear that the modified colliery review procedure was being followed by British Coal and that, because that procedure was followed, British Coal was consulting the unions. I made it clear that it was for British Coal to make decisions about the future of collieries in the light of all the information on the market and that it was not and should not be a matter for the Government.

Mr. Robin Cook: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Eggar: I will give way to the hon. Gentleman later.

The hon. Member for Livingston has made a great deal of the information that he released to the press yesterday. In that information, he sought to claim that the various pits that he listed were, somehow, competitive. I understand the hon. Gentleman's point, but he must have words with his researchers. It is an abuse of the Short money to come up with such shoddy workmanship.

The hon. Gentleman referred to the United Kingdom coal report. There is no such publication. He produced figures for import prices of coal which are too high. The

hon. Gentleman also appears to be totally unaware of the fact that there are different coals at different prices in the figures that he has quoted. Also, when he seeks to compare the import prices with the prices for the United Kingdom pits, he ignores the transport costs inside the United Kingdom. Above all, the hon. Gentleman ignores the basic fact that it does not matter about the price of imports or the price of production at the pits that he has cited, because if there is no market for the coal, British Coal has difficulty in selling it at any price. The hon. Gentleman knows that we have 45 million tonnes of coal in stock at pitheads and at the generating stations.

Mr. Robin Cook: If the Minister now recognises that the problem is that the generators will not buy coal from whatever source, why, six months ago, did he and the President of the Board of Trade practise a fraud on the House by saying that they could solve the problem of the pits by bringing the price down to the level of imports? We warned them that the problem was a market that was rigged against coal.

Will the Minister answer the question that he ducked last Wednesday and has already ducked twice today—how many pits will close? The report in *The Times* says that 20 pits will survive to privatisation. Is that correct, and, if so, does he agree with me on one simple piece of arithmetic, which is that that means that 10 will close?

Mr. Eggar: There is nothing new in what I have just said. My right hon. Friend the President made it clear that the problem facing the British coal industry was the size of the available market. We made that clear this time last year and in the White Paper. My right hon. Friend and I repeated that in the debate in July and the chairman of British Coal has also made it clear. That is a major difficulty facing the coal industry.

The hon. Member for Livingston has just repeated the accusation which he made earlier and which he has been making consistently. He said that the White Paper is a fraud. Not for the first time, I find myself wondering whether the hon. Gentleman has ever read the White Paper. In that paper, we were open and realistic about our examination of the market opportunities for coal. We looked at every single suggestion put to us for increasing that market. We checked the opportunities that we identified with the Select Committee, we received evidence from more than 300 organisations and individuals, we commissioned a number of independent studies, we exchanged evidence with the Select Committee, we were able in the White Paper to draw on the Select Committee report and we presented a thorough analysis of the position. Of course, the House approved the conclusions of the White Paper in March.

In the White Paper, we rejected central planning of the energy industries. I should have thought that Opposition Members' experience with the "Plan for Coal" would have taught them that such an approach to central planning is, and always was, doomed to fail. Instead, we set out in the White Paper our policy based on competitive energy markets in which, increasingly, consumers can obtain energy from a diversity of sources at competitive prices. That policy of a competitive energy market has reduced real prices of gas by 20 per cent. since 1986 and has brought down domestic electricity prices over the past two years.

Of course, that policy retains a central role for coal. Coal remains, and will for the foreseeable future, the single largest source of fuel used to generate electricity.

Mr. Eric Clarke: British coal?

Mr. Eggar: Yes. It is overwhelmingly British coal. The hon. Gentleman may laugh, but he appears not to be aware that steam coal imports have fallen by 50 per cent. this year. We set out the reasons for our conclusions about the market and made them clear in the White Paper.

Let me recap briefly on our examination of different suggestions that have been put forward. The hon. Member for Livingston and his hon. Friends urged us to intervene in the contracts for gas-fired generation. I must say to him that it is no part of the role of a responsible political party or a responsible Government to interfere with agreed commercial contracts, especially when, on one estimate, the effect of the hon. Gentleman's proposals would be to put some 50,000 jobs in the oil and gas industry at risk.

Some Opposition Members urged us to ban coal imports in contravention of our international obligations. This year, coal imports have fallen by 15 per cent. and, as I said, steam coal imports have fallen by 50 per cent.

Mr. Dobson: Will the Minister tell us what international obligations we would be breaching by trying to reduce coal imports?

Mr. Eggar: There are international trading obligations, GATT and European Community obligations. I thought that the Labour party was committed to an open-trading system—maybe I was incorrect.

We were urged to close the magnox nuclear power stations, but the evidence in the White Paper and the evidence submitted to the Select Committee acknowledged that the magnox stations are now producing the cheapest electricity available on an avoidable cost basis.

The Select Committee urged us to limit electricity imports from France. As the Chairman and the Select Committee know very well, we investigated that option thoroughly, but explained to the Select Committee that our clear legal advice was that it would be against Community law and it would not be possible for us to restrict or prevent trade across the interconnector without severe financial and legal consequences.

Mr. David Ashby (Leicestershire, North-West): Is my hon. Friend aware that he could solve many problems at one stroke if we were to cease strip mining and devastating the countryside? If we did that, we should be able to save some of the pits because it would be an enormous cost saving not having to devastate the countryside.

Mr. Eggar: I am aware of the strong feelings of my hon. Friend on that matter and he has talked to me about it frequently. I know that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment is currently considering, as was stated in the White Paper, the whole matter of mineral planning guidance note 3, which controls such planning permission, and I am hopeful that he will come forward with a consultation document shortly. I am sure that my right hon. Friend will contribute to that consultation process.

Mr. Richard Caborn (Sheffield, Central): I want to correct what was surely a misunderstanding by the Minister earlier when he was talking about the modified coal review procedure. If he reads paragraphs 271 and 272

[Mr. Richard Caborn]

of the Select Committee report carefully, he will see that the modified coal review procedure was invoked in those two paragraphs because our terms of reference differed from those of the Government. They considered 21 pits and we considered all 31. We said that the 10 pits that were lying idle should go back into production, to which the procedure should be allied. It was not to apply to the rest. People believed the President of the Board of Trade when he said that there was to be a realistic investigation. Many people believed that, at least, those other 21 pits were likely to be saved. The procedure in the Select Committee report was applied to the 10 pits that were under immediate threat.

Mr. Eggar: I obviously pay attention to the hon. Gentleman's interpretation of the Select Committee's report, but it seems to be a rather curious position to take that somehow certain pits only should go back into a colliery review procedure which has previously been available for all pits for the past 20 years. It is not clear from his comments whether he opposes the decision made by British Coal on the modified colliery review procedure. Whatever position he takes, I have a long list of his hon. Friends who have signed early-day motion 1143 and would happily hand it to him and suggest that he talks to all of them and gets their views.

In the White Paper, we identified and took a series of practical steps to help the coal industry. The Select Committee recommended that a high priority should be placed on reforming working practices, especially on working hours. In the past week, I announced that we will repeal the Coal Mines Regulation Act 1908 with effect from 20 November.

As the White Paper and the Select Committee both made clear, there were widely divergent views on the size of the market open to coal. We set out those views in the White Paper. We did not make predictions, but accepted that British Coal should be given a further chance to compete for a bigger market. We responded to the Select Committee's recommendation and offered subsidies for additional sales of deep-mined coal for electricity generation.

In the past week, I was able to announce our first offer of a subsidy to Ellington colliery. That will help safeguard the pit's future for the next 18 months. I can announce today that, subject to European Community approval, we are in the process of making further offers of subsidy to British Coal in support of export sales from Ellington pit.

Mr. Jack Thompson (Wansbeck): Will the Minister clarify whether the Ellington pit contract will be for 18 months, as he said in the past week, or, as I now understand it, for 15 months? It has been bandied about that Ellington pit would receive £2 million out of the £500 million available. There is a heck of a lot of money left to be used. Is his Department directly and actively trying to get markets for the coal?

Mr. Eggar: I am sorry that I did not write to the hon. Gentleman to clarify that point. The contract is for 15 months, running from 1 January next year. When I referred to 18 months, I was talking about the position of the pit covered by that contract more or less 18 months from today. That was the confusion and I apologise if I misled the hon. Gentleman.

The subsidy is still there. We said that we would make £100 million available on the basis that was put forward by the Select Committee. That money is still there. I have just announced that Ellington is to benefit—at least, an offer has been made to British Coal of a further subsidy of coal for export.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Eggar: I am prepared to give way, but I am aware that I am taking up the time of other hon. Members. Mr. Deputy Speaker has asked us to keep speeches short because many hon. Members wish to speak.

Mr. Cash: There are two pits immediately adjacent to my constituency. In relation to subsidy and to putting more money into British Coal, has it been the policy to put money into the new clean coal technologies, such as the topping cycle, which would enable the market for coal to be increased? As I understand it, GEC Alsthom has made it clear that it is possible for us to produce substantial amounts of energy at reasonable prices by the conversion of coal into gas. I am told that in America, as much as $750 million of investment is provided; in the United Kingdom so far, the figure is only £5 million. Can my hon. Friend give us an assurance that money will be spent in greater quantities on new technologies?

Mr. Eggar: Over the past 10 years or so, the Government have spent about £200 million on research and development in the general area of clean coal technology. We announced in the White Paper a substantial increase in the amount available to the coal research establishment to enable it, among other things, to expand its level of co-operation with the researchers in the United States who are, as my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) rightly points out, making a major commitment in terms of the expansion of research and development activity.

Mr. William O'Brien (Normanton): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Eggar: For the last time.

Mr. O'Brien: The Minister has been generous in giving way. He referred to the assistance given to collieries. Will he now answer the question I put to him last week? When redundancies occur under privatisation—all this is building up to privatisation—will the miners who are made redundant receive redundancy payments the same as or similar to those received now under British Coal?

Mr. Eggar: That is a matter for British Coal. The Government have said that we shall be willing to extend the redundancy payments that we make available to British Coal for onward transmission until the end of April. I have also made it clear that in the event of there being consultations on closures that began this year, there would, of course, have to be continued availability of those terms beyond the end of April, if the consultations should continue. As I am sure the hon. Gentleman is aware, the details are a matter for British Coal.

The hon. Member for Livingston belittled the Government's commitment in terms of the finance that they had made available to British Coal. He belittled the fact that we had made available £20 billion to British Coal since 1979. Let me spell it out for him and for my hon.

Friends. The £20 billion is the equivalent of 200 new hospitals. It is the equivalent of 3,000 new secondary schools. It is equivalent to the cost of doubling the country's motorway network. The hon. Gentleman seeks to belittle that investment.

Mr. Churchill: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Eggar: I will not give way. I am sorry. My hon. Friend must realise that I have given way generously. I am sure that he will have a chance to make his own contribution in his own way.

Mr. Ted Rowlands (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. The Minister has made it clear that he will not give way again.

Mr. Rowlands: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The Minister has repeated the figure of £20 billion, which he gave last week. Is he aware that £8 billion of that is capital investment and that £6 billion existed——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That is not a point of order for the Chair, as the hon. Gentleman knows.

Mr. Eggar: The hon. Member for Livingston talked today as if there would be no jobs for the coal miners who had been made redundant over the past year. He seems to ignore the success of British Coal Enterprise. Some 9,000 former employees of British Coal have been found jobs or long-term training opportunities by British Coal Enterprise. The chief executive of British Coal Enterprise has made it clear that he believes that 88 per cent. of its active clients—the people who are registered with it—will be found a job by British Coal Enterprise and that 75 per cent. of its active clients will find jobs within the first 12 months of registration.

What of the hon. Member for Livingston? What of the Labour party? From time to time, the hon. Gentleman offers his solutions for the energy market. Characteristically, he fails to spell out the consequences of his answers. Perhaps he has failed to do so because he knows that some hard choices have to be made within the energy market. The fact is, as his hon. Friends know, that a bigger market for coal can be created only at the expense of some other energy source. If we create a bigger market for coal, we shall have to close down the nuclear power stations, we shall have to intervene in the gas generation contracts or we shall have to take illegal action against another member of the European Community.

If the hon. Member for Livingston wants to burn a lot more coal, he will have to square that with our commitments on the environmental front. He has conveniently ignored the additional costs—and therefore the increased lack of competitiveness for coal burn—of retrofitting desulphurisation equipment in power stations. Not only did he ignore that cost, but he ignored the fact that there is no technology available for removing carbon emissions from coal-fired stations. He simply does not understand the environmental aspects of coal.

The hon. Member for Livingston called the White Paper a fraud. What is the Labour party's energy policy? Last October, we asked the same question and we got no answer. We asked again in March and there was no answer. We asked in July and there was still no answer. There was a small step forward at the Labour party conference last month which you will have heard, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Last month, the Labour party decided that it would come up with its energy policy by the time of the 1994 conference. The national executive committee spokesman had obviously spoken too soon. Last week, the hon. Member for Clackmannan announced in an interview:

"there will not be a comprehensive energy policy in place until the 1995 Labour party conference."

Who knows? We may be very lucky. The country may get a view of the Labour party's energy policy by the end of the decade. Meanwhile, Labour avoids all the difficult choices. It fails to understand that Governments have to make choices. If Labour, in opposition, aspires to government, it has to make choices in opposition and it has to make its policy clear.

The Government have spelt out their approach clearly. We have done everything possible, within the constraints of the economic reality and within our legal obligations, to increase the opportunities for British coal. We believe that the best future for British coal lies in the private sector. Privatisation offers the best prospect for the coal industry, which is why we are committed to introducing the legislation necessary to achieve privatisation at the earliest possible opportunity.

5.19 pm

Mr. Terry Patchett (Barnsley, East): I am grateful for having caught your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because of the 31 collieries that the Secretary of State has doomed to closure, two—Houghton Main and Grimethorpe—are in my area. Indeed, I worked at Houghton Main for 26 years, and I know what reserves will be wasted.

It appears that the Government's objective in the debate 12 months ago was to play for time cynically in order to deflect public attention from the coal industry. Although the Minister led the House to believe that he would take a fresh look at the pits that he had named for closure and that he would investigate fresh market potential for coal, taking into account the Select Committee's report, he has not done that.

I believe that the Select Committee's investigation was merely a charade set up by the Government as a time-wasting exercise, and I was far from happy with the Committee's report. It did, however, contain some suggestions, although I am sure that every member of the Committee would concede that nothing in the report was taken up by the Government. The Government have used the time that they created for themselves through their promises, which were in fact commitments made to the House, by proceeding deviously with their original closure programme.

It is ironic that just before last year's debate I had been invited by the Commonwealth secretariat to go to Ghana as an observer of the election on behalf of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. The election was to take place the day after the coal debate. Since Grimethorpe and Houghton Main, which were on the hit list, are in my constituency, I was reluctant to be out of the country at that time. However, one of the Whips assured me that I had nothing to worry about in the near future as the Minister had made a commitment to the House that nothing would happen to the pits until he had done as he promised, and that the Minister would have to honour that commitment.

I went to Ghana with some trepidation but not without making arrangements for matters to be watched at the two

[Mr. Terry Patchett]

collieries in my constituency and for me to be kept informed. Sure enough, within three days of my arrival in Ghana, I received a message that the two collieries were being proposed for salvaging—so much for honouring a commitment. I came home to get the true picture.

The truth appeared to be that the coal board was organising the voluntary closure of pits by the men themselves; or so the Government would have us believe. In fact, the men were being blackmailed with threats of huge losses in redundancy money if they did not sign by a certain date. Knowing the National Union of Mineworkers and the mining industry as I do, I assure the House that not one pit branch of the NUM voted voluntarily for pit closure; they voted as they did because of financial threats.

Proof of the Government's lack of commitment to the mining industry is the fact that, since the pit closure announcement on 13 October 1992, 21 of the pits that were earmarked for closure have stopped production with the loss of 21,000 mining jobs—affecting more than half of the country's miners—and more than 60,000 jobs in related industries.

The Government have failed to make progress on even the few modest proposals in the White Paper. Despite the commitments made in that White Paper, nothing has been done to stop the power generators running down coal stocks, to cut the dash for more expensive gas-fired electricity generation, to restrict the expansion of opencast mining, to limit the import of expensive, subsidised nuclear power from France, to reduce the dumping of coal imports or to promote the export of British coal. In addition, not one penny of the promised £500 million Government subsidy for extra coal sales to the electricity market has been made available.

To make matters worse, the Government have not only closed pits but made absolutely sure to sabotage access to the remaining reserves in the doomed collieries; reserves that even they may one day have to consider trying to extract. By having the shafts filled, the Government are denying access to the reserves that are the nation's treasure house. The Government have no overall energy policy. They have not considered the complete cost of this shambles which affects the balance of payments and causes a loss of revenue to the Exchequer and an increase in unemployment costs in general.

Given the deceit that the Minister has perpetrated on the general public and the House, and knowing him to be an honourable gentleman, I personally expect him to resign before the evening is over.

5.25 pm

Mr. Simon Burns (Chelmsford): The House will agree that the past 12 or 14 months have been traumatic for the coal industry. I am sure that we are united in an utter dislike of unemployment and its effect on individuals and communities, whether coalfield communities or not. Unfortunately, as my hon. Friend the Minister for Energy said, Governments have to govern, and there are times when tough decisions have to be made, however unpalatable they may be.

In the past few months, much has been made of the significant, even dramatic, improvements in productivity in the coalfields in recent years. Of course, everyone pays tribute to the tremendous work of the miners in raising productivity, but it is a sad fact of life that the realisation that productivity has to be increased to earn money, and the increases themselves, came far too late.

We should never have had to live through the strike of 1984-85. If there is one man who needs to be chastised for the current state of the British coal industry, it is Mr. Arthur Scargill. If in the 1970s and early 1980s the coal industry had had the realism that it has had for the past few years, it would have become world competitive. It would have been able to carve out a market in this country and win markets overseas to safeguard its future.

Although the debate about the current number of mines in this country is uppermost in everyone's mind, we should not forget—this is not merely a debating point—that mines have been closing since the war because the market has been contracting. The problem facing this country and the coal industry is straightforward; it is evident to anyone who cares to look. British Coal is producing more coal day after day, week after week, but no one will buy it in sufficient quantity. The Government have embraced the Select Committee's recommendation and have been prepared to pay a subsidy to help British Coal become competitive. We heard the announcement at Ellington about the first subsidy being paid—but unfortunately that does not diminish the need for a far greater market for coal. I hope that the Minister, or my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment, who will wind up the debate, will be able to assure the House that British Coal will seek to do everything within its power to try to attract more orders for its coal and to help create a bigger market for it.

In recent months the importance of what is being done to help the coalfield communities has been overlooked, yet it is crucial. Unlike many of our constituencies, in which people do not live in villages and communities as they may have done many years ago, the coalfield communities are places where people still rely on each other and, sadly, they have relied on a single industry for their survival and their success. Over the past 12 months there have been some important improvements and some genuine help has been given to those who have become redundant to assist them in finding alternative employment, to become reskilled and retrained and so enhance their opportunities to get back to work as quickly as possible.

To my mind, the most important role of Government, and of individual Members of Parliament, is to seek to encourage as much expansion and improvement in the economy as possible, and to minimise unemployment so that people have more opportunities to get into work and to earn a living. *[Interruption.]* I tell the hon. Member for Clydesdale (Mr. Hood), who is talking from a sedentary position, that no Opposition Member has a monopoly in terms of worrying about the unemployed. All my hon. Friends care as much as he does about people who are out of work and cannot find a job.

Mr. Jimmy Hood (Clydesdale): I may have put my point rather strongly, because I was saying that you were talking nonsense, but the Government have to accept that your care and concern for the unemployed has been judged by your actions, and the results of your actions.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. I remind the hon. Gentleman that, despite his strong feelings, he is addressing me.

Mr. Hood: My apologies, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Burns: Despite the hon. Gentleman's strong feelings, I trust that he will not become too sanctimonious and bother the House with humbug. It ill befits the hon. Gentleman to lecture Conservative Members as if he had a god-given right to be the only individual who cares about the unemployed.

I shall return to my original point about the regeneration measures by which the Government seek to help the coalfield communities that have had so many problems over the past 12 months. It should not be forgotten that the greater part of £200 million in the regeneration packages announced in October and March has already been put into place in areas affected by pit closures. Major projects are under way in all those areas: £6·5 million has been spent on the Robin Hood line extension to Mansfield——

Mr. Paddy Tipping (Sherwood) *rose*——

Mr. Burns: Wait a moment.

Two million pounds more is being spent on the Viking business park in south Tyneside; English Estates is investing £24 million in providing up to 200,000 sq ft of commercial space in Yorkshire and Humberside. Local partnerships are well established in all affected areas and are working together to ensure that sustained and lasting regeneration takes place.

Since last October Lord Walker, in another place, has been co-ordinating the regeneration package. An important element of that package has been the confirmation of assisted area status in the announcement made in July about the new map by my right hon. Friend the Minister for Industry. Doncaster, Mansfield and Barnsley have all been upgraded to development area status. Wakefield, Dewsbury, Castleford and Pontefract, Alfreton and Ashfield, Chesterfield and Retford have all been upgraded and have become intermediate areas. Assisted area status will ensure that all those places are eligible for the full range of regional assistance available from the Government, and that will help to provide genuine opportunities to regenerate the areas that have been so sorely affected over the past year or so.

Mr. Tipping: I am delighted that the hon. Gentleman mentioned the Robin Hood line. It is true that the Secretary of State for Transport made the announcement last May in Nottingham, but perhaps the hon. Gentleman does not know that six months later the local authorities involved are still waiting for confirmation about how the money will be made available. Will it come as a grant or as a standard spending assessment? The authorities also need to know whether the money will be available this year, next year or the year after. It is all very well to announce such projects, but it is good to get things built on the ground. We want to see new jobs and new things happening, not to hear hollow empty promises.

Mr. Burns: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman and I fully understand his anxiety and his desire that, when an announcement is made, action should be taken as swiftly as is humanly possible afterwards to assist his constituents and other people in the area. I am sure that he will be pleased that my hon. Friend the Minister for Energy and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment are in the Chamber and will have heard his plea. No doubt his message will be taken to the Secretary of State for Transport, and I trust that any problems can be resolved as quickly as possible so that we can get the scheme under way.

Mr. Hardy *rose*——

Mr. Burns: I am afraid that I must make progress, as many hon. Members still want to speak.

Over the past 12 months we have heard a lot about one subject; we have heard about it today, and I believe that my hon. Friend the Minister for Energy, too, alluded to it. I am talking about the many vague throwaway lines, especially from the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook), about what the Government should or should not do. I am sorry that the hon. Member for Livingston is not in his place to hear the debate, because it is an important debate for all Members of the House. It seems sad that the 20-second sound bite for tonight's television news is more important to the hon. Gentleman than being in the Chamber to listen to the debate and to the concerns of all hon. Members on this important subject. [HON. MEMBERS: "Cheap."]

Mr. John Evans (St. Helens, North): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Burns: Hon. Members may say, "Cheap", but it is no cheaper than a number of remarks that the hon. Member——

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. There is a point of order.

Mr. John Evans: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Is it not one of the normal courtesies of the House that when a Back Bencher intends to refer to another hon. Member he informs that hon. Member of his intention? Furthermore, is the hon. Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns) aware that my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) is currently attending a meeting of the shadow Cabinet?

Madam Deputy Speaker: It is certainly true that that is a courtesy of the House if one hon. Member intends to attack another, but that is not a matter for the Chair.

Mr. Burns: I am grateful for your guidance, Madam Deputy Speaker. I was aware that if one intended to raise an issue about another hon. Member one gave him notice, but I have slipped up tonight because I assumed that the hon. Member for Livingston would have the courtesy to remain in the Chamber and listen to the debate rather than slink off to a shadow Cabinet meeting. However, that is up to the hon. Gentleman and I do not wish to pursue the matter.

All too often we hear from the Opposition throwaway lines about the need to close down nuclear power stations and to restrict gas-fired power stations. They forget what would happen if we did that—such ideas are so easy to throw out when one is in opposition. They do not take into account the number of jobs that would be lost in the nuclear and gas industries; people would be thrown out of work and on to the dole queues. It is too easy and simplistic to give such advice when one has not the responsibility of office, and does not have to implement it.

The Opposition's attitude to nuclear power is especially fascinating. The hon. Member for Livingston and some of his hon. Friends are often quick to dismiss the nuclear industry and call for people to be thrown out of it. I am sure

[Mr. Burns]

that the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) and the right hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) would not agree with that, but then we all know that the Labour party is deeply split on nuclear energy.

I have with me a rather interesting Fabian pamphlet entitled "No Nukes!" by Robin Cook. The foreword boldly pronounces:

"Robin Cook examines the case for civilian nuclear power and finds it to be unneeded."

Hon. Members might be interested to know the Labour party's position. The foreword goes to to state:

"The Labour Party played its full part in the development of the nuclear industry in Britain. It was the Attlee government that established the UK Atomic Energy Authority . . . It was the Wilson government . . . that initiated the Advanced Gas-cooled Reactor . . . programme which committed Britain to the construction of five more nuclear power stations, and by the end of the Callaghan government"—

in those far-off days of 1978-79, when we were in the hands of the IMF, when we had cuts in our hospitals, education and everything else; those halcyon days—

"a commitment had been made to a two further AGR stations. Yet"—

[Interruption.] Opposition Members anticipate me. The pamphlet continues:

"Yet during Labour's last spell in office our identification with nuclear power provoked a number of controversies within the movement itself".

I suspect that the right hon. Member for Copeland and the hon. Member for Workington would not welcome those controversies because they fully support the nuclear power industry, probably because of the siting of Windscale, and they fight diligently for the interests of consumers, their constituents and the overall energy policy of this country.

In that fascinating tract, the hon. Member for Livingston went on to say:

"we may require no further power stations for at least a decade and will free resources for investment elsewhere in the public sector. If we do require a new station it should be coal-fired".

That shows his rejection of nuclear power, but he never tells us how many people would be thrown out of work and the misery that that would cause for their families. Let me tell him—it would be more than 100,000 people. I am not surprised, frankly, that he does not talk too much about that matter.

Mr. Caborn: Has the hon. Gentleman read the motion? It states:

"recommendations of the Trade and Industry Select Committee in its Report on British Energy Policy . . . would ensure fair competition for coal against other fuels and secure a wider market for coal."

I remind the hon. Gentleman that, in that balanced energy policy, there was a role for about 25 per cent. to 27 per cent. of electricity produced by nuclear power. In fact, there was to have been a nuclear review.

Mr. Burns: I am extremely grateful to the hon. Gentleman. I suggest—I suspect that he has not seen it before—that he makes his bedtime reading that fascinating Fabian Society document entitled, "No Nukes!" by Robin Cook.

Mr. Caborn: That is what we are debating.

Mr. Burns: Indeed we are, but I have tried to show that, whatever the hon. Member for Livingston has signed up to in his responsibility as a member of the shadow Cabinet, he also writes documents which seem to be at variance with what he adds his name to. It is not the first time, and I suspect that it will not be the last time.

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesbrough): The hon. Gentleman is referring to a document which was written in 1980.

Mr. Burns: The hon. Gentleman overheard one of my hon. Friends. In fact it was written in July 1981, but I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will confirm that the hon. Member for Livingston has not repudiated the contents of that document in any way.

There are several other matters that the House should know about. They are rather more interesting than the general political knockabout that we heard from the Opposition spokesman. How many mines would the Labour party save? Exactly how would the Labour party save those mines? It is all well and good for Labour politicians to go around the country mouthing support for this group and that group, but, without any concrete proposals and real facts and figures, that is worthless and utterly meaningless. How would the Labour party obtain more contracts and a larger share of the market for coal in this country and overseas? It is all too easy to complain and criticise. The country and the House need to hear exactly what the Labour party would do to redress the situation.

The Liberal Democrats always have a view on every critical issue in this country. I noticed that, uncharacteristically, there is no Liberal Democrat amendment on the Order Paper, unless—perhaps I am being uncharitable—my Order Paper is incomplete. The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) is not usually shy in coming forward. He is not seeking to intervene. Obviously the Liberal Democrats do not have an amendment, so one assumes that they either could not agree an amendment or they have no view at all.

Mr. Simon Hughes: I might as well give the hon. Gentleman the answer now. I hope that it will bring his speech to an end. All my colleagues will vote with the Labour party and all other opposition parties and, I hope, with some of the hon. Gentleman's more intelligent colleagues in support of the overwhelming view of the British people that we should do something to try to save the coal industry, not sell it down the river.

Mr. Burns: I am grateful to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey for that clarification. He did not actually tell me why the Liberal Democrats have not tabled an amendment, but that is neither here nor there. I warn the hon. Gentleman that those who stand in the middle of the road usually tend to be run over. It is characteristic of the Liberal Democrats that they always sit on the fence or stand in the middle of the road until they think that they know which is the best way to jump for the maximum number of votes.

Nobody usually knows exactly where the Liberal Democrats stand on any issue, and energy policy is no exception. With their typical clarity, vision and sense of purpose, they have two policies on energy, which I suspect is to appeal to the maximum number of people in the hope of gaining the maximum number of votes, as that seems to be what motivates them.

The Liberal Democrats' alternative White Paper on energy and the environment, which was published in January—the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey is displaying it—suggests that they could

increase the market for coal by 50 per cent. by interfering in the market. Unfortunately, that policy directly contradicts their document on a carbon tax, which was published in September and which said that their carbon tax would increase the price of coal by a mere 58 per cent. Any sane person in his right mind can work out that such a price rise, when we are trying to make the price of coal more competitive with world market prices, would destroy any chance of British coal competing in the world market.

Of course, the facts and consistency never get in the way of the Liberal Democrats in their pursuit of votes. Their energy policy is a little like their defence policy. Liberal Democrats in Scotland want Rosyth for Trident, Liberal Democrats in the south-west want Devonport for Trident, and Liberal Democrats at Westminster just want to scrap the whole thing.

This is an important debate. It is a difficult matter because difficult decisions must be taken. I am glad that, during a very difficult time, the Government have searched far and wide for the best possible solution.

The Government took genuine account of the Select Committee report, which recommended a subsidy. They offered a subsidy to help and to give British coal breathing space to seek more markets. I hope that British Coal will be told in no uncertain terms—I am sure that it has already been told—that it must work hard to carve out better markets. I also hope that British Coal will be left in no doubt that the pits that may possibly be privatised must be left in a proper state.

The way forward must be privatisation. The nationalisation of British Coal was not the solution to a problem—effectively, it was the continuing cause of a problem. Privatisation will provide an opportunity for private enterprise to give the British coal industry a future where people can work in it, produce coal and find markets to which that coal can be sold. The sooner my hon. Friend the Minister introduces a Bill to enable the coal industry to be privatised, the better it will be for us and for the coal industry.

5.50 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): I regret that the speech of the hon. Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns) seemed to be a combination of the usual Tory dogma, the Tory brief from Central Office and the Tory distortion of the facts when Tory Members are driven to quote from a Labour document published 12 years ago and to misquote from one of our documents. The figures attributed to us by the hon. Gentleman came from Cambridge Econometrics, not the Liberal Democrats. I have the documents in front of me. It must have something to do with the fact that the hon. Gentleman is feeling more vulnerable now as a result not simply of having a Liberal Democrat challenging him most closely in his parliamentary seat, and having previously lost control of his local authority, but also not running his county council either since the Tories were defeated in Essex last May.

Mr. Burns: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hughes: No, I will not give way. The hon. Gentleman went on for a long time. He also clearly indicated that he will not leave the Chamber until 10 o'clock because he criticised someone who did not stay. I give him notice that I will be leaving for a short time to attend my parliamentary party meeting and then I will come back. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will not move from his seat between now and 10 o'clock, otherwise he will also take the biscuit for hypocrisy this evening.

The last time that we voted on this issue was in July. The Opposition parties, with some support from Government Members, managed to get the Government to within 22 votes of a change of policy. Since then, one more Tory seat has fallen and the Government's majority has been reduced by two. The fact that in the past year my hon. Friends the Members for Christchurch (Mrs. Maddock), who is with me on the Bench, and for Newbury (Mr. Rendel) have taken seats from the Tory party is more to do with the Government's failure to understand the rejection of their economic, employment and energy policies and their interrelationship in this country than with anything else. *[Interruption.]* If the Minister does not understand that the Tories had the two largest by-election defeats in recent history largely because of their fuel policy and the tax on fuel, I do not know where he has been in the past few months.

Mr. Kevin Hughes: Shutting pits.

Mr. Simon Hughes: I wish that a few more Ministers had been shut in pits. The President of the Board of Trade has not been down any pits.

Mr. Kevin Hughes: He has been shutting them.

Mr. Simon Hughes: I said that it would have been better if they had been shut in pits, not shutting them.

One year ago, the President of the Board of Trade made a statement in the House in which he announced the beginning of the sad year that we have just gone through. He said:

> "I accept full responsibility for that decision, as I do for the consequent events."—*[Official Report,* 19 October 1992; Vol. 212, c. 205.]

When he made his second statement on 25 March 1993, at the end of the Government's review of coal policy, he said:

> "Finally, let me remind the House of what I said earlier. There can be no guarantees. The market for coal is complex and unpredictable. Even among the experts, opinions differ. I have done all that I reasonably could, consistent with economic British Coal."—*[Official Report,* 25 March 1993; Vol. 221, c. 1241.]

When the Minister came to the House last week to make the third coal statement, he did not even make that claim. Today, the criticism of the Opposition parties is that the Government have not done all that they reasonably could, and are not even thinking of doing all that they reasonably can.

We hope that, as a result of an intelligently and reasonably put argument—as it was from the Labour Front Bench and, hopefully, is now and will be by Back-Bench Members—perhaps some Government Members will either vote with us or abstain because there are differences of policy that could be pursued by the Government. Such differences would help to achieve a result that Britain generally, as well as the coal industry specifically, needs.

Since we met to debate this issue one year ago, we have gone from a position of debating the future of 50 pits to one of debating the future of 30 pits. Twenty pits have ceased production and there is a severe risk that we will be down to 20 pits, as suggested by the leak in *The Times* yesterday.

What is the global background against which that is happening in our country? Like other hon. Members who take an interest in these matters, I obtain the regular press

[Mr. Simon Hughes]

releases from British Coal. Two press releases, among others, came to me in September. I quote from the press release dated 1 September 1993. The heading is

"Coal Use Expanding World-Wide."

The press release reads:

"'Britain out of step', says marketing chief. 'Britain is out of step with the rest of the world in turning its back on coal', British Coal's marketing director said today (Wed). Speaking at the British Association's annual meeting at Keele University in Staffordshire, Andrew Horsler said both developed and developing countries were investing in coal-fired plant for electricity generation."

Later in the month, I received a copy of a speech of the chairman of British Coal—before the speech in which he hinted that he was not optimistic about the future. He clearly said that, first, the Government had not fulfilled all of their obligations. I quote:

"Policy guidelines on the level of stocks for electricity generation, to which Government referred in its White Paper and which currently stand at some 33 million tonnes at power stations alone, are yet to be issued".

Secondly, he said that the World Energy Council, at its meeting in September, made it plain that energy assessments have an increased role for coal in the world, not a diminished one. Therefore, the world will look for more coal to use.

Britain has the cheapest competitive coal, as well as the best stocks, in the European Community. Therefore, it is madness for the Government to stand on one side and say, "We reject central planning. Our policy is to ensure if we can that coal remains the single largest source of fuel for electricity and yet do nothing to ensure that that can be guaranteed." Of course, the chairman is pessimistic.

If we look back over the past year, we see that the Government were deluding everyone on the facts about the realistic prospects. British Coal could have competed with imported coal with regard to inland power stations because of the benefits of local transport advantage. However, it could not have competed with regard to coastal power stations where importing coal is not nearly such an expensive business. Therefore, the argument that domestically produced coal would be able to displace imported coal never did stand up on the basis of all the facts. The Government knew that, in all probability, they would rarely have to use the offer of the subsidy, and that has been borne out by the facts. Effectively, the only use of the subsidy was announced last week with regard to Alcan at Ellington, which has been amplified and extended this week.

In the White Paper, and even today, the Government have not made clear what the sensible and intelligent level of stocks should be. The discussions need to be concluded. Yes, large stocks are being produced because British Coal has been very effective and productive. Yes, the stocks might be higher than they have been for a while. However, we do not know what sort of a winter we will have this year or next. We also have no idea whether the Government yet have a clear view of what the stocks should be, which is a crucial determinant of the amount of coal that the industry should be able to sell. The Government have not talked to the electricity generators to seek to persuade them to come to a conclusion over the additional purchases that they may be able to acquire, over and above their base stock. It is imperative that that is done before any decisions are taken about any of the collieries that are still under threat.

The problem is that the Government are obsessed with price as opposed to cost. If one adds up all the costs of the coal industry and compares them with all the costs involved in the nuclear generation of electricity, the assessment is honest and honourable, but the Government do not do so. *[Interruption.]* It is no good the Minister nodding his head because the figures are clear.

In their White Paper the Government said that the avoidable costs of generating electricity from existing coal-fired stations are generally less than the full cost of a new combined cycle gas turbine. The price of electricity generated by nuclear power, at about 1·2p per Kw hour, seems cheap when compared with that of coal, but if one considers the total cost of nuclear power—including all the levy subsidies from other sources—it is about 4·3p per Kw hour, which makes it considerably more expensive than coal.

The Minister has to equate like with like. The problem with this debate and those last year is that coal has not been given a chance to compete on equal terms with its competitors. On its own terms, it is not only winning in the market here but is also winning in other competitive markets abroad. Our coal is now nearly as cheap as any imported coal.

Mr. Eggar: The hon. Gentleman ought to compare like with like. He has quoted the full cost of gas and nuclear electricity, compared with the avoidable cost of coal. If he wishes to go in for that exercise, he ought to compare the avoidable cost of coal with the avoidable costs of nuclear and gas. He will find that the cost for coal is higher than for electricity generated by nuclear or gas.

I know that the Liberals inhabit cloud cuckoo land, but when independent generators can invest in new coal-fired stations, as they can invest in gas-fired stations, why does he think that no independent generator has opted to do so?

Mr. Hughes: Does the Minister remember that I and my colleagues submitted a full submission to the coal review? The hon. Member for Chelmsford suggested that Liberal Democrats do not have a clear policy, but our policy was very clear and we submitted it, unlike, I should add, the Labour party, which did not submit an alternative at all.

At the beginning of this year we published a further full statement of our policy, and it dealt with the avoidable cost question, which is serious. I understand the dilemma. Our policy dealt with how the Government can pull the levers to create a market for coal within which there is fair competition. The Minister knows what the various policy options are.

The French interconnector is one option that we have often discussed and the Minister and his colleagues have begun to deal with that.

The second option that must be dealt with is the argument about equality and the level playing field, and that involves the nuclear levy. There is no disagreement about the £20 billion in public money given to the coal industry—taking the figures back to 1979. We know that, as electricity consumers, we all make a contribution towards the nuclear levy, too. That has protected the industry, and is evidence showing why the nuclear industry was not sold when the Government privatised electricity generation. If one could correct that imbalance, people would choose coal.

As the Minister knows, the long-term contracts, which create a 15-year tie-up to the electricity generators, are the third and most important option. The generators have managed to protect themselves even though—as independent witnesses among others have said—the cost of gas on the world market is increasing whereas that of coal is decreasing.

As I want to win the argument, I shall be reasonable. I would be happy—not for myself or for my party, but for the country and the coal industry—to meet the Minister and to go through the document that we produced. I am advised that our figures are accurate. We could do that on a rational basis, away from the Chamber. I hope that he would then agree at least to reconsider pulling the levers that only the Government can pull. If they do not do so, they will leave British Coal alone, unsupported and, they hope, in the private sector.

I do not want to extend the debate but must comment on two further matters. It is ludicrous that we are still not trying to evaluate the prospects for coal in the context of a total energy policy for this country. The same, sadly, was true a year ago. We are awaiting a debate on the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report on the gas industry; the debate on the review of the nuclear industry is in the wings and a leak yesterday suggested that the Government may be going for a 20 to 25 per cent. nuclear energy component; a debate about the renewable energy industry is also in the wings; and in March we debated coal industry policy. We cannot possibly plan a long-term strategy whereby the coal industry will have some security unless it is part of the review of our total energy mix and we come to a common view about which component works where.

It is no good the Minister saying that we must just leave it to the market. I know what the Government are up to. They are holding the fort until the next Session. They will then put a Bill before Parliament to privatise the coal industry, sell it off and wash their hands of it, saying, "It's nothing to do with us." That is Thatcherism gone mad. The paradox is that I thought that it was a case of Thatcher going mad; but she now realises that the policy is mad, just as the Government are continuing with it.

Privatisation is probably irrelevant to the future world market for coal and the British contribution to it. British Coal becomes more productive, effective and efficient every week. Privatisation will change none of that and the Government ought to put the privatisation proposals and debate on the back burner until they have taken responsibility for the industry and given it a secure future first.

Why did the Minister duck the question that the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) and I both asked him? Why did he give a fatuous answer about windmills, which he knows are entirely irrelevant? What is the minimum size that he and the Government are willing to allow the coal industry to be reduced to? All the expert advice suggests that the industry will not be viable below a certain size. It will not be a player in the world market and will effectively be written off. Much of our deep-mined coal is viable, many pits have plenty of stocks left and many people who work in them want to keep their jobs rather than do something else. That should be the Minister's concern, and he needs to come clean with his colleague the Secretary of State for Employment at the end of the debate and tell us what is the bottom line for the Government—or is there no bottom line, which is what we believe?

We must all be concerned about the consequences for jobs. Of course we should not maintain the industry merely so that people can keep their jobs if we do not need it; but what if we do need it and people want to work in it? The statistics are clear. Coal-mining areas have some of the highest unemployment in the country and evidence shows that, once out of work, the majority of people do not find work again in a short time. When they do find a job, it is not usually as secure or as highly paid, and many households soon become dependent upon the woman as the main wage earner. We are therefore right to be concerned about the economic implications of pit closures. It is madness to pay redundancy to people to do nothing when coal is in the pits, they want to work and there is a global, European and British market for the product.

The Government must also come clean on opencast coal mining. There has been draft interim planning guidance, but we have not had the final document. It is absolute nonsense to close down pits in which there has been capital investment underground while ripping up England's green and pleasant land for opencast mines that most communities do not want. The hon. Member for Leicestershire, North-West (Mr. Ashby), who represents one of the heartlands of England, made the point as tellingly as I can. We must say no to opencast mining because the louder and more clearly we say no, the more supportive we will be of the British coal industry and exisiting pits.

I hope that the Minister will accept my invitation to go through the statistics together away from the Chamber. I do not think that he understands yet how overwhelming the case is for the coal industry to survive. I hope that his hon. Friends will make it clear that they are not satisfied that the Government have done all they can. I hope above all that it will be clear to the British people that, although they may sometimes feel betrayed by the Government and those who work for the Government, many of us and the majority of British people within and outside coalfield communities believe that British Coal has a future and want it to have a future and that the Government so far have been profoundly wrong.

6.10 pm

Mr. Winston Churchill (Davyhulme): A week ago, I returned to Westminster from Blackpool with every hope and intention of doing my bit for party unity, only to be hit between the eyes with what the Governor of Hong Kong would call "a double whammy" of further defence cuts and additional pit closures, neither of which I am able to support.

In common with certain other hon. Members on both sides of the House, I had the opportunity in recent months of visiting several pits. Indeed, I had the privilege of going underground at Welbeck and Calverton collieries with men who, without a shadow of a doubt, are the finest deep miners in the world. These same men kept the lights on when Arthur Scargill turned his bulldozer of the National Union of Mineworkers against parliamentary democracy in 1984. The Conservative party and this Government owe those men a great debt of honour as, indeed, the noble Lady, Baroness Thatcher, herself acknowledges. Nothing grieves me more in this sad and sorry business than that the present generation of Ministers is prepared to kick those men wantonly and gratuitously in the teeth.

[Mr. Winston Churchill]

There is bewilderment, cynicism and anger in the coalfields. They have fulfilled all ministerial injunctions to increase productivity, to reform working practices and to modernise their production to put it on a par with any coalfield to be found anywhere else in the world. They have broken every record in the book in the name of market testing. Since March, many pits have increased productivity by a further 20 per cent. The Minister for Industry cannot point me to another industry in the land that has achieved productivity increases on the scale that has taken place in recent months in the coalfields. As one miner said to me and some hon. Friends only last night, "We are just burying ourselves in our own coal." That is the measure of their success in fulfilling Ministers' injunctions.

I find it difficult to explain what is going on. Clearly, it started in the mid to late 1980s as an understandable determination by Ministers that this country should never again be held hostage by Arthur Scargill, or any successor, and the NUM. But there is a limit to the time that generals or, indeed, Ministers can fight the battles of yesteryear. There is no militancy left in the pits. Scargill has no clout left. To fight the battles of a decade ago is to miss the point entirely. They are irrelevant. What started as a plan to put Scargill and the NUM in their place now appears to be a craven bowing down by Ministers to the vested interests that were established in the wake of electricity privatisation.

I am glad that in opening today's debate the Minister did not once again trot out his hoary old chestnut that we have a free market in energy. It is patently clear to everyone in the land that there is no free market in energy. We have the most rigged market that it would be possible to devise. *[Interruption.]* The Minister groans, and well he may. Each year, a £1·3 billion subsidy goes from the electricity consumer to Nuclear Electric. Is not that evidence of a rigged market? Nuclear Electric has a guarantee that it can sell to the grid every kilowatt hour of energy that it produces. Is not that evidence of a rigged market? Similar privileges have been accorded to our friends across the channel with the interconnector.

It is inconceivable that Ministers allow themselves and the British electricity consumer to pay a subsidy to Electricite de France because they accept that every kilowatt hour of electricity that comes through the channel interconnector is produced by nuclear energy. They know full well that nothing could be further from the truth. Much of it is produced by fossil fuels, so it should be charged with the fossil fuel levy and should not get the kickback subsidy that the mug of the British consumer is required to fund through his electricity bill.

In March, my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade reprieved 12 of the 31 pits that on 13 October 1992 he announced would close. At that time, undertakings were given that he would take steps to carve out a wider market for coal. Does my hon. Friend the Minister for Energy recall being present in the room of the President of the Board of Trade when that undertaking was given to me and several of our hon. Friends on the evening of 24 March? If so, could he perhaps tell me, the House and our mineworkers what steps he has taken personally with his ministerial colleagues to honour that promise? I willingly would give way to him if he cares to answer. [HON. MEMBERS: "Speak, speak."] It remains possible for people not to break their silence, although I believe that the Government have plans to address that matter for the criminal courts, if not for the House.

What steps have my hon. Friend and his ministerial colleagues taken to reign back the dash for gas to load following rather than base-load generation, as recommend by the Select Committee?

Mr. John McFall (Dumbarton): None.

Mr. Churchill: Quite so. Indeed, the Government have licensed two additional stations when they were under no legal obligation to do so.

What steps have my hon. Friend and his ministerial colleagues taken to require Nuclear Electric to use the subsidy of £1·3 billion a year for the very purpose for which it is paid—to put in place an orderly programme for the closure of the Magnox reactors? Instead, that subsidy has been used to fund those reactors so that they can continue to operate in the future.

What steps have my hon. Friend and his ministerial colleagues taken to prevent the generators running down their coal stocks at an unnecessarily rapid rate, which has had the effect of utterly kicking the bottom out of the market for coal? What is the value of market testing when there is no market? That coal could be delivered free of charge to the generators and it still would not be possible to find a market for it.

What steps have my hon. Friend and his ministerial colleagues taken to curb the burning of orimulsion by requiring flue gas desulphurisation technology to be put in place to cope with that very dirty form of fuel? Has the Prime Minister been in touch with Prime Minister Balladur, either on the telephone or face to face, to insist on equality of flow through the channel interconnector? Has my right hon. Friend asked that gentleman to facilitate —as the French are bound to do under the treaty of Rome —the export of electricity from this country to Spain and other EC countries via the French grid?

I look forward to the reply by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment in view of the evident unwillingness, or possible inability, of my hon. Friend the Minister for Energy to answer the questions that I have posed.

I regret to say that Ministers have taken none of the steps that I have outlined. Therefore, the reprieves that they announced earlier this year and the exercise in market testing were simply nothing more, at least in their eyes, than a cynical charade. In consequence, even the 12 reprieved pits—12 out of 31—of which 10 now remain, will be closed. I believe that some of those closures will be announced next week and others in the coming months. No doubt even more pits besides those 10 will be closed, perhaps even some of the 19 core pits that were not on the original hit list of British Coal and the Secretary of State.

My hon. Friend the Minister makes great play of the fact that the coal industry has received £20 billion in subsidy in recent years from the Government. He misleads the House, however, if he seeks to suggest that those funds or the bulk of them have been put towards investing in the industry's future. He knows full well that that is not the case. Those funds have had to be provided to close down the industry and to pay miners to go away. They have been used for a different purpose from that implied. My hon. Friend knows full well that no operating subsidy has been paid to the

mining industry in the past 10 years, and to harp on that figure of £20 billion does my hon. Friend's case less than justice.

Certain of my hon. Friends and many of our constituents are concerned about the cost of the intended imposition of VAT on fuel. I wonder whether my right hon. and hon. Friends are aware that if the pit closures programme, as announced 12 months ago, is implemented in full, the cost will exceed the entire net revenue to be derived from VAT on fuel in 1996-97, when it will be paid at the full rate of 17·5 per cent. It is anticipated that that tax will generate £2·2 billion net. Evidence given to the Select Committee, however, suggested that the cost of paying miners to go away and of closing the pits will run to £2·5 billion. Obviously, that is far greater than the amount that will be raised in revenue from that unpopular tax.

What Government in the world would put under 6 ft of concrete a nation's greatest natural resource? In fact, we have the greatest natural resource of Europe. What Government would sack a work force who have broken all productivity records and who are employed in the least expensive deep mining industry in the world? That decision is unnecessary and wrong and, in consequence, I have no alternative but to cast my vote against the Government tonight.

I can tell my right hon. and hon. Friends that it gives me no pleasure to oppose my own party and my own Government. As Members of Parliament, however, if we have any good purpose in the House, surely it is not to follow blindly the Whips' bidding and to rubber-stamp Government policies, whether they are right or wrong. Our purpose must be to vote for what we believe to be right and in the national interest.

I shall not vote against the Government just to make a protest against something that is inevitable—the closure of the pits—because I do not accept that inevitability. Even now, at least 10 of those 31 pits could be saved. That can happen, however, only if the House requires the Government to abandon what I believe to be their shameful, short-sighted and wrong-headed policy. In those circumstances, the Government would have no choice but to tackle head on the rigging of the market against coal. They would have to establish a truly fair and free market in energy and reign in the dash for gas. They would be required to curb the nuclear industry at the margins. They would also be required to pick up the telephone and call Prime Minister Balladur to make it clear that we are not prepared to see six mines closed in this country just because of the interconnector.

Other countries such as the United States and Spain are investing in coal. At the weekend, it was announced that Spain will receive significant EC subsidies to enable Spanish mine owners to exploit their resources. It will cost twice as much to mine that coal as that which we will be putting under 6 ft of concrete. What a fantastic state of affairs. What are the Government doing about that? No doubt our contributions to the EC will be used in part to subsidise those Spanish pits.

At the end of the day, when the gas has run out, when the coal imports from Siberia and Algeria are rather dodgy and when the price of imported coal has gone through the roof, will those who sit on the Treasury Bench not live to rue the day, along with the rest of us, when British coal was put under a slab of concrete?

6.29 pm

Mr. John Evans (St. Helens, North): This is a unique occasion for me because I can say, with heartfelt sincerity, that it is the first time in almost 20 years in the House that I can follow a Conservative Back-Bench Member and tell him that I enjoyed his speech. I agreed with much of it and look forward to the hon. Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) joining us in the Lobby tonight. I trust that other Conservative Members who support him will also have the courage to join us in the Lobby. I echo the hon. Gentleman's words that it is still not too late to save the British coal industry if a sufficient number of Conservative Back-Bench Members have the guts to follow the hon. Gentleman's lead.

Just over 12 months ago, the only colliery left in the Lancashire coalfield, Parkside colliery in my constituency at Newton-le-Willows, was gearing up to go into full production in a new multi-million pound scheme. As I said in the House at the time, the miners said that it was the best scheme ever developed at Parkside colliery and that by Christmas the colliery would be making profits worth millions of pounds. Some 80 per cent. of the colliery's output went by environmentally friendly merry-go-round trains direct to Fiddler's Ferry power station, just six miles away. The juxtaposition of the colliery and the power station was a piece of intelligent physical planning that made sound economic sense.

Nearly 800 miners worked at Parkside colliery. The vast majority were young men with families and mortgages. Many of them had worked at two, three or four other collieries in the area which had closed during the previous two or three years. They all thought that they had a good future because Parkside colliery had millions of tonnes of valuable reserves below the ground. The pits had been profitable in each of the previous five years and had a superb and efficient work force. The miners thought that the pits had a future.

Then the axe fell—Parkside colliery was included in the 31 pits to be closed in the announcement made by the President of the Board of Trade on 13 October 1992. As everyone knows, the subsequent outrage that swept the country resulted in the President of the Board of Trade making a statement in the House on 19 October saying that 21 of the collieries would be reprieved and that an inquiry would be launched to save as many pits and jobs as possible. Everyone now recognises the fact that the only job that was considered for saving was that of the President of the Board of Trade.

However, Parkside colliery was one of 10 collieries which British Coal said had no future, and on Friday 23 October British Coal ended production at the colliery, despite the promises made repeatedly by Ministers that there would be proper consultations between British Coal and the miners at the collieries concerned and a proper review of the likelihood of those collieries being saved.

No consultations whatever took place with the miners and no review took place of the collieries. Parkside colliery —which was opened in 1964 and on which millions of pounds were spent last year—is now abandoned. It is a monument to the Conservative Government's folly, which has turned so much of British industry into a graveyard. It is a very sad graveyard.

Although British Coal may have abandoned the colliery, it has not been abandoned by a dedicated group of women who are still fighting to save miners' jobs. I refer

[Mr. John Evans]

to Parkside Women Against Pit Closures, who launched their campaign to save the colliery on Monday 18 January 1993. The camp which they set up by the side of the A49 at the entrance to the colliery has been "manned" 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Those women are still occupying that site and their behaviour there has been exemplary. They have always co-operated with the local police at Newton-le-Willows and St. Helens, informing them of any events that would take place, whether rallies, demonstrations or whatever. Not a single incident has occurred at the colliery site in the past nine months, nor has there been a single arrest. Indeed, the local police have always co-operated with the women at the site and kept a friendly eye on the camp, particularly through the night.

However, those good relations disappeared in the week beginning Monday 4 October 1993, when British Coal in its wisdom decided to bring in stone to start filling one of the shafts. The women mounted a picket and sought to persuade some of the lorry drivers to turn away and not deliver the stone to the colliery. Although they were supported by many of the lorry drivers, the stone was still being delivered to the colliery. The women stepped up their protest against the filling operation by occupying the colliery pump house on the Thursday night. The pumps were in use, pumping water and methane gas out of the colliery. The women emphasised to British Coal that they would not obstruct access to the pump house or the pumps, or do anything that would affect the machinery. They pointed out that they wanted to save the colliery and see it return to full production.

The following day, Friday 8 October, a British Coal management team arrived and entered the colliery precincts. Later that afternoon, the care and maintenance work force still at the colliery were sent home. Some time after midnight on the morning of Saturday 9 October, the entire pit, the access roads to the colliery and domestic properties near the pit were plunged into complete darkness. All the power had gone. Shortly afterwards, the British Coal management team went to leave the colliery. The women were alarmed at what was happening and asked what was going on, but the British Coal team refused to respond and retreated back into the colliery. The women were particularly concerned about the fate of two colleagues who were left in the darkened pump house well inside the colliery precincts.

Shortly afterwards, a dozen or so uniformed police officers arrived. The inspector informed the women that they were breaking the law and said that they must leave the site or he would arrest them. The women asked the police inspector to inform them which law they were breaking, but that question went unanswered. The women, who always co-operated with the police, said, "Well, if you must have a couple of arrests, we shall volunteer two of our number who can be arrested and that will satisfy the police requirement."

No arrests followed, but at about 2.30 am five vans suddenly pulled up at the colliery and about 45 riot police in full riot equipment, many of them with dogs, arrived at the scene and proceeded physically to manhandle the women to the side of the road. One of the women was bundled into the women's cabin and told that she was under "cabin arrest". Another was bundled into a police van, driven down the A49 and then dropped at the side of the road.

The riot police moved through the women towards the only man who was with them, and whacked him in the face with their riot shields. That individual was a 25-year-old named Billy Pye, who is a former miner at Parkside, a resident of Newton-le-Willows and a member of the National Union of Mineworkers national executive committee. Fortunately, Mr. Pye was smart enough not to retaliate. If he had done so, I would not like to think what would have happened. Suddenly, the riot police disbanded. The whole incident, from the arrival of the riot police and their leaving, took only five minutes. No arrests were made, so presumably no law was broken.

As the Member of Parliament who represents Newton-le-Willows and the surrounding area, I am entitled to ask why that terrifying and somewhat brutal police action was instigated. Why were nearly 70 police officers used to subdue seven women and one man? Was it not a question of intimidation aimed against the women against pit closures campaign? I am entitled to ask also what was the cost of that police operation, particularly when the Merseyside police authority and the chief constable constantly complain to Members of Parliament of a shortage of resources to undertake ordinary police work.

As darkness gave way to dawn and to daylight, it transpired that British Coal—without notifying or warning the North Western electricity board—had cut the entire colliery out of the national grid. That created a powerful and dangerous reaction, which it is alleged damaged the major substation at the colliery, blacked out part of Newton-le-Willows and caused difficulties for British Rail.

When the substation was examined later by electricity board officials, they allegedly said that it had been left in a dangerous condition. If the women had interfered with the electricity supply, they would have been vilified, arrested and probably sent to jail. British Coal personnel left the colliery on 9 October and no one has returned there since. We were told that Parkside would be one of the collieries offered for sale to interested parties, but it has been abandoned. The only people there now are a couple of civilian security guards and members of the women against pit closures campaign.

My concern now is with what is happening with the pit. Parkside has a major contract to supply methane gas to Crossfields at Warrington. No gas has been pumped to Warrington for many months. No gas at all has been pumped from the colliery since the pit closed on 9 October. I am no expert, and I should like to know what is happening about the build-up of methane gas at Parkside. Is there any danger of an explosion occurring at the colliery, or of gas seeping from the colliery and entering properties in the vicinity?

I have written to British Coal to protest at the completely irresponsible attitude that it has adopted towards Parkside and the rest of the British mining industry. I invite the Minister for Energy to join me in asking British Coal for a report on the events at Parkside on 9 October, and to clarify whether any dangers exist at the mine. The Minister will appreciate that that part of the country has a long history of tragic colliery gas explosions.

The Secretary of State for Employment also represents a Merseyside constituency, and will be visiting a school in Haydock in my own constituency in a couple of weeks. The grandfathers of children there worked in the mining

industry in Haydock, St. Helens and Newton-le-Willows. I hope that the Secretary of State will join me in inviting the chief constable of Merseyside to provide an explanation as to why so many policemen were used in a frightening and intimidatory action in the middle of the night against a handful of women. I hope that he will do so, because Merseyside police and British Coal have a case to answer.

6.44 pm

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): I rise with mixed feelings to speak in this debate. I have much sympathy with the plight of miners who have been made redundant and miners who will be made redundant, for several reasons. My constituency has a history of pit closures and job losses from the mining industry; I am well aware of the significant productivity increases that miners have won from the ground over the past 10 years or more; and I am more than well aware that the structure of mining communities makes it difficult for their members to find work outside that industry.

I am particularly saddened and concerned because Conservative Members feel great loyalty to those miners —particularly members of the Union of Democratic Mineworkers—who stood up to intimidation and kept the industry moving in 1984-85.

Many important and significant issues have not been addressed by right hon. and hon. Members tonight. There has been much talk of unfair competition from the nuclear and gas industries, but many forget that British Coal is also confronted with competition from imported coal. Many right hon. and hon. Members said that British Coal produces the most competitive coal in Europe, but we do not just live in Europe; we live in the world. The sad fact is that British coal is not always competitive with coal on world markets. It may be more competitive than German or Spanish coal, but not more so than Australian or American coal.

United Kingdom coal generally costs in excess of £40 per tonne. Coal can be landed in this country at £33 per tonne. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development average is £26 per tonne, and our competitors in France and Italy—who import a great deal of coal and have virtually no coal industry of their own left —regularly import coal at less than £30 per tonne.

Many right hon. and hon. Members know in their heart of hearts that Britain's geology is too often against us. Some of the largest and easiest seams were worked out long ago, and the American deep mine sector has a far simpler job because its geology is easier and hence its coal is cheaper.

Mr. Hood: The hon. Gentleman appears to be reading the speech that he made last year, and his notes are not up to date. Is he aware that two of the 10 pits currently under threat of closure are producing coal more cheaply than Colombia?

Mr. Oppenheim: I am flattered that the hon. Gentleman should remember my remarks last year, but this is a new speech. I hope that he will remember its contents next year. Apart from coal from a relatively small number of pits, British coal cannot be produced at such a low cost as that from Australia and the United States. Our larger stockpiles of coal are also a contributory factor in some pit closures.

Mr. George Stevenson (Stoke-on-Trent, South): As to the geological problems that British collieries face by comparison with their overseas competitors, is the hon. Gentleman aware that one year before it closed 18 months ago, Trentham colliery in my constituency produced the quickest 2 million tonnes in Europe, and made £7 milllion profit?

Mr. Oppenheim: I tried to make it clear that I am not talking only about European coal. It is not difficult for Britain to be the most competitive coal-producing country in Europe when it is competing against the German coal industry, which we know is hopelessly inefficient, and the small and inefficient coal industries of France and Spain. Our coal industry has to compete in the world market. We cannot be little Europeans and think only in terms of Europe.

The hon. Gentleman says that Trentham is profitable, but he forgets that, until this year, British Coal had significant protection against imports, so it was relatively easy to show a profit.

Mr. Derek Enright (Hemsworth): I want to give a practical example to the hon. Gentleman. Since Grimethorpe colliery, which supplied industrial coal, closed down, its customers have had to pay more on the free market. That is nonsense.

Mr. Oppenheim: I should have thought that, if that were so, someone would have bought Grimethorpe colliery by now. If it were so easy to produce cheap coal at Grimethorpe, I find it amazing that nobody began to mine coal there.

Mr. Enright: I accept the hon. Gentleman's amazement. The matter astounded me and my hon. Friend the Member for Batley and Spen (Mrs. Peacock). During the review procedure, machinery was taken out of Grimethorpe and it was almost shut down. That astounded me, and I welcome the hon. Gentleman's concern.

Mr. Oppenheim: I accept what the hon. Gentleman says. I do not have a lot of time for British Coal's management, who play a lot of games and are trying to protect their position, but one cannot get around the fundamental fact that, until recently, Government deals made between the Central Electricity Generating Board and the National Coal Board, as it then was, effectively forced the CEGB to buy coal from the NCB and prevented all but a small quantity of supplies from being imported. The hon. Gentleman knows that that is true. Until recently, the British coal industry enjoyed significant protection from imports.

Mr. O'Neill: Surely there are two aspects to the matter: first, the price of coal, about which the hon. Gentleman, although there is an alternative to his view, is advancing a strong argument and, secondly, the importance of a national strategy for coal. It is important not only that we have a diversity of fuels in an energy portfolio but that part of that portfolio is exclusively British in character. Our mining industry will soon not be large enough to sustain itself into the next century, despite the fact that we have massive reserves that we could exploit well into the next century. We are getting to the point where we could have diseconomies of small scale rather than economies of large scale. The hon. Gentleman's view is blinkered and his perception is far too narrow.

Mr. Oppenheim: If the hon. Gentleman will bear with me, I shall do my best to answer those points.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned rigged markets, but if the market has been rigged it has been rigged in favour of British coal. For years after the war, the CEGB was forced by the Government to buy British coal and was banned from buying imports. British Coal benefited further from subsidies that amounted to £20,000 million in the past decade. That was a significant sum, and if the market was rigged it was, until recently, rigged very much in British Coal's favour.

British Coal received further help. Until recently, generators were not allowed to burn gas for power generation in competition with British Coal because it was Government policy not to burn gas for power generation.

The hon. Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill) spoke of diversity, but we have not had diversity in this country. We generated the bulk of our power from two Government-directed sources—nuclear and coal. Other countries benefited from diversity. Japan had an expensive coal mining sector; it closed almost all its coal mines and now buys the cheapest coal and gas on the world markets, as well as having a nuclear sector. The Italians closed most of their pits; they now benefit from buying gas on world markets. We shall not ensure diversity or security of supply by saying that we shall exploit our natural resources without importing energy. That is the best way to create energy insecurity. If cheap energy sources are available on the world market, we should take advantage of them and conserve our natural resources for future use.

If all the pits are closed, we shall still generate 30 per cent. of our electricity from domestically produced coal, which is much more than most other industrialised countries.

Mr. Cormack: Nobody is sensibly suggesting that we should be wholly dependent on British coal. I have not heard any hon. Member suggest that. I have heard time and again the view that we should protect our indigenous fossil fuel industry as a vital ingredient in our energy supplies. My hon. Friend mentioned the management of British Coal. Does he think that they have pursued with vigour their prime duty, which is the defence and promotion of our indigenous fossil fuel industry?

Mr. Oppenheim: No, I think that British Coal has been pursuing its own rather smaller interests, and I am not defending its management.

The hon. Gentleman says that we have not had diversity of supply.

Mr. Cormack: Hon. Friend.

Mr. Oppenheim: Occasionally, one forgets such things, but of course the hon. Gentleman is my hon. Friend.

The reality is that we have not had diversity of supply. For years, under a Government-directed policy, we generated 65 per cent. of our electricity from coal—a ludicrously high proportion from the environmental, economic and energy security points of view. Comparable figures are only 50 per cent. in Germany and 8 per cent. in France. Even the United States, which has access to some of the cheapest coal in the world—far cheaper than the coal to which we have access—produces only 55 per cent. of its electricity needs from coal. If we want to ensure energy security, it strikes me as totally daft to say that we shall burn our indigenous energy and not take advantage of cheap imported gas or cheap imported coal.

Mr. Cormack: Nobody is saying that.

Mr. Oppenheim: Then I put it to my hon. Friend that this more market-driven system—although it is not market driven enough for my tastes—will result in a balance whereby we generate about 30 per cent. of our electricity from domestic coal, about 10 per cent. from imported coal, about 20 per cent. from gas and the rest from other means, including nuclear. That strikes me as a far more balanced policy than we have had since the war.

We have heard much talk about foreign supplies of energy not being very secure because countries are unstable, but we get almost all our imported coal from the United States and Australia, which both have stable democracies and have had long and friendly links with Britain. We cannot say to them, "I am sorry but we are not importing coal from you any more because you are not stable." That would be ridiculous.

Hon. Members mentioned countries such as Russia and Poland, from which we get a small quantity of coal, and said that we must not buy from them because they are poor, unstable countries and because we cannot rely on them. It strikes me as being an extraordinary policy for people who call themselves socialists to say that we should not buy coal from countries that are poorer than us. That is not much like the brotherhood of man. If we carry on saying to those poorer countries, "We won't buy your products because we can't rely on you," we will end up ensuring that those countries are unstable. Furthermore, such beggar-my-neighbour policies will ultimately beggar ourselves, because unless we buy from those countries what they are best able to sell us, they will not have the resources or the wealth to be able to develop their economies so that they can buy more sophisticated products from us.

Ultimately, such policies lead only to an intensification of political and trade conflicts, and worse conflicts than that. If we constantly say to third-world countries that we will not buy their products because we think that they are unstable, they will have no chance whatever of improving and developing themselves.

Many hon. Members on both sides of the House say that we should have an energy strategy. One reason why we have problems in our nuclear sector is that it was part of a Government-directed energy strategy. That should be a warning to us, because the Government directed the proportion of electricity that should be generated by nuclear, and directed that we should buy indigenous technology at all costs.

In the 1960s, the politicians said that we should buy advanced gas-cooled reactors because they were British designed, and rejected cheaper and more proven American-designed pressurised water reactors. By the 1970s, the AGR programme was in predictable trouble. Instead of then taking the advice of the CEGB chairman, Sir Arthur Hawkins, and adopting the American technology, we went for another United Kingdom design, the SGHWR, because it was lobbied for by vested interests. Three years later, that was cancelled.

Because it was state directed, the story of the British nuclear industry is one of enormous waste of resources and scientific talent. What makes it worse is that no one knew

the cost because of the way in which the system was run, until we had to find out during privatisation. The history of nuclear electricity in Britain should be a warning against industrial strategies, or intervention or energy strategies, because, however imperfect the market may be, it is always a great deal less imperfect than the results when those choices and decisions are made by politicians.

I have a great deal of respect for and sympathy with the plight of the miners, but I would put it to them that there is no future to be gained for any industry by protecting it from competition, be it domestic gas competition or foreign competition from imported coal. I welcome the help that the Government have tried to give and the efforts that they have made. My area has benefited from the assisted area status for Alfreton and Ashfield.

I have no sympathy whatever with the position of the Opposition. It is easy to be caring, to bemoan job losses and to call the Government uncaring when one is in opposition. When Labour was in power, it cut thousands of mining jobs in my constituency. During the 1960s and 1970s, Labour Governments shut one pit for every week. They gave the miners who were made redundant an absolute pittance compared to the redundancy payments that we give them today.

Labour also backed the strike in 1984-85. I put it to hon. Members that that strike had a bad effect on the coal industry as a whole. I have no doubt whatever that if it were not for that strike, we would be able to save many more pits than we are saving today. I have no confidence in and no sympathy whatever for the position of the Opposition. I consider their attempts to say that they are caring as nothing more than sanctimonious humbug. They should look to their own far from glorious past in the coal industry before criticising the real efforts of the Government to make the British coal industry competitive.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. I remind hon. Members that Madam Speaker has ruled that speeches between 7 pm and 9 pm are restricted to 10 minutes.

7.4 pm

Mr. John Cummings (Easington): I never thought that I would see the day when my colleagues agreed with a Churchill. The hon. Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) put on the record the reasons why, and the way in which, the Government should assist the British coal mining industry to achieve a larger share of the market. Because I am governed by the limit of 10 minutes, I shall not enter into the same arguments.

I wish to place on record my admiration for the men at Vane Tempest colliery and the group known as Women Against Pit Closures, who fought a magnificent campaign —the men in respect of the jobs, and the women in support of their menfolk. The men fought valiantly against the intense pressure and intimidation by British Coal, which led to a withdrawal of several thousand pounds for each miner who was eventually declared redundant at Vane Tempest. I salute those men, and the womenfolk who stood by them.

The history of closures in my area is long. Since 1979, we have seen the closure of South Hetton, Horden, Blackhall, Eppleton, Hawthorn, Seaham, Dowdon, Murton and Easington. It would be interesting to hear from the Secretary of State how much of the £20,000 million was expended on redundancy payments in those collieries. How much of that money remains underground in those collieries? Those collieries are now flooded, their roofs have caved in, and many hundreds of millions of tonnes of coal have been sterilised, not only for this generation but for future generations.

The Secretary of State may well recall the case that was made by Easington district council for the retention of Vane Tempest and Easington collieries. I was delighted to hear this week that British Coal is exporting 100,000 tonnes of coal to Denmark. I understand that the coal is from stocks that remain at Easington colliery. The case was made some three years ago by the district council to the Department of Trade and Industry and to British Coal that they should get off their backsides and explore markets that we knew existed in Europe, and for which European funds were available, to assist with the cost of transportation and shipping.

Nothing was done until after the demise and closure of Vane Tempest and Easington. Lo and behold, out of the blue we can export 100,000 tonnes of coal. I am delighted with that. It may mean extra jobs at Blyth, from where the coal will be exported. It could mean extra jobs at Seaham, should orders continue to be received from abroad. There is a market there, but it had not been tested. No one had the commitment to move into the line of exports until the 11th hour and 59th minute.

We are also left with problems at Easington colliery, which is up for sale. Budge has expressed an interest in taking over the colliery, securing perhaps 600 jobs. I am not saying that I am in favour of privatisation of the industry, but we are talking about 600 jobs. We are talking about a highly skilled and highly motivated work force. We are talking about a sophisticated mine, which, in the past, attracted tens of millions of pounds of taxpayers' money, as the Minister keeps reminding us. There are several million pounds of pumping costs to be met.

For the benefit of hon. Members who do not understand what is happening in Durham, I should say that there are five pumping stations, but no operational collieries. Should the pumping cease at Easington and the other stations in Durham, the whole of Durham's water supplies will be at risk. Serious concern has been expressed by the National Rivers Authority. At Blyth, injunctions may be taken out in future.

The industry has been transformed over the past 10 years. We have had mechanisation, automation, computerisation; we have had reorganisations; we have had combinations. All of that has been done with the co-operation of trade unions and a willing work force. Output has soared by 38 per cent. over the past year. Nothing in any sector of British industry can match it. And the reward? The miners are given the sack and put on the dole in areas where unemployment already tops 20 per cent.—in some, 25 per cent.

Statistics and logical arguments will not, I fear, win the day in the Chamber. Ministers need to have the political will. They must examine practical ways of assisting the indigenous coal market. Can we really rely on the stability of the middle east or of the former Soviet Union? It is interesting to note that 20 Tories have signed a letter against the defence cuts. Do those same 20 Tories truly not believe that we require a home supply of energy for this

[Mr. John Cummings]

and future generations? Will they follow us into the Lobbies tonight to express their anxiety about what could happen if Britain is held to ransom in the future?

We have witnessed the obscenity of the electricity suppliers generating and marketing their own electricity. In their areas they have a monopoly. I cannot shop around and buy from NORWEB or a southern-based electricity company. I have to buy from the north-east, from Northern Electric. It is certainly not a free market.

The legacy of pit closures also worries us. Right hon. and hon. Members must understand what it is like to live in a colliery community. In the past, we were self-sufficient islands. We have colliery housing, now in a deplorable condition in Easington. We will be left a legacy of redundant colliery buildings. English Heritage, uniquely to my knowledge, has expressed an interest in retaining some colliery housing and buildings. My advice to English Heritage is to keep people in the housing and to bring in the money to provide grants to improve the properties and the general environment in which people have lived for many generations next to slag heaps—virtually inside the colliery yard.

We have had marvellous colliery welfare schemes, paid for out of miners' pay packets for generations. They, too, are at risk. Hard-pressed local authorities are in no position financially to take over the many acres of welfare grounds and miners' welfare clubs, tennis courts, bowling greens, cricket grounds and football pitches.

I do not know what will happen in the run-up to privatisation, but I should like the Secretary of State to assure us that these schemes will continue and that the new owners of the pits will be responsible for their continuation.

The Minister has tried to persuade us that the mine workers pension scheme will remain safe in Government hands. I am not sure that it will. I am worried about the hundreds of thousands of people who rely on the miners' pension fund, and I want concrete guarantees in any future Bill to give me the confidence of knowing that the pension scheme is secure.

Ministers must be aware of the effect of coal imports on our balance of payments. Hundreds of millions of pounds are at stake. The Government deficit is running at £50 billion, but we also have an £800 million bill every year for redundancy payments to miners——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

7.14 pm

Mrs. Elizabeth Peacock (Batley and Spen): My interest in coal is well known in the House and has become more so in recent months. I must declare an additional interest in the coal industry today, as I am now helping Edwards Energy/Coal Investments to reopen mines in south Wales and Yorkshire, where we hope to retain some jobs.

My general interest will continue, and I ask the Government to move forward rapidly on four separate but related aspects.

I believe in the continued importance of coal in Britain's long-term energy policies. I also believe in ensuring that enough markets are retained to sustain a viable mining industry in Britain. We are, after all, sitting on our own resources. Early steps must be taken to restructure the industry by privatisation, creating a truly competitive market.

In the period running up to privatisation, the licensing of private mines should be undertaken in a way that allows those pits to operate in the private sector.

It is essential that this or any other Government ensure that coal plays a significant part in Britain's long-term energy policy. Although coal may be more difficult to obtain than gas, oil, nuclear or water energy supplies, it is a British resource which remains unaffected by changes in international politics. That could be important in the future. I therefore suggest that a policy decision must be made to retain coal production at viable levels.

I have received today a letter from ICI in which a change is also suggested:

"As a first step towards the necessary fundamental review of the electricity market, surely there is an intellectually simple and quick fix that the Government could require as a 40 per cent. shareholder in the Generators? If ICI and other intensive electricity consumers could only gain access to operate Fiddlers Ferry power station under the same conditions enjoyed by PowerGen, an additional 3 to 4 million tonnes of coal a year would be locked into electricity generation, mines would be saved and our electricity pricing problem would be resolved."

So the high energy users feel strongly about the issue.

By privatising electricity and gas before coal, we brought the full force of the competitive fuel market to bear on coal when it was still in no shape to respond to the change. As any undertaking is freed from the control of the state, its management is determined to benefit from the rewards of the private sector—and their new shareholders will accept nothing else. The idea of regulating the markets by means of independent watchdogs has not been a success —indeed, that has been the Achilles' heel of our privatisation programme.

I consider that a market must be wholly free of restrictions, or it must accept some degree of state control. As a Conservative, I believe in free enterprise and in freedom of action and choice. Equally, I believe that the state has a part to play in strategic areas of a nation's well-being. Britain's energy policy is one such area in which the state should retain control over its destiny. By relying on the industrial watchdog principle, we have passed that control to a third party, thereby abrogating the state's responsibility.

In electricity generation there is no justification for the coal-burning electricity generators and the 12 distribution companies recording bigger than ever profits—totalling £3 billion—in a period when coal costs to generators have fallen about 10 times faster than the price of electricity to Britain's domestic consumers. Fortunately, the regulator is now taking a closer look at the power pricing structure with a view to imposing distribution price controls.

I suggest that this is too little, too late. It is like the virtually uncontrolled dash for gas, and it has been another of the problems that resulted from privatising electricity before coal. Realistically, it was at the time in question probably never possible to privatise coal. I hope that the Minister will take action in this market.

Coal stocks are building up. Representing as I do a manufacturing area, I know well that if goods cannot be sold, production cannot be maintained. If everyone else involved in manufacturing industry in Yorkshire had sat on their backsides over the past few years and had not gone out on aggressive marketing campaigns, there would be no manufacturing left in the area at all. If British Coal had

been more aggressive in its marketing, and had become involved in niche markets, many of the mines that are now closing would have a future.

It is outrageous that British Coal can announce one day that it will double imports of house coal and industrial fuel and then a few days later decide to close the very mines that could supply that market. To me as a business woman, that is not good marketing. No wonder British Coal says that the pits have no future, and that it is pessimistic—everyone would be.

If the Government had not given their consent to other gas-fired stations at a difficult time, more tonnes of British coal would be burned and we would have had more of a coal industry left. We have a highly subsidised nuclear power industry, the sales of which are guaranteed. The industry has been allowed to increase its market share from 18 per cent. to—in the near future—around 30 per cent. That leaves 50 per cent. of the market for gas, and 20 per cent. for any other prospects.

British Coal has to be restructured to cut its operating costs and satisfy the changing market conditions. Privatisation is obviously the best way of achieving that, but the four or five new mining companies which are set up must be truly competitive. Competing companies will fight for customers and will do a better job than we have seen in the past. We should ensure that there are several clearly defined, viable and competing coal mining companies. Those companies would then compete in a two-level marketplace with the small but developing mining companies which are already in private hands.

All the companies would be able to supply the large-volume, low-cost United Kingdom electricity generating market if they were given the opportunity to bid into that market. There is some concern that the companies may not have that opportunity.

The specialist domestic and industrial coal markets also can be supplied from controlled cost, low-volume production mines with minimal overheads. Much of the massive investment in the coal mines still exists, and therefore the mines can be run in the future at a much lower cost than they have been.

The British coal industry does have a positive future if we get on with the change now. The industry will be much smaller, but I believe that it will be viable and profitable. It must remain an important sector within Britain's energy policy. Change is with us, and we have to manage that change. Together with Ministers, I will do all that I can to promote and help that change.

However, I believe that the Government have not taken the necessary action that would have ensured that there was a market. I am concerned about how much of our coal industry will still exist when privatisation becomes law next July. There is great concern throughout the country that British Coal will have closed down most of the industry before we get to that stage.

Urgent action is needed to ensure that private companies that are putting in bids to license mines are not brushed aside. Those bids must be looked at carefully, and I suggest to my right hon. Friend that we have allowed British Coal to be judge and jury in the present set up. If it does not want competition, it will not license mines. That would be a disastrous state of affairs and something should be done about it.

My concerns of last year, and of earlier this year, have not changed. I believe that the concerns which I expressed earlier this year by voting against the Government were right. I do not like to take that action, but I must tell my right hon. Friend that I shall do the same again this evening.

7.24 pm

Mr. Richard Caborn (Sheffield, Central): On 13 October 1992, it was announced that 31 collieries were to close. The House debated that announcement, and instructed a Select Committee to inquire into the decision. Many distortions have been placed on the Committee's recommendations from people both inside and outside the House. I would like to clear up one or two of those points.

It is less than honest of the Government to table to the Opposition motion an amendment which states that the conclusions of the Government's coal review accepted the principal recommendations of the report by the Select Committee on Trade and Industry, "British Energy Policy and the Market for Coal." The Government walked away from the debate in March this year when they produced their White Paper on a Thursday and had it debated in the House the following Tuesday. Many complained that that was too short a time to examine the 180-page document. Complaints were made also that hon. Members were not allowed to debate and indeed vote on the 39 recommendations contained in the Select Committee report.

I asked the Government through the Liaison Committee and through the Leader of the House whether the Government would table a procedure motion, whereby an amendment containing the 39 recommendations by the Select Committee would be placed before the House. That was denied by the Government. The Government claimed that the majority of the recommendations of that Select Committee were accepted.

There were nine key recommendations which addressed the central question posed by the President of the Board of Trade: "Is there a large market for coal?" That question was answered by the Committee. The answer came from an economic perspective and the Committee produced it clearly and conclusively. Of the evidence submitted to the Committee, 95 per cent. was in public as were all the hearings. The Committee had a Government majority, and the recommendations were carried nem. con. by the Committee. That should be compared with the Government's inquiry, which was in secret, no oral evidence was submitted and which produced a totally opposite conclusion.

The Government have rejected the nine key recommendations to widen the market for coal. These include a reform of the nuclear levy, a curb on French imports—a subject of which a lot has been said tonight—a restriction on orimulsion use without full gas desulphurisation, a reduction in opencast coal output, and an increase in coal sales to the electricity market by retaining the regional electricity companies franchise. Yorkshire Electricity said that if stability had been kept in the market by the retention of the franchise, the company would have taken 15 million extra tonnes of coal. The Select Committee heard the same from a number of regional electricity companies, with the amount of extra coal varying from 10 to 15 million tonnes.

Further recommendations by the Committee include an extension of coal sales to the industrial and domestic markets, a removal of market discrimination against coal and a curb on the dash for gas.

I challenge the Secretary of State who said at the Dispatch Box this afternoon that a curb on gas would

[Mr. Richard Caborn]

encourage the breaking of contracts. The Committee was privy to information on the 15-year gas contracts that were on a "take or pay" basis. All the recommendations in our report are clearly within the law. The report was not asking the Secretary of State to break any contracts when it recommended a curtailment on followed-through load for combined cycle gas turbines so that coal could take up more base load. The Committee makes clear that there would be no breaking of contracts in terms of "take or pay". I challenge any suggestion that the Select Committee recommendations ask the Government to act illegally. The recommendations, if followed through, would find a larger market for coal.

The Committee said also that no further licences should be given, because the Government should honour all the licences that have been given for gas. If that were not done, in five years the result would be that 25 per cent. of the market for electricity would be produced from gas, an increase from virtually zero in 1992. In 1997 25 per cent. of the market would be displaced to be taken over by gas-powered generation. That is quite significant. The Government have extended that forecast to around 30 million tonnes of coal equivalent, or nearly 30 per cent. of the market. That would close down another five pits.

The Government were also asked to consider the increase in coal stock levels. Had those recommendations from the Select Committee been acted upon, 25 to 27 pits would be operating in addition to the 20 core pits. About 47 pits would be operational in this country. There was nothing to stop the Government doing that, had they followed through what the President of the Board of Trade said to the Select Committee. The right hon. Gentleman said that he wanted to extend the market for coal. From what has been said in the House tonight, it is evident that the right hon. Gentleman gave a similar commitment at a meeting with some of the rebel Back Benchers on 24 March. Clearly, that market for coal has not been widened and is in fact considerably worse now than it was on 13 October 1992. It will continue to be that way unless the Government take action. It is well within their power to do so.

The Government throw up their hands and say that they cannot deal with market forces. The Minister for Energy said this afternoon that he was not prepared to determine the market and to apply pressure to create a proper portfolio within the energy market. If that is so, all the work that the Government did and that we did was in vain. The House was deceived because the Government were not prepared to put right that which was wrong.

The problem of the energy industry is that it operates in a rigged market. That market was rigged by the model of privatisation. Not only the Select Committee says that; not only I say that; not only some Conservative Back Benchers say that. Many experts in the industry say that the model of electricity privatisation was fundamentally flawed. It has rigged the market against coal. That means that gas will continue to take a greater share of that market. That will put this country in some jeopardy in the years to come as the price of gas continues to increase.

If the Government do not believe what we say, they should listen to the Energy Intensive Users group, which includes ICI, the steel industry and British independent steel producers. The group's letter to *The Times* has already been referred to. Another section of the letter says:

> "The UK's asset of large efficient coal-fired power stations fuelled by increasingly competitive UK coal is now being squandered, and energy-intensive manufacturing industry is being strangulated by high electricity prices which have increased by up to 70 per cent. since electricity was privatised."

A steel company in Sheffield, United Engineering Steels, is one of the most efficient and effective. It gave energy prices as a major reason for closing one of its plants in Rotherham. If the Government do not heed the advice of such people in industry, they will create a distinct disadvantage for our manufacturing base. It is bad for miners and mining communities to close pits, but unless we have access to the cheapest form of energy in this country we shall put our manufacturing base at a distinct disadvantage.

The same advice is being given from every quarter of industry in the United Kingdom. The letter from the Energy Intensive Users group continues that the Government have the power

> "to reform the electricity market so that the declining costs of coal in efficient base-load stations are reflected in internationally competitive prices to electricity-intensive manufacturing industry . . . In essence these were the recommendations of the trade and industry select committee".

There is a broad consensus that the Government should accept their responsibility to ensure not only that we have a balanced energy policy but that we produce for the nation the cheapest form of electricity. We are denying the nation that because the model of electricity privatisation was rigged against our coal industry.

We have proved beyond any reasonable doubt that the cheapest way to produce electricity in the United Kingdom is coal-fired generation. An increase in coal's market share can be managed without any loss of jobs in either the nuclear industry or the gas industry. We need a balanced portfolio. The Government should go back and consider the recommendations that were agreed by the Select Committee, which had a Conservative majority. It was transparent to everyone that there were compelling reasons to vote for the report.

7.33 pm

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): I hope that my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Front Bench will look yet again at the Select Committee report; it bears close examination and inspection. I appeal to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. There is deep dismay, disillusion and anger in the coalfield community. In the village of Huntington in my constituency is the Littleton colliery. Up to now, as the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mrs. Golding) knows only too well, it has featured on no list. It has beaten many records. It has a magnificently dedicated work force. It is the integral, not an integral, part of the community.

When there were rumours about the colliery recently I wrote to Mr. Neil Clarke, as did the hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Dr. Wright). We received extremely disturbing replies that no guarantees could be given and that the future of the mine was open to doubt and all the rest of it. We have sought an interview with Mr. Clarke and I hope that the hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood and I will see him together in the next few

days. It is not a party issue in any sense. It is a community issue. Many of the hon. Gentleman's constituents work at the colliery. It is in my constituency.

Ms Joan Walley (Stoke-on-Trent, North): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Cormack: No. I have only a few minutes. That colliery is typical of the problem that we are talking about. If it goes, a community will be devastated.

I must confess that I am unimpressed by the performance of the management of British Coal. I have mentioned that in interventions in the House on previous occasions. We want someone to promote, prosecute with vigour and be dedicated to the industry. We want someone who believes in that industry and has a fundamental feeling that we need an indigenous fossil fuel industry in the United Kingdom. We want someone who will leave no stone unturned in seeking to promote its interests. I do not know precisely how Mr. Clarke occupies his time. I make no personal attack on him. However, he certainly has not persuaded me.

One receives press release after press release from British Coal. The keynote is not optimism or determination but pessimism. Running through all the press releases are statements such as, "It is difficult to find markets", "It is difficult to do this or that." Of course it is difficult. But the man has a job. It is not exactly an unpaid job. He should be fighting day in and day out for the industry.

We need to be able to derive our energy from various sources. It is crucial that coal should continue to be the major source. As hon. Members have said so often in these debates, one is to a degree at the mercy and subject to the whim of the international markets and even of international events over which one has no control. In some cases we may rely on countries that are not all that stable. Imports of gas from Algeria have already been referred to.

We have high-quality coal in the United Kingdom, and a lot of it. If we run down the industry, not only do we destroy individual communities, with all the heartache and anguish that that brings and the economic knock-on effects on other industries, but we debilitate and weaken the country in the future. I have seen it happen before. My home town is Grimsby in Lincolnshire. I have seen how the deep sea fishing industry has been destroyed. When I stood as a candidate for Grimsby in 1966 there were many deep sea trawlers going out to sea. I went to sea on one of them for 17 days. I shall never forget it. It was marvellous. I came back with enormous respect for the fishermen.

The coal and fishing industries are similar in many ways; for example, miners and fishermen have to put up with great hardship. Having seen the fishing industry destroyed, I do not want to see our coal industry totally destroyed. I appeal to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to think again. He is a man with some sensitivity. The Government have not performed well on the issue in the past year. I say that with no joy.

I did not vote for the White Paper because I was not persuaded by it. I did not vote for the Government last October because I was deeply distressed. The Government have done nothing to win my vote on this issue. They certainly will not have it tonight. I do not say that with delight. I want to see the Government succeed.

More can and should be done. We do not want any more gas-fired power stations at the moment, and licences for them should not be issued. We want an indepedent inquiry into Magnox—those aging nuclear power stations—but there has not been one. Something must be done about the French link. Something can be and should be done immediately about opencast. My hon. Friend the Member for Leicestershire, North-West (Mr. Ashby) referred to the devastating environmental effect that opencast has in a community—I have seen it in my constituency—and although I pay tribute to the landscaping carried out afterwards, for two or three generations of school children areas are devastated. That need not and must not happen.

There are many things that it is within our power to do. If we have the will to do them—and proper and true leadership —we can retain a truly viable and thrusting indigenous fossil fuel industry, a British coal industry, well into the next century.

My hon. Friend is respected in the counsels of the Government and is listened to by the Prime Minister, quite rightly, with care and attention. I appeal to him to talk to the President of the Board of Trade and the Prime Minister and to say to them that over the past year we have not served the industry as well as we should have done.

There is no point in trotting out that £20 billion figure and saying that it represents a subsidy towards operational costs, because it does not. It does not represent a massaging of the market; for the most part it is a paying off of the redundancies at the mines that have closed and the cost of the strike. I am not saying that that should not have been done—I wholly support generous redundancy terms for miners—but that £20 billion has not been invested in the industry to make it better; it is £20 billion put into the industry to pay for the injuries caused to it. It is important that we get our facts right on that and see it in perspective.

Much rests on the shoulders of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State tonight. He must show that, in spite of the blemishes and problems of the past year, we are determined to serve the industry better in the future. My right hon. Friend will not get my vote tonight, but I hope that, by his speech, he will earn it the next time round.

7.42 pm

Mr. David Hanson (Delyn): It is an outrage that we are discussing the motion tabled by my right hon. and hon. Friends, because it shows that the Government have failed completely to fulfil the promises made in the White Paper on the coal industry last year, when the Point of Ayr colliery in my constituency and other collieries were threatened with closure. In the past year the Government have given no support to the mining industry, and the motion will get my wholehearted support in the Lobbies.

The speeches of the hon. Members for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill), for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) and for Batley and Spen (Mrs. Peacock) are a measure of the Government's failure to date. If the Government cannot count on the support of their own Back Benchers who take an interest in this matter, who can they count on?

I hope that the House will forgive me if I concentrate my remarks on the Point of Ayr colliery in my constituency, which is one of the pits on the closure list. I am pleased that the Secretary of State for Employment will wind up the debate, because he knows the colliery well from his former job as Secretary of State for Wales. Indeed, the tunnels of that colliery run under his constituency.

The past year has involved a catalogue of disaster for my constituents and the Point of Ayr colliery, and nothing that I have heard so far has given me confidence for the

[Mr. David Hanson]

future. The colliery was hit hard by the initial closure announcement, but my constituency fought back and presented a 16,000-signature petition to the House. There were letters of support and a protest march in the town of Prestatyn in my constituency. The colliery also received widespread community support from Delyn borough council and Clwyd county council. The case for the Point of Ayr colliery to remain open is based not on emotion but on solid fact.

We have lost 467 jobs in the last year, and are now down to 260. Shortly that will fall to 155, and potential closure has not been discounted. This has caused problems and has had a multiplying effect on employment in my constituency. Although the Point of Ayr colliery was originally included in their list, I hope that the Government will show some common sense and, even at this late stage, will stop the blatantly obvious waste of resources in my constituency.

There is still 10 to 15 years' supply of good, mineable coal available in the north Wales area and in the Point of Ayr colliery which should be invested in the nation's future. We have high-quality coal and a high-quality work force. We have available some of the cheapest coal in Europe, and there is a market at Fiddler's Ferry power station for that coal, if British Coal and the Government will allow it to be sold.

Another feature of the past year has been the uncertainty and continued low morale among my constituents. There has been a drift away from jobs in the coal industry to other jobs because of natural wastage and uncertainty about the future. Despite that, one year later, the Point of Ayr colliery is still producing coal.

The facts showing why the industry should not be sacrificed speak for themselves. The work force in my constituency is second to none and is still mining coal. It is selling coal based on less than £1 per gigajoule, among the cheapest in Europe. The miners in my constituency have bent over backwards to improve productivity. In 1987-88, they were producing 3·1 tonnes per man shift; in 1991-92, they were producing 4·5 tonnes per man shift; last year, 8·9 tonnes per man shift; in 1993, in the Point of Ayr colliery—which is threatened with closure and is on the hit list—they can produce 14·7 tonnes per man shift.

At this very moment, the miners are continuing to pioneer the continuous-mining system. The mine has had investment in new machinery, a new work force and new practices, which the miners have readily accepted, and they are now greatly improving productivity. They continue to pioneer roof bolting. Despite the concerns of my hon. Friend the Member for Sherwood (Mr. Tipping) about that system, they have developed and pioneered it. They are looking at small domestic markets in the local area to promote their coal.

Today the Point of Ayr colliery generates large profits, well in excess of the investment made in it. The work force have made the changes that they promised, and have bent over backwards to secure the investment needed to produce the goods.

The Government promised to safeguard the future of the coal industry, and in yesterday's edition of *The Times* it was shown that the Point of Ayr colliery is a valuable resource for the nation. It says:

"The government's assessment of prospective coal sales is relatively upbeat."

It goes on to say:

"Their faith in the ability of British mines to achieve a further productivity revolution has been reinforced by experience at the Point of Ayr mine, in North Wales. British Coal's experiments there with continuous mining machines for driving roadways, and other innovations, have achieved striking results."

That pit is now due to close—it is on the Government's list—despite the fact that productivity has massively increased and it still has great resources. That it is due to close is a waste and a scandal which will come back to haunt the Government in the future. *[Interruption.]* The Minister shakes his head. The pit is on the Government's list of pits due to close. If the Minister can tell me that the pit has three or four years' life left, let him do so. If he will not give me that assurance, I will continue to say that the pit is due to close.

Mr. Eggar *rose——*

Mr. Hanson: Give me an answer.

Mr. Eggar: The hon. Gentleman does himself and his constituents no good by scaremongering. Point of Ayr, like all the other pits, goes into the modified colliery review procedure and is considered under the general review process, as he well knows. Point ofAyr was singled out for praise by Boyds for its innovative approaches to mining techniques, and I agree with the tribute that the hon. Gentleman paid to the miners there.

Mr. Hanson: I wish to be reassured by the Minister. I hope that this evening he can give assurances, not just to that colliery, but to the other 10 on the list. There are still pits which are due to close and about which no assurance has been given to me by Neil Clarke, the chairman of British Coal, who said only two weeks ago that pits such as Point of Ayr are due to close. Pits such as that have a viable productive future in the industry and I hope and pray that the arguments that I make today will allow the pit to have that viable productive future.

I do not want to scaremonger. I wish to place on record the contribution that that pit has to make. I think that I have more knowledge of my pit and my community's feelings than had the previous Secretary of State for Wales.

There is still time tonight to change. The Government can this evening bring forward policies to offer subsidies to British Coal to create extra sales. They can take action on coal imports and on opencast mining, and to make National Power and PowerGen hold larger stocks of coal. They can take action to secure the future of Fiddler's Ferry because British Coal will continue to supplant coal that is mined in Wales with coal that is mined in Yorkshire and is playing off pit against pit in a reducing market.

There is power and strength in the arguments put forward by my hon. Friends. I strongly believe that the Point of Ayr colliery can contribute to the future of the coal industry and to British energy needs, and will be a powerful force in the marketplace in the future.

I shall conclude by simply relating to the Ministers who are present a fax that I received from the Point of Ayr colliery National Union of Mineworkers only this afternoon. It says:

"We want to compete and we want to work for a living, mining some of the cheapest coal in the United Kingdom. Support us. We are hard working, we have done everything asked of us"—

and yet they still face potential closure.

Will the Minister assure the House that my pit and others like it will have a future in an energy market for my

grandchildren in the future? I fear that the Government are continuing to slim down the coal industry ready for privatisation. The debate should not be about ownership; it should be about the survival of an industry. My pit has a future. I hope to hear assurances from the Minister about the pit; it has a future. It can contribute, it will contribute, and if people support the Labour party's motion this evening it will have an opportunity to do so.

7.52 pm

Mr. Malcolm Moss (Cambridgeshire, North-East): I begin by joining hon. Members on both sides of the House, and especially my hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill), in paying tribute to the miners in the coal industry for the remarkable gains in productivity that have taken place during the past few years.

Productivity has reached about 9·45 tonnes per man. This is the seventh time in six months that the record has been broken and it means that the output per man shift is now about 36 per cent. greater than it was a year ago. Those are remarkable achievements, but I cannot help asking why those productivity gains did not take place years ago, before the privatisation of the electricity supply industry and before the changes resulting from that legislation.

Mr. Hardy *rose*——

Mr. Moss: As I have only ten minutes in which to speak, I shall press on.

British Coal says that there is more to come, with investment in new technology and new mining techniques and systems, resulting in better efficiency and reduced cost. Does anyone seriously believe that those remarkable improvements would have happened without the introduction of competition that we brought about by privatisation of the electricity supply industry?

Interestingly enough, although productivity has increased, mines are becoming safer, with the all-accident rate showing a 19 per cent. reduction on last year. That emphasises that changes in working practices and greater flexibility by the miners can be achieved without necessarily jeopardising safety. I am pleased to note that the Minister emphasised that most important factor when he opened the debate.

That productivity has fed through to a much more competitive coal price, without which there would be an even smaller market for coal than that which we are discussing this evening. The power generators have been able to secure five-year contracts at the lowest real-term prices for coal for many years. It is worth pointing out, however, that the prices are still well above world prices, which remain depressed as a result of over-supply worldwide.

The new contracts will have a positive outcome. PowerGen has estimated that, when those price reductions are passed through in full to the regional electricity companies, electricity prices will decrease by 17 per cent. in real terms in the next five years. I am sure that that will be widely welcomed by all electricity consumers and will largely offset VAT increases on electricity which may or may not be in the pipeline.

While I am discussing price, may I say that it is important to remind the House that the Government accepted the most important recommendation in the Select Committee on Trade and Industry's report, which asked for a subsidy for coal in the electricity supply market. It set conditions up to an extra 16 million tonnes of coal above the contracted totals of 40 million, limited to five years until the year 1998. That subsidy was designed to bridge the gap between the cost of production of British coal and the world market price. Although it is true that very few additional sales in the electricity supply market for coal have resulted, even with that handsome subsidy, the Ellington colliery agreement with Alcan's own power station at Lynemouth is very welcome.

Much mention has been made in tonight's debate of the Select Committee on Trade and Industry's report and its recommendations to secure an additional market for coal burn in this country. I believe that the Government tackled those recommendations fairly, honestly and with strong counter-arguments in their White Paper. I propose, in my limited time this evening, to highlight three only of those points to show that there are no easy solutions that we can pull off the shelf, dust down and implement tomorrow.

First, I shall discuss the question of coal imports. It is important to differentiate between imports of steam coal and those of other types of coal. Those have been reduced to the minimum contractual levels that have been in place for some time, currently less than 1 million tonnes a year. With about 45 million tonnes of coal—about a year's supply—at the pit head and the power stations, it is obvious that there is little or no need for further imports in either the short or long term.

Secondly, let me discuss the environmental recommendations in the report. Orimulsion has been mentioned several times this evening. The Select Committee on Trade and Industry report recommended that Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution should insist on flue gas desulphurisation as a condition of using orimulsion, but it is not so environmentally dirty as claimed.

The power stations at Ince and Richborough emit less than half the amount of dust and less carbon dioxide per unit of electricity than they would if they were burning coal or heavy oil. In addition, the amount of sulphur dioxide that the stations are permitted to emit is no more than was allowed when they burnt oil. It seems to me that putting a limit on heavy fuel oil would either put up the costs of generation and increase electricity prices to the consumer or close down the stations altogether.

The other environmental issue that was mentioned by the Select Committee report was that of flue gas desulphurisation. However, although the report asks for an additional 2 GW to be insisted upon, it later states:

> "Deciding now to install more FGD would not raise British Coal's sales in the five-year period up to 1998, and would not in itself cause the generators to use more British coal at all."

In addition, the fitting of FGD will not in itself solve all the environmental problems of coal-fired power generation. In the future it is more than likely to be increasingly constrained by new emission limits not only for sulphur dioxide but also for carbon dioxide and nitrogen dioxide.

Although the power generators have been given stringent emission targets for sulphur dioxide, it is worth reminding the House that the targets can be achieved by other means, especially by turning to combined cycle gas burn, which produces no sulphur dioxide and about half the carbon dioxide emissions.

Finally, I wonder whether the people really understand what flue gas desulphurisation means and what effect it will have on the environment as a whole. We will need to quarry thousands and thousands of tonnes of limestone. The main sources of limestone are the Peak District

[Mr. Moss]

national park in the Derbyshire dales and the national parks in various parts of the country. Does anyone think that we will really quarry huge amounts of limestone from those areas of natural beauty? There would be a massive increase in heavy goods vehicle traffic trundling backwards and forwards from the quarry to the power station and, at the end of all that, we would produce enormous quantities of gypsum for which there was no market. In a recession, particularly in the building industry, I do not think that we would find a market for that gypsum. Instead of just having mounds of coal at our coal tips, we would have mounds of white gypsum on our landscape as well.

The report held out the hope that clean coal technology could provide a substantial additional market for coal and that the technology was just around the corner. I should like to take up a point made by the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) in answer to a question put to him by my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, South-East (Mr. Paice). The hon. Member for Livingston said that we could meet our environmental emission targets now and in the future using clean coal burn technology. However, the only reference to that technology in the Select Committee report is on flue gas desulphurisation, to which I have already referred.

Clean coal burn technology is well into the future. It is likely that integrated gasification combined cycle gives us the best possible solution to the problem, but that is many years down the road. The only plant in Europe now is a demonstration plant and it is light years away from being proven economically.

It seems ironic that in future we will be producing coal to produce the methane which we will then send to our combined cycle gas turbines. It may be that gas stations in the future could have coal gasification bolted on.

What are the Government doing about clean-coal technology? They are currently funding a portfolio of about 56 projects with a contract value of more than £114 million. The Department of Trade and Industry's contribution to the total is about £24 million. In addition, there is a wide range of coal research projects in United Kingdom universities——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order, order.

8.2 pm

Mr. Jimmy Hood (Clydesdale): I apologise for missing the first speech today, but that was caused by my commitments on a Select Committee. I was fortunate—if that is the right word—to hear the second half of the Minister's speech. I am pleased to see that the Minister is almost in his place. When someone meets the Minister, he is always pleasant and polite and gives the impression that he is listening to what is being said to him. However, I always judge people by what they do rather than by what they say. Having listened to the second half of the Minister's speech today, all I can say is that it was full of evilness. *[Interruption.]* I am choosing my words carefully. It was full of evilness for the coal industry and communities such as that in which I am proud to have been born and bred.

We have heard some wonderful speeches from Conservative Members, but we have lived through what has been happening in our mining communities. I must tell the Minister, as pleasantly as I can, that he received a drubbing from his hon. Friend the Member for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) and he deserved every bit of it. I shall try hard not to add too much to that, but he must excuse me if I come back to it now and again.

I joined the mining industry in 1964 as an apprentice engineer with a great future in a great industry. Within four years, as a qualified engineer, I moved down to the Nottinghamshire coalfield. I worked there for 19 years before coming here. I can remember when mining families were brought from all over Britain to the midlands coalfield in the late 1960s and early 1970s. It was the most cosmopolitan coalfield of them all. It always seems a misnomer to me because there is no such thing as a Nottinghamshire miner. Nottinghamshire miners come from all over the country and include Geordies, Scots, Irish and Lancashire men. Had it not been for the "Plan for Coal" in 1974, some of the pits in Nottinghamshire would have been closed. That includes the pit at which I worked, Ollerton, which is now one of the top pits in the industry.

The 1974 Labour Government had faith and confidence in the coal industry. I can remember making my maiden speech on 8 July 1987. I reminded the House of the famous quotation from Nye Bevan who said that Britain is built on coal and surrounded by fish. Now all the fish have been given away. The hon. Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) told us about the time he stood as a candidate in Grimsby. He said that he used to watch the boats going in and out. The only thing one can watch now is fishermen burning their boats because the industry has been destroyed. Now, the Government are continuing their obsession with destroying the coal industry, too.

In 1979 there was a change of Government. The new Government did not have the same confidence in the coal industry. *[Interruption.]* I am not surprised to hear a "Huh" from Conservative Members. Baroness Thatcher is not a lover of the coal industry and she set out to wreak revenge on the industry. The Government sought revenge not against Arthur Scargill, but against Joe Gormley, then the president of the National Union of Mineworkers. He was president of the union during the miners' strikes in 1972 and 1974. It is the 1974 miners' strike that the Government now see as the reason for their defeat in the 1974 election, and they have been seeking revenge against miners, their families and their communities ever since. That is the truth.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Ethnic cleansing.

Mr. Hood: There has been some ethnic cleansing in our industry.

I have not come here just to defend my union or colleagues who presently work in the industry or the many thousands who have lost their jobs. I certainly have not come here to listen to comments about Arthur Scargill. Something must be said in this place in answer to what has been happening. We have heard some pontificating about the miners' strike and what happened as a result of it. Make no mistake, the strike was planned. It was planned not by Arthur Scargill, the NUM or the miners, but by the Tory Government. Its seeds are to be found in the Ridley plan of 1979.

In 1981 the Government were determined to get what they wanted out of the industry. They went for it in 1981 but had to pull back because they did not have the goods to do it. They did a body swerve, similar to the one they did last year. They decided to improve the facilities for exporting coal in 1981. They built up the coal stocks, relied

on nuclear power and pushed through their trade union legislation, supported by the Liberals. They got ready for 1984.

A Select Committee met a week before the start of the miners' strike in 1984. Ian MacGregor, the man who walked about with a bag over his head, was asked about the effect that the overtime ban was having on the coal industry at that time. As he walked out of the Select Committee, he said that things would change within a week, and they did. Within that week the closure of Cortonwood and the other four collieries was announced. It was the provocation necessary to start the strike.

I will not stand in the House without defending miners and their communities, especially when I hear the trash that comes from Conservative Members who talk about the 1984 miners' strike as the cause of everything that has happened. The 1984 miners' strike was planned and perpetrated by the Government. The hon. Member who was the Minister with responsibility for coal in 1984 knows what happened.

I have never before mentioned in the House that during the miners' strike my car was petrol bombed, my garage was burnt down, my wife was attacked in our house by masked men and my son was assaulted five times. I wrote to my Member of Parliament, who at the time was the hon. Member for Sherwood, Mr. Andy Stewart. I told him of those events and asked him how he could help. He told me to go back to work. That was the help I got from a Tory Member of Parliament.

When the closure of 31 pits was announced in the past year, the Government did not bother to listen. The people said no, the mining community said no and even some Conservative Members said no, but the Government turned away, said that they had to have another look and bought time. We heard the story of the hon. Member for Davyhulme, who was persuaded to accept promises at the meeting with the Minister and the President of the Board of Trade. Nothing has been said since.

The Government have closed 21 pits, 20,000 miners are out of work and 60,000 other jobs have been lost. Now they are planning to close another 15 pits, to sack another 20,000 miners and to forfeit another 60,000 jobs. When I refer to the Minister's speech as evil, I mean just that. None of us from the mining communities is surprised at what has happened. Nothing that the Government could do would surprise us. Conservative Members accuse those of us who stand up and talk to them with the contempt that they deserve of being sanctimonious, but we have lived through the problems and will again. We wil not lie down. We will fight the decisions and say "no" and "no". If the Government do not change their ways, the people will change the Government.

8.10 pm

Mr. Edward Garnier (Harborough): I come to the debate with none of the experience that the hon. Member for Clydesdale (Mr. Hood) has of the mining industry, save that in 1987 I unsuccessfully fought the seat of Hemsworth, as the hon. Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Enright) bears witness, although it was not he that I fought but his late and lamented predecessor, George Buckley. Holding that seat prior to Mr. Buckley was a fine Labour Member, Alec Woodall, who represented all that was best about a mining Member of Parliament. Sadly, he was not permitted to remain as a Member of Parliament by the Labour establishment in that constituency because it thought that he was too moderate.

Mr. Enright: That is an absurdity, sunshine.

Mr. Garnier: No doubt the school teacher who has replaced him will be as good as he can. I gather that the hon. Gentleman is a Euro-consultant, but no doubt we will hear more about that.

I shall briefly refer to the Government's policy on energy, which, as my hon. Friend the Minister—or the Prince of Darkness as he must now be called—has described as that of ensuring secure, diverse and sustainable supplies of energy at competitive prices and in a form that people and business want. It is often forgotten in debates of this sort that we are seeking to satisfy customers as well as those who work in the industry. As a country with a diverse range of energy resources—oil, gas, coal and nuclear energy, plus a considerable potential for renewables—it is right that Britain should take advantage of those resources as best we can and to ensure that the policies that are to be implemented will achieve that.

There has been considerable progress since 1979, when the Conservative Government inherited a largely state-owned energy sector. Since then, the Government's policy has been one of progressive liberalisation that has brought major benefits to the industry and its customers —a group of people so often forgotten by Opposition Members. I shall briefly outline those benefits. North sea oil and gas have been freed from state control by the abolition of the British National Oil Corporation and the privatisation of British Petroleum and British Gas. Production is expected to reach a second peak this decade, keeping the United Kingdom alone in the EC as broadly self-sufficient in energy.

Since British Gas was privatised in 1986, domestic gas prices have fallen by 20 per cent. in real terms and industrial prices by 36 per cent. in real terms. To extend competition, the gas monopoly to supply has been reduced from 25,000 therms to 2,500. We have a manifesto commitment to reduce progressively British Gas's monopoly of the retail gas market to give smaller users the same rights as big firms.

In the short term, since electricity privatisation in 1990, there has been substantial progress towards improved efficiency, greater competition and greater consumer choice. The standards of service for each regional company have already brought dramatic improvements in customer service and have recently been strengthened by the electricity regulator. All the regional supply companies have announced price freezes or cuts for this year. Under the legislation that privatised the electricity industry, the monopoly threshold, below which the regional electricity companies have an exclusive right to supply, is to be reduced from 1 MW to 100 kW in 1996 and abolished in 1998. That will ensure progressive development of competition in the supply business.

It is widely recognised, on the Conservative Benches at least, that energy policy must take account of the fact that markets are sometimes inhibited from working effectively. Where full competition is not yet possible, independent regulators have an important role to play in protecting the interests of the customer by administering price controls that encourage industries to become more efficient, by enforcing standards of services and by encouraging

[Mr. Garnier]

competition. However, the Government have not absented themselves from responsibilities in the energy industry. The existing bodies include the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority, British Nuclear Fuels plc, Nuclear Electric, Scottish Nuclear, Northern Ireland Electricity and, one hopes, British Coal in the future if it is privatised.

The Government are still involved with the consents for power stations and overhead lines. They are involved also in issuing licences for oil and gas exploration and production in line with the nation's best interests, in maintaining safety standards across the energy sector and in protecting the environment through sustainable development, which includes a commitment to energy efficiency, work on renewables and involvement in the funding of some areas of energy research.

I ask the Opposition parties to bear in mind that while, over the past 14 years, the Government have been actively engaged in the energy industry, producing an effective energy policy to benefit the people of Britain, the Opposition parties have been somewhat at sea.

My hon. Friend the Minister mentioned the article by the Opposition Front-Bench spokesman for energy, the hon. Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill), in *Lloyd's List* on 22 October when the hon. Gentleman admitted that the Labour party will not have a comprehensive energy policy in place until the 1995 Labour party conference. I should have thought that the people whom Labour represent have a right to expect the Opposition to have in place an energy policy that can be examined and criticised, or praised, depending on one's point of view.

We are entitled to know how many pits the Labour party would keep open if it came into government. [HON. MEMBERS: "All of them."] We are told that every pit would be kept open. The party that says that is the party that closed more than 300 pits and sacked 220,000 miners in the 11 years before we came to power. Which commercial contracts would the Labour party interfere with to achieve the additional sales that it claims would exist? How many other jobs in the energy industry would Labour be prepared to sacrifice to satisfy the coal industry? Those questions continue to be unanswered.

Mr. Skinner: I will answer those questions.

Mr. Garnier: I have no doubt that the hon. Gentleman will have a chance to speak in due course. We have yet to have answers to those questions from the Opposition and it is about time that we had them.

8.19 pm

Mr. Derek Enright (Hemsworth): I discovered that a very good friend of mine taught the hon. Member for Harborough (Mr. Garnier) when he was at school. I must rebuke my friend for his failure when I next see him. One would normally expect from one of his pupils a speech that was sparkling, logical and incisive. Instead, we got the bland central office line, right down the line and all the way.

Before the general election, the Rothschild bank, distinguished for taking on broken ex-Chancellors, made an assessment of the pits. Frickley pit in my constituency was in the top 10 profit-making pits, so there seemed to be no doubt about its future. One short year ago, the President of the Board of Trade by his announcement plunged Frickley pit into a loss-making position, although it was not loss making in actuality. One short year ago, that pit was put on his list.

It has not been a short year for the families who work in Frickley; it has been a lifetime for them. One of the burdens of guilt that the Government must bear is what they have done to thousands of mining families as a result of the uncertainty in the pits—uncertainty which they have created and which continues at this moment.

Mr. Garnier *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Enright: I wish that the hon. Gentleman was living as a Hemsworth miner and was subjected to that treatment. It is not a pleasant position and has not been helped by the actions of the Government and of those who support them in any way.

This year, not 500 yards from the comprehensive school in Featherstone which I helped to set up, we celebrated the centenary of the Featherstone massacre when two totally innocent people were shot. It is clear that they were innocent because they were shot in the back when they were a considerable distance away from the disturbances. They were shot because miners were on strike. The miners were on strike because pits were being closed as a result of overproduction—the reason for the car strikes in the late 1940s and early 1950s. There is a bit of overproduction, so let us have a strike.

We all remember the Ford strikes. Red Robbo was the most useful instrument of management who ever existed. When there was overproduction, the management would say, "Let us make a strike and save a bit of money." The same thing happened 100 years ago and that is what the Government want to take us back to. The mines were private then. Lord St. Oswald operated them and I have no doubt that his successor will operate them once again. Standards and safety will be cut again. The only thing that brought the mining industry advances in technology and real advances in safety was nationalisation. I am not ashamed to say that loud and clear.

We talk of productivity—the sudden burst of productivity, as the Conservatives would have it. That is not true. I am sorry that the President of the Board of Trade is not still here. He made exactly that statement at an all-party energy meeting, which you may remember, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and he was rebuked for it at the time by Lord Haslam. Lord Haslam is no Maoist or Trotskyite; he is a solid, card-carrying Tory. However, he rebuked the President of the Board of Trade because we have had constant increases in productivity. The biggest increases in productivity have come since nationalisation. It is important to remember that it is a geometric progression. It is also important to remember the prize of safety that came with it.

We have a problem with management—here I agree with some Conservative Members. We have a crisis in management generally in this country, not only in the management of British Coal. The hon. Member for Harborough mentioned my consultancies. I have worked in Africa and on the continent, and I have worked with many private firms. I am bound to say that the quality of management in continental firms, in American firms and in Japanese firms, above all, is infinitely better than the quality of management in the United Kingdom. We must face that problem.

It is no good saying that we lose productivity because of the social chapter; it is no good saying nonsense like that. We lose productivity and competitiveness because we have poor management. One only has to listen sometimes to the Confederation of British Industry and to the Institute of Directors to realise that at the root of the British problem is short-termism. That is absolutely encapsulated in the policy of hiving off British Coal to private enterprise here, there and everywhere. I stress the word British; I do not mean Barkers coal or Aztec coal.

It is an interesting exercise to look at the firms that are bidding to take over British Coal. When Frickley is affected, I shall advise my constituents about which firms to back and which not to back. Despite what has been said today, some firms have a most appalling record on safety and an appalling record of exploitation, whereas other firms are better. There will be a hotch-potch of firms involved and it will be difficult to choose between them.

I have two specific questions for the Secretary of State for Employment and I should be grateful if he would take notice of them. My first question concerns redundancy. Redundancy is being used by management at the moment in a way that leaves people not knowing where they are —a very cruel way. I know that the Secretary of State does not have direct control over the matter, but I also know that he has the ear of British Coal. I hope that he can impress the following on British Coal. A man may be offered redundancy terms one day and may then consult his family about those terms. He may go back a month later and say that he accepts the terms. To say, "That is not on offer now; it was only on offer if you took it straight away", is insensitive, to put it at the mildest.

The second question concerns the review procedure. When Grimethorpe in my area came under the review procedure, it was a review in title only. What happened was that the machinery began to be brought up straight away and faces were closed. That is not a proper review procedure. I should be grateful if the Secretary of State in his winding-up speech would give a guarantee that it will be a genuine review procedure, and that faces will not be closed and machinery will not be taken out. The men will then know that an honest review is taking place.

My next point concerns competition. One factor that has not been mentioned is gas. Let us recall how gas came to be sold to the electricity supply industry. British Gas did not want to sell the gas. It might have been willing to sell, but only at a commercial price. Hon. Members will recall that the electricity industry said that it did not want to pay the commercial price, but something lower. Ofgas made British Gas, against its commercial judgment, sell gas at a lower price. If that is not a rigged market, I do not know what is. The question needs to be addressed seriously.

There should be a combined energy policy towards which we should be working. In principle, the Government are not against interference in the market; one only needs to think of how they intervened in the nuclear market. If that is not interference or a deliberate rigging of the market, I do not know what is. The Government may be justified in interfering—I am not arguing about the rights or wrongs of the case—but the fact is that they did it.

The Government must look to their laurels. They must start to treat the miners fairly, protect their interests and declare that they will do so now.

8.29 pm

Mr. James Clappison (Hertsmere): I welcome the opportunity to participate in the debate. It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Enright). I cannot claim the distinction of having been taught by him or one of his friends——

Mr. Enright: Shame.

Mr. Clappison: I have no doubt that my classical education would have been a great deal better if I had been.

It has become clear among my colleagues—those who feel unable to support the Government and those who, like me, will support them—that there is sympathy for and recognition of the plight of the miners and the mining communities. I recognise the strength of feeling welling up within the hon. Member for Hemsworth which leads him to his passionate defence of the mining community of Hemsworth, which he represents so vigorously. There is no absence of fellow feeling in my party for the mining industry.

My contribution to the debate is to highlight one aspect of the mining communities which has not been dealt with sufficiently, if at all, tonight except in the excellent contribution of my hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns), but I first wish to draw attention to the motion and the basis on which it was tabled.

Having listened to the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook), I believe that he put the case far too high, especially when he charged the Government with fraud. I cast my mind back to last October when the Government had to face a difficult situation: coal stocks were piling up and there were problems with contracts with the electricity generators. The Government have not been impervious to all that was said then or to what has happened since. The hon. Member for Livingston said that everything that has happened since last October was predetermined, that the Government have not listened and, in his words, that it has all been a fraud. There is clear evidence that that is not so and that the Government have listened carefully.

I also listened with great interest to the contribution of the hon. Member for Sheffield, Central (Mr. Caborn). He spoke about the recommendations made by the Select Committee on Trade and Industry. Like all those who took an interest in the matter at the time, I remember that the cry in the House was for the Select Committee to be given a role. It was given a role and it made some recommendations. The hon. Member for Sheffield, Central mentioned some of them, but he did not mention that which provides clear evidence of the Government's good faith. I refer to the Government's commitment to provide a subsidy. It was one of the Committee's central recommendations, no matter how one views the report.

Recommendation 228 states:

"We recommend that the Government provide a subsidy to the generators . . . to burn up to 15 million tonnes of deep-mined RC"—

British coal—

"per annum above the quantities of 40 million tonnes falling to 30 million tonnes"

as from April next year. On any reading, that is a substantial commitment. It came with a substantial price tag, and I remind the House that that price tag was put on it by the Select Committee. It was a price tag of £500 million which, as the Select Committee envisaged, would fall on the taxpayer or come from diversion of moneys from the fossil fuel levy. That is clear evidence of the

[Mr. Clappison]

Government's commitment and their preparedness to adopt the Committee's recommendation. I should not dismiss the subsidy out of hand, as the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) did on behalf of the Liberal Democrats. Clearly, it will have a significant role to play in some areas——

Mr. Michael Clapham (Barnsley, West and Penistone): I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way, especially as time is limited. I shall be brief. If he were to read a little more of the report, he would learn that the recommended subsidy was recommended in the context of an extension of the franchise market to 1998. That is an extremely important point which the Government failed to take on board.

Mr. Clappison: I take great consolation from the fact that the subsidy is proving valuable for the miners of Ellington. I welcome today's announcement that the subsidy will be extended to exports. I hope that the Liberal Democrats pass on the good news to the people of Ellington. They dismissed it out of hand today, but it will clearly be very important to the people there.

As I said, I should not adopt the approach of the hon. Member for Livingston because he puts the case far too high. Nowhere does he put the case higher than in the motion, which mentions the effect of the closure of the pits on the coalfield communities. It states that the House

"regrets that closure of these pits will destroy the economies of the coalfield communities".

It will, of course, have significant implications for the miners who face redundancy and for their families, but to talk of destruction is to paint a false picture of the coalfield communities.

Mr. Cummings: It is true.

Mr. Clappison: I sympathise with the miners who have lost their jobs, but the hon. Member for Easington (Mr. Cummings) must understand that even if the Opposition's alternative—such as it is—were implemented fully, it would not increase the numbers employed in the mining industry. From personal knowledge of his mining constituency, the hon. Gentleman will know that employment in mining has declined this century.

There were more than 1 million miners before the first world war; 700,000 men were employed in the mines at the end of the second world war when the industry was nationalised. At that time, it was correct to talk of coalfield communities being dependent on only one industry. In those days, the mining industry was the lifeblood of those 700,000 people, but things have changed since then.

The hon. Gentleman misses the point. Hundreds of thousands of jobs have been lost in those communities, under Conservative and Labour Governments. The picture is all too familiar in other European Community countries and in the United States: such communities have suffered from being over-dependent on one industry. A very important point that has arisen——

Mr. Cummings: There is now no industry in my coal communities.

Mr. Clappison: The hon. Gentleman is wrong. It is important that he and all Labour Members with mining constituencies remember that the Government have given substantial assistance worth £200 million, which has not come the way of other communities facing redundancies in this or any other recession.

Mr. Cummings: The hon. Gentleman is living in cloud cuckoo land.

Mr. Clappison: It is not cloud cuckoo land, and the people who will benefit will not regard it as cloud cuckoo land. Those communities are in many instances part of assisted areas. They also benefit from British Coal Enterprise and the training and enterprise councils. Nine thousand of the 18,000 miners who were made redundant last year have found jobs or been offered training. That is not nothing; it is not to be dismissed out of hand. The coalfield communities desperately need diversification and inward investment more than anything else. That is the future for the coalfield communities and to suggest otherwise is to look back and ignore the positive future.

I agree with the hon. Members who have spoken of the very great qualities of the people in the mining communities. They are no strangers to hard work and they have many enterprising skills. Their entrepreneurial spirit has clearly been shown in the success of the many thousands of projects generated by British Coal Enterprise. They now need support. The message from my colleagues who have sympathy for the mining industry is that we are looking for every ounce of support that the Government can give to such areas to bring about much-needed diversification and to give people the hope that they can only gain from the enterprise culture and inward investment. The days when the mining industry dominated those areas and was their sole source of income are long gone.

Those of us who know the areas—many Conservative Members do, and have great sympathy with them—wish the Government every success, and urge them forward in every possible way. We hope that all the agencies and all the leadership provided by British Coal Enterprise can be drawn together, so that the people make a great success of all the opportunities that are coming forward. Conservative Members believe in the spirit and abilities of those miners and those communities——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order.

8.39 pm

Mr. Ronnie Campbell (Blyth Valley): The hon. Member for Hertsmere (Mr. Clappison) must live in cloud cuckoo land.

I begin by welcoming the subsidy for Ellington colliery, which is just outside my constituency; many of its workers live in the constituency. Perhaps, as we have been told this afternoon, the subsidy will last for only 15 or 18 months, so I wonder what will happen in 18 months' time. I am a bit worried about what will happen to the colliery, because there are so many possibilities for opencast mining—I shall talk about that later. I am worried about what will happen to Ellington colliery after the new agreement signed with Alcan has been going for 18 months. It will be interesting to see whether another deal is struck, and I shall explain later why I think that that may not happen. The deal with Ellington could be just a one-off shot. Alcan is getting a cheap form of energy; it is being subsidised with a cheap tonne of coal to keep the power station burning.

We have heard some passionate speeches about the independent review procedure from hon. Members with pits in their constituencies that are about to close. As I said to the Minister earlier, in my experience the review procedure is not worth the paper it is written on. The Secretary of State for the causes of unemployment was the Minister responsible for the coal industry when my local colliery, Bates's colliery, went through the procedure. Stourton colliery was the first to go through the procedure, and Bates's was the second. We went to London and put a case second to none. There was a Conservative appointee in the chair, yet at the end of the week, when we had put the case for Bates's colliery, he delivered his judgment that on the evidence that he had heard the colliery should stay open for another two years to prove whether the seam that we recommended was workable.

We were jubilant, we put the flags out and opened the bottles of champagne. But that did not last two weeks. Within two weeks Ian MacGregor and his cohorts on the board at the time announced that Bates's colliery was to close. So I warn my hon. Friends not to place too much hope on the review procedure; it is simply a dark horse. If there is anything here to do with the prince of darkness it is the colliery review procedure. It has no strength and no legal force. It is up to the coal board whether it wants the colliery to stay open or to close.

I remember going to see Lord Walker, who was a Minister at the time, and he said, "Put your colliery through the review procedure. It is a new procedure that we have just worked out with NACODS." We did. Lord Walker said that the colliery would stay open if that was the decision made by the review procedure. He gave us a guarantee, but we lost it.

Mr. Skinner: Then he took the Maxwell money.

Mr. Campbell: Indeed, he took the Maxwell money.

The Government have hit the coal industry on the head with a sledgehammer. Subsidies to the nuclear industry amount to £1·3 billion. As we argued earlier, if the coal industry had even half that money we could practically give our coal away—what is left of it. I read in the paper the other day that the Magnox reactors are to be demolished, but God forbid—new ones are to be built. If we got rid of Magnox tomorrow we could put 9 million tonnes of coal into the coal-fired power stations. But the Government are going the whole hog on nuclear power, although they have not got the thermal oxide reprocessing plant off the ground yet. They cannot even reprocess the damn stuff.

Opencast mining is a big worry for us in the north east. We have only two collieries; one has a bit of a guarantee, but it looks as though the Government's sledgehammer will send Wearmouth sliding down the slippery pole. Unfortunately, opencast mining is a great threat. Last week I asked the Minister what opencast reserves there were in Northumberland and Durham, and I received the following written answer:

> "British Coal has informed me that, as at March 1993, total reserves of coal estimated to remain unworked in approved opencast sites in Northumberland, Durham and Tyne and Wear were 16,696 million tonnes."—[*Official Report*, 25 October 1993; Vol. 230, c. *432*.]

In Northumberland there are already 12 applications waiting to be processed, so in addition to those approved amounts there are more millions of tonnes to come.

I fear that the whole of the north-east is likely to be dug up from one end to the other for opencast mining. That is my fear for Ellington colliery. I hear whispers, but I have not been told officially—the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) and my hon. Friend the Member for Wansbeck (Mr. Thompson) might have been told officially, but I have not—that Northumberland county council is talking secretly to an American firm about a plan to build a coal-fired power station in Northumberland. What does that say about the marketing side, if an American firm wants to build a brand-new coal-fired power station in Northumberland? Why are British Coal and National Power not doing that? Why is it left to the Americans? I have just given the House the reason; it is the abundance of opencast coal. That will be the fate of the collieries in the north-east, and that is one of the reasons why the Government want to close them. Clearly opencast coal is in competition with deep-mined coal; it is cheaper to mine and there are subsidies. At least 80 per cent. of opencast coal goes to the power stations.

Imports of coal have increased dramatically over the past two years. The cost to our balance of payments is £700 million. As has been said before, that money would enable us to avoid putting VAT on fuel for old people. National Power gave evidence to the Trade and Industry Select Committee last year that the average price of imported steam coal was £35·50 per tonne. A contract had been offered at £36 a tonne, yet the DTI said that British coal was not competitive. Boyds' claim was even worse. The report said that British deep-mined coal cost three times as much as United States, Australian and South African coal. Of course, the Government were head over heels with Boyds when they commissioned it to do a job on British mines—and that is what it did. However, what Boyds did not say at the time was that the United States coal industry receives $700 million in subsidies for research and development. Australian mining receives a subsidy of a 150 per cent. tax rebate on research and development. There is also a subsidy to transport coal from the mine to the port. Again, I cannot find out what the figure is, but there is a tax rebate and, again, Boyds did not say. South African mining receives 10 per cent. subsidies. If we had such a subsidy, as Arthur Scargill has rightly said many times, we could give our coal away.

8.49 pm

Mr. Quentin Davies (Stamford and Spalding): It is a great pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Blyth Valley (Mr. Campbell). He always speaks with particular eloquence on any matter concerning his constituency or the region of his constituency, and of course he speaks with passion and knowledge about the coal industry. The only thing that is surprising about the debate—it must cause the hon. Gentleman great distress—is how little Labour Members who spoke with such feeling about the coal industry have been supported by the main body of the Labour party. If there had been a debate on this subject —*[Interruption.]* I thought that I was touching a sensitive nerve. I see that I am proved right on that if on nothing else.

If there had been a debate, as there frequently was, on this subject at any time over the first three quarters of our century, the Opposition Benches would have been packed with Labour Members eager to defend what they saw as the interests of their industry. Everything changes, including the coal industry.

[Mr. Quentin Davies]

The important thing, however, is how we adapt and respond to change. I was one of the many Conservative Members who felt great concern and disapproval last year at the manner in which British Coal was addressing change, and particularly the manner in which it proposed to dismiss a large number of employees, many of them hard-working, long-serving and loyal, at 48 or 72 hours' notice. That is no way for a humane and responsible employer to behave. I was extremely glad that my right hon. and hon. Friends, after little hesitation, ageed with that view and gave instructions to British Coal accordingly. In the same spirit, I welcome the Government's move to smooth the transition of British Coal to the new market conditions in which it finds itself, and I greatly approve the Government's decision to use taxpayers' money to subsidise British Coal in the short term.

We have already heard an eloquent account of the extremely useful subsidy that Ellington pit has received to enable it to carry forward a major contract with Alcan. That is very satisfactory. But there is all the difference in the world between deciding to smooth the path of transition for a public sector industry for which the Government bear ultimate responsibility and a decision to persuade all those who work in the industry that they can continue as though nothing had changed in the world and induce in them an entirely false sense of security. That would be a thoroughly irresponsible and inhumane course to adopt. The Government are absolutely right not to accede to the blandishments not only of the Labour party but of certain of my colleagues who urge them to go in that direction. My hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) appeared to suggest that the Government should permanently distort the economy to subsidise the coal industry and ensure that the industry continues to have a guaranteed market for a given amount of coal, irrespective of the price of that coal or the demand for it. That cannot be sensible.

As in other matters, the Government have a clear responsibility to ensure that the country continues to enjoy the lowest possible energy prices and the greatest possible security of supply. If we allow ourselves, for whatever sentimental or political reasons, to be deflected from that objective, we shall not do a good day's work for the country. We shall certainly not do a good day's work for employment. If we have anything less than the most favourable energy prices, we shall add, perhaps fatally, to the costs of energy-using sectors throughout the economy and we shall endanger employment in many industries throughout the land. That would be an extremely foolish and destructive thing to do.

There is a very popular and, at first sight, perhaps, seductive view that, in order to secure the cheapest supply of energy possible, the Government should be devising a national energy policy and deciding exactly what proportion of investment should go into the different sectors of the energy industry and rigging the market effectively to provide for that. Superficially, that might be an attractive view to some hon. Members, but it needs to be considered very carefully indeed because it rests on the extraordinary assumption that the Government have superior knowledge about the future pattern of demand for or supply of energy in the world.

If we seriously believed that Governments have access to such superior economic knowledge, logically we should decide to put the whole economy into the hands of a Gosplan. At least in other sectors of the economy and economic and industrial policy—even among the Opposition—the light has dawned and it has been appreciated that that is not a very intelligent way to proceed.

The Government should not second-guess the aggregate wisdom of the energy industry—the producers and the customers—and say, "If a regional electricity company wishes to sign a contract for the long-term supply of electricity to be produced by combined cycle gas turbine stations, it shall not be allowed to do so, or if people wish to build nuclear plants, they shall not be allowed to do so because we have superior wisdom." The Government's responsibility is to liberate the energy market to allow the full range of judgments of those who are involved in the market and are prepared to invest in it to determine the pattern of new resource allocation and to ensure that we have as competitive and, therefore, as efficient an energy market as possible.

That goes for coal, but of course it also goes for gas. It is about time that we continued the very virtuous process of deregulation of the gas industry so as to deregulate also the retail market below 2,500 therms consumption per year right down to nothing per year. If anybody wants to get into the business of supplying a retail customer with gas, there is absolutely no reason why he should not be allowed to do so.

Similarly, in the nuclear industry it is about time that we got rid of the nuclear levy which distorts energy markets of all kinds. Equally, as a necessary counterpart to that, it would be necessary for the Government to resume the liabilities that they imposed on Nuclear Electric. We should get rid of the nuclear levy. We should equally get rid of the moratorium on the construction of nuclear power stations. If a privatised Nuclear Electric—I hope that it will be privatised soon—decides that it wishes to build a Sizewell C or further nuclear power stations, it should be allowed to do so. If private sector investors are prepared to put in the money to do that, who are the Government to say that they are making the wrong economic decision and that it should not be done?

Last but not least, the effect of a deregulated, more competitive energy market would be that British Coal, whether privatised or not, would have to begin to respond to genuine competitive pressure for the first time. I do not think that there is anyone, even on the Labour Benches, who genuinely believes that British Coal has done all that it might do to market coal aggressively and to look for new applications for coal and new markets for it. Of course, British Coal has not done that. The sad fact is that it has suffered from a terrible handicap—the debilitation of 50 years of nationalisation and protected markets.

8.59 pm

Mr. Paddy Tipping (Sherwood): Miners in Nottinghamshire and throughout the country want straight answers to straight questions: will they have a job at Christmas, and can they plan for their summer holidays? They want to know about their future. As miners in Calverton said to me only this week, they cannot take being treated like dogs. They can face the future, but they cannot face continued uncertainty.

Miners at Bilsthorpe—I am proud to be wearing a Bilsthorpe tie today—want to know whether they will be given an opportunity to keep their pit open. I remind the House that, before the accident in the summer, Bilsthorpe was producing coal at a profitable rate. It was the most productive British coal pit in the country. The accident has put it back. The cost per gigajoule increased but it is now coming down. The men at Bilsthorpe fought for the life of that pit. Some of them have given their lives for it to give them some time to show what they can do at the colliery.

Ministers should look at Calverton colliery, which has had £10 million spent on it to open a new face. It is important to recognise that at Calverton, traditionally, 50 per cent. of the coal comes from a domestic market. It is important to acknowledge that 80 per cent. of that coal can be used to keep our fires burning, rather than importing coal from countries such as Poland. It is astonishing that, in the current year, the amount of imported coal will double, yet there is a question mark over Calverton colliery on which £10 million has just been spent. It is important to give the colliery an opportunity to keep our balance of payments down and to supply our needs.

My hon. Friends have followed this debate extremely carefully. They know that the Government not only cannot run the energy market but cannot tell the passing of the seasons. Some of us would like to know what has happened to the nuclear review, which was promised for the summer. It is now the autumn and we are getting into winter. When will an announcement be made on the nuclear review? Will the announcement simply be about economic matters, or will it also deal with environmental issues?

Many people have made the case for nuclear generation. However, the Achilles heel of the nuclear industry is that it has not been able to sort out decommissioning and disposal costs. It is astonishing that there is talk of a new Sizewell C at a time when there is so much power in this country. It is more astonishing that, when the Minister of Energy was confronted with the planning application, he washed his hands of the matter.

The issue before us is that of the power market. We have talked a lot about coal, but we should acknowledge that there are 26 coal-fired power stations in England and Wales. By the end of the current coal contract, the number of coal-fired power stations will have shrunk significantly. Less than 10 coal-fired power stations will be left, and places such as Castle Donington, Staythorpe and High Marnham will have closed. About 16 power stations have closed, with 10,000 job losses. The power stations that remain in places such as Didcot, Ferrybridge and Ratcliffe will be used to twin shift. It is a bit like flying a jumbo jet from Manchester airport to Yeadon airport. Power stations should be on base level and the peaks should be covered by gas. There is a place for strong coal-fired power stations in this country.

We are also faced with the prospect of privatisation. Miners will want to give the Government some pointers and to ask why, if they are restructuring, they keep changing the terms of redundancy payments. Why cannot the Government give a commitment tonight that the same terms will apply to redundancy payments throughout the restructuring process?

Miners also want a commitment on pensions. They have read the Government's consultation document on pensions. It is questionable. They want a commitment that any surpluses taken away will be compensated for by improvements in pension rights. They also want to know what will happen if they work in the newly privatised industry and their company is taken over. Will their pension continue?

Most important, under privatisation, the miners want the coal industry to survive. We are in a highly competitive market and clearly it makes sense that, if privatisation is to come—we will fight it—we should go for a unitary model in England and Wales because we need a core of pits to ensure that coal can compete in the energy market.

It is clear to me that the Government are in an unseemly haste to privatise coal. They want to put the coffin lid on the coal industry and bury it. Miners are progressive and hard working. They and the management are a fine body of men. They will not be put down and buried easily. If the Government try a quick and botched privatisation, the ghost will rise to haunt them for ever.

9.6 pm

Mr. George Stevenson (Stoke-on-Trent, South): In view of the time, I shall be brief. The crux of the debate is what has happened since the White Paper and that is what all hon. Members should consider and be concerned about. I have heard a lot of sympathy in the majority of speeches from Conservative Members—most contributions have been conspicuous for the amount of sympathy—but I have failed to detect any coherent response from the Government.

I take my hat off to the Government. For a party of competition and free market philosophy, the Conservative party has demonstrated a gritty, dogmatic determination to support a rigged system. The pool pricing system is the best example of that. If ever a system were contrived by people to penalise an industry and meticulously to create —in a connived way—a licence to print money, it is the pool system, which determines the price of electricity. We all know why that is. Like the nuclear industry, the coal industry is being prepared for privatisation. Let us compare the two. The Government are pumping £1·3 billion a year into the nuclear industry until it is ready to be privatised, but they are closing down 85 per cent. of the coal industry —perhaps the private sector might then be interested. That comes across very clearly from the way in which the Government have pursued their policies.

The reality is that the White Paper conceded very little and gave the coal industry no fair chance. Why should we be suprised that it was never intended to do so? It was a bolt hole for Ministers. We must all face that reality this evening, irrespective of which way we shall vote, and I pay tribute to those Conservative Members who have had the courage to say how they will vote.

The Government's approach to the nuclear industry is perhaps the shining example of their prejudice against the coal industry. We have heard references this evening to the much-heralded and promised review of the nuclear industry. I think that we have all seen recent reports that the Government are now thinking of announcing the review at the end of the year. The Minister is reported to have said that, when the review is announced, Nuclear Electrict must not be encouraged to think that that is a signal for it to apply for privatisation. It will not do so because it has been given the message, "Don't worry, wait until you've been fattened up a little more by the subsidies that we're providing. Then you can apply for privatisation." A clear message has emerged from the debate—the Government's

[Mr. George Stevenson]

complete failure to react positively to the concerns that have rightly been expressed by hon. Members this evening and for some time.

I conclude with an appeal. The Government may claim that they have a right to act as they are doing because they are the elected Government, but they do not have the right to jeopardise the future energy security of the nation. Yet that is what they are doing. Let me give an example. Trentham colliery in my constituency has closed. It is one of the few that has a private bid to continue mining. Do not leave the decision on that bid to British Coal. It will fight tooth and nail to keep the colliery closed because it does not want the coal on the market. It wants its position protected. That is my concluding plea to the Government this evening. I hope that in reply we will hear a positive response to what is a mini-privatisation, which should be consistent with Government policy, although not with mine. There is good coal there and a bid in, and it should be supported.

9.11 pm

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): When I came to the House nine years ago in the middle of a miners' strike, I never thought that, nine years later, I would have to defend the last remaining pit in south Wales. It is the Tower colliery in my constituency. It is productive and made £12 million profit last year and will make more profit next year. Yet this week, 250 men are being made redundant. That is incredible, because the mine has a market for its coal. It sells to the Aberthaw power station and exports to Ireland, Spain, France and elsewhere.

This week, I wrote to the Minister and today I got a reply. I asked him why these men were facing the sack and why coal imports for industrial and domestic use had risen when the coal output from pits such as Tower was being cut. He said that nearly two thirds of imported coal is of grades and types for which the United Kingdom has insufficient sources of supply, including anthracite. He continued:

"BC's policy is to maximize sales of British coal and only where this is not possible to engage in imports . . . shortages, therefore, have to be supplied by imported coal."

Tower coal is grade 2 anthracite quality. It is precisely what is needed for our domestic market. Tower miners will tell how it is the best low-sulphur coal in the world today and that the domestic market is crying out for the anthracite coal that Tower produces. Instead of supplying this market, Tower coal is being passed over for imported coal.

If the Government's so-called subsidy for British Coal to sell more coal means anything, Tower would have assured markets for its coal. I am glad to see the Secretary of State for Employment in the Chamber. He used to be the Secretary of State for Wales. He will remember well how he congratulated the men from my pit on their productivity and profitability when I took them to see him in February. They thought that their future was assured.

My constituency has the highest male unemployment rate in Wales. One in three men is out of a job. If the pit shuts, 40 per cent. of the working men in my area will be without a job. The area has one of the lowest incomes per household in the United Kingdom—£4,000 a year. That is poverty in Britain. If the Government shut the pit and further destroy the industry in my constituency, £10 million will be taken out of the area.

The market is rigged and has been rigged all along. The Government are destroying the industry from spite because of how the miners fought them in many coal strikes over the years. The industry should be retained for the future of this country and its energy policy.

9.14 pm

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): My hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) dealt admirably with the recent history of the Government's chopping and changing concerning the coal industry. My hon. Friends, such as my hon. Friend the Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd), have spelled out passionately the impact of the Government's policies on the communities which they try their best to represent. I do not represent such a community, so I must stick to what might be called the basic facts.

The basic fact that the House needs to remember is that Britain is a fuel-rich country in a Europe that is short of fuel. No other country in the European Community has such large fuel reserves of such variety. Those natural assets should have been used to the benefit of our people by adding weight to our bargaining position with the other EC members. Instead, those advantages have been frittered away and fuel-rich Britain has a fuel trade deficit which further pit closures can only make worse.

Britain's coal mines are the most efficient in the EC and they produce coal at half the cost of that which is mined in Germany or in any other mines in western Europe. No other British industry is twice as efficient as its German counterpart and yet this is the industry which this short-sighted and stupid Government have chosen to close down.

The mines are not being closed because of inexorable market forces but because that is what the Government always intended. They will close because of the Tory policies adopted not just in the past few months but in the past few years. Those mines will close because, in the past 10 years, the Tory policy has been based on years of neglect, not benign neglect but malignant neglect, and wasted opportunity.

A year ago, the Government let the cat out of the bag and announced their policy that meant that 31 pits were to close. That announcement confirmed all that the Labour party had said in the past five years as the Tories pushed through the privatisation of the electricity industry.

There was a public outcry at the Government's announcement and the people of this country saw for the first time what the Tories were doing to the mines and they knew that it was wrong. As a result of that public outcry, the Government backed down, or appeared to do so. They carried out a review of their policies and considered a report from the Select Committee on Trade and Industry. They also published a White Paper that has turned out to be nothing more than a con.

We argued at the time that the Government's proposals in that White Paper would not save any mine and our arguments have turned out to be true. Almost all the original 31 pits have closed or are doomed to close. Even some pits that were not originally threatened are now at risk.

The Government's efforts to try to con the people were successful when one considers the newspaper headlines of the time. The *Financial Times* ran the headline:

"Government to save 12 pits".

The headline in *The Times* stated:

"Heseltine pit rescue deal to cost £500 million".

The Daily Telegraph reported:

"Twelve pits reprieved by Heseltine. £700 million lifeline for the coal industry removes threat of revolt by Tory MPs"

The *Daily Express*—at that time a supporter of the Prime Minister—announced:

"Major's £700 million pits rescue"

There was some discrepancy, however, because it is obvious that the journalists were not clear, despite, presumably, carefully reading the White Paper and listening even more carefully to Tory Ministers, whether the possible subsidy was £500 million or £700 million. We have learned today, however, that just £2 million of that subsidy has been called on.

If people think that a subsidy of up to £700 million seems a generous offer in an effort to save a small part of the British coal industry, it is worth reminding the British taxpayer that the Government have used £350 million of taxpayers' money to subsidise property speculation at Canary Wharf. All that money was called upon.

The Government's line now is that they never promised to save any pits, but, as the headlines show, that was not the impression that they gave and they did nothing to correct that impression. I checked with the newspapers published the day after those headlines and found that they contained no letters from the President of the Board of Trade pointing out that they had got it wrong. The Government set out to deceive the news media and the general public, and they succeeded.

That was not the first example of Tory deception over pit closures. For years, the Government pretended that they did not intend to run down the coal industry. Almost two years ago to the day, I published a report which Rothschild, the merchant bankers, had prepared for the Government. It was a secret report by Tory bankers, sent to Tory Ministers, predicting that thousands of miners would be thrown on the dole and that Britain could end up with as few as a dozen working collieries—the process that is going on now.

What was the response of the Government and British Coal to my publication of that report? The then Energy Secretary, now Lord Wakeham, blamed Labour for what he referred to as scare stories about running down the coal industry. He dismissed as

"coming from cloud cuckoo land"

Labour complaints that British Coal was being run down to make way for cheaper imported coal. He used taxpayers' money to do that, as he did it on press statements issued in the name of the Department of Energy.

The boss of British Coal was not backward in denouncing us either. He was reported in the newspapers as "hitting back at suggestions that the company planned wholesale pit closures ahead of privatisation".

He added:

"We are not in the business of planning to discard pits".

He may not plan to do it. Apparently, he just does it by accident.

Nobody believes what the Government or British Coal say now, because too often they have not told the truth about their intentions for the industry. When the Tories wanted to hang on to seats in Nottinghamshire at the last election, the then Energy Secretary promised the Nottingham miners, in a press release issued by Tory central office,

"a secure long-term future for your great industry".

He went to Nottinghamshire to say that. Since then, several of the Nottingham pits have closed and none of them is safe.

Nobody in the coal industry can trust a word that the Government say, which is why no one in the industry now accepts their promises on safety or their reassurances about what will happen to the pension funds if the industry is privatised.

The Government now say that they have done their best to help the coal industry, but that there is no market for coal. So that is that—the pits must close. However, the Government have done nothing or next to nothing to help. They can do nothing unless they are prepared to change the energy market in Britain. It is not, has never been and is never likely to be a free market. It is a market that has been rigged by the Government to the advantage of virtually everybody in the world except the British coal industry and the British people.

The nuclear industry, foreign coal producers, France, the foreign suppliers of orimulsion, and the multinational oil companies that sell the British people their own North sea gas all benefit from the rigged market. So do the foreign suppliers of natural gas and the foreign builders of the gas-fired power stations that are going up all over our country. The Government's energy policy seems directed to help every energy industry in the world except ours. They may have it reclassified as part of our overseas aid programme.

The most efficient coal-fired power stations can produce electricity at costs significantly lower than alternative fuel. Do any Conservative Members challenge that assertion? Apparently it is accepted—there are no objections. I am glad about that because that is what John Wakeham said when he produced an article for the people of Mansfield in Nottingham on 11 March 1992, just before the general election. I shall repeat what he said because it is the basis of our case and that of the coalfield communities:

"the most efficient coal-fired power stations can produce electricity at costs which are significantly lower than alternative fuels."

Let us consider those alternative fuels. Let us take French electricity, and—my God!—we take a lot of French electricity, which is produced by nuclear power stations that are subsidised by France. When I say that they are subsidised, I really mean subsidised. The way that the French subsidise their nuclear power stations makes the common agricultural policy seem like the free interplay of market forces. On top of that, our stupid Government decided to give the French another subsidy almost as big as that which the French themselves provide to make their nuclear power even cheaper. Why should British miners have to compete with that?

As to British nuclear power, every electricity consumer has to pay a nuclear levy, and without the takings from that levy Nuclear Electric would be trading while insolvent —for that is what it told the Select Committee. Under the present arrangements, however, nuclear power stations supply power wherever and whenever they can produce it, at whatever cost they can produce it, while coal-fired power stations capable of producing cheaper electricity are forced to lie idle. That is not the operation of a free market.

Under the present arrangements, Nuclear Electric has a legal right to first place in the merit order of operating power stations. When Sizewell B comes on stream, it will go on base load despite the fact that it will be producing not the cheapest electricity in Britain but the dearest. Those are the economics of the madhouse.

Much has happened since I coined the phrase "the dash for gas" three years ago. Many more gas-fired power

[Mr. Frank Dobson]

stations are being built, but if one takes proper account of the capital building costs, the cost of the electricity that they produce is higher than that of coal-fired stations. In addition, most of that generating capacity has been designed by foreign companies, because British companies are not in a position to compete.

Recently, I was told that I should stop calling orimulsion the filthiest fuel in the world. But I cannot forget that the burning of orimulsion led to the famous headline in *The Sun*, "Black rain eats cars". Orimulsion can be burned safely only if millions of pounds are spent on cleaning its chimney emissions. If that expenditure were undertaken, orimulsion would price itself out of the market.

Deep-mined British coal is denied access to a market in which it is the cheapest fuel. The Tories say that they believe in free markets. The coal industry would be saved from the threat of near-extinction if the Government would end the way that they rig the market against coal.

That is not the only consideration. Energy projects are enormous in their scale, vast in their cost, and take a long time to bring into operation. That is true whether the project is an oil-producing platform in the North sea, a nuclear power station or the sinking of a mine. No market can respond quickly to long-term changes in fuel supply or the demand for energy, which is why such decisions cannot be left to the market alone. In no country of the world are they left to the market alone. Such decisions call for strategic involvement by Governments.

That is not the only reason why there is a role for Government in energy decision-making. Fuel imports and exports make an enormous impact on our balance of trade. In addition, national security and self-sufficiency must be considered. There are also Europe-wide implications that no Government can abdicate. To burn gas in power stations to provide base load electricity is to waste that gas. It is better burnt at the place that it is intended to heat. To burn it in power stations will run down our limited supplies.

If our pits are closed, Britain will be left dependent on foreign supplies of natural gas. When we first raised that issue, Tory Ministers laughed and mocked, and said that we could get it from abroad. When we asked them where, they answered, "The Gulf, Algeria and the Soviet Union" and then they laughed again.

Since then, we have had the Gulf war, the Algerian army has felt it necessary to organise a coup to keep Muslim fundamentalists out of the Government and the Soviet Union has sundered into republics, some of which are themselves descending into separatist chaos.

The Tories believe that we and our children should be dependent on the Gulf, Algeria and Russia for long-term supplies of gas. How short-sighted can they get, leaving our country and the rest of Europe to be held to ransom?

Other foreign supplies of coal are scarcely more reliable. Some of them rely on semi-slave and child labour. Why should Britain's miners have to compete against child or slave labour? That cannot be right. A decent British Government would campaign against child and slave labour in pits around the world, making them compete on equal terms with us.

Fuel imports have to be paid for. We already have a dreadful trade deficit. Closing mines will condemn us to importing more and more fuel, so our exports will have to rise to avoid increases in the deficit. Will not the Government recognise that fact? The President is, after all, the President of the Board of Trade.

In the past 10 years, the Government have become obsessed with their addiction to privatisation. Apart from privatisation, they have no energy policy. All over the world, countries with coal supplies have invested in clean coal technology. Even under Ronald Reagan, the United States had a $2 billion programme to develop clean coal technology. Governments and companies in Sweden and Germany have invested heavily in cleaner methods of burning coal. Such a policy provides a market for coal and experience and expertise for the American, German and Swedish companies that are designing and building such plant. As the world turns more and more to clean coal technology, those companies will get the orders for new plant. They will have the know-how. British companies will be at a disadvantage because Tory short-sightedness will have excluded them from yet another modern market.

That is not all. The European Community imports about 120 million tonnes of coal a year. A sensible British Government would have pushed our partners to help British Coal by making Europe reduce its dependence on outside supplies of coal. After all, Tories constantly prate on about the need to be concerned about Europe's trade balance with the rest of the world. Here is an opportunity to help, but the Government have thrown it away. They have done nothing to help. Instead, they have prattled on about subsidiarity and closed down the most efficient mines in Europe while other countries keep their less efficient mines open. Our European partners think that we are mad. It is not the British people but the British Government who are mad.

We have heard speeches from hon. Members with experience of coalfields and former coalfields all over the country. There is one colliery left in Scotland, one left in Wales and one left in Northumberland. Under this Government, importing coals to Newcastle has become a reality—it is part of their energy policy. There are no collieries left in Lancashire——

Mr. Skinner: And Derbyshire.

Mr. Dobson: They are threatened in Derbyshire and Durham.

The Government must abandon the pit closure programme. They could make a start by giving coal an equal opportunity to compete. If they stop rigging the market against British mined coal, our collieries can compete and prosper. They could make sure that no more orimulsion is imported. They could cut coal imports—there are no international obligations that prevent us from doing that. They could reduce their purchases of electricity from France and insist on exporting British electricity through that channel link. They could cut opencast mining. They could end the issue of new licences for new gas-fired power stations. They could get regulators to do their jobs properly and refuse to accept sweetheart deals in which companies buy expensive electricity from gas-fired power stations. They could stop the gas-fired stations and the nuclear power stations from hogging the base load, which their costs do not justify. They could start selling coal to our European partners.

If the Government did that, they would achieve many benefits for Britain. They would save all that taxpayers' money now being poured into making men redundant.

They would help the balance of trade and reduce our growing dependence on imports. They would stop thousands of miners and other people being thrown on the dole. They would sustain the coalfield communities.

The miners and their families are not looking for charity from the House or anybody else tonight. What they are looking for is a decent chance and a bit of common sense. The only way that the House can give them a chance and show a bit of common sense is by voting against the Government tonight.

9.35 pm

The Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. David Hunt): We have on several occasions over the past year debated the coal industry. I believe that this is the first occasion on which the shadow employment spokesman has participated in these debates. I should like to say a few personal words to him as he now moves to a new position as shadow transport spokesman.

I have much appreciated his unfailing courtesy. We may have disagreed on policies and principles, but we have never doubted each other's commitment to bringing down the level of unemployment and increasing employment opportunities.

Mr. Dobson: Speak for yourself.

Mr. Hunt: Just one second. The only defect in my shadow spokesman is that he sometimes does not know a compliment when it hits him in the face.

Mr. Dobson *rose*——

Mr. Hunt: I am still paying tribute to him.

I agreed with what the hon. Gentleman said when he spoke of the depth of compassion that there is in the House for the coal industry. The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Stevenson) said that it came from all parts of the House. The debates that we have had about the coal industry have been characterised by the extent of commitment to coal on both sides of the House, and among all hon. Members.

I have spent some considerable time looking up the debates about coal that have taken place in previous years. One interesting era was the 1960s when there were extensive debates about markets and the collapse of the coal market. I ask hon. Members on both sides of the House to play close attention to those debates and to what happened.

Coal had a substantial market in domestic fuel. Throughout the country most people burned coal in their grates to provide heating for hot water and central heating in their homes. During the 1960s, the bottom fell out of the market. Although coal used to provide a substantial proportion of the market in the 1960s, that market almost completely disappeared.

Today, coal provides only 7 per cent. of that domestic market, whereas in the 1960s it was four, five or six times as much. During the debates in the 1960s great anger was felt on both sides of the House about the way that coal mines were shutting—10, 20, 50, 100, 150, 200, and at a rate of 40, 50 or 60 a year. What on this occasion caused a serious problem to become much less of a challenge was the extension of the market for coal in electricity generation. As all hon. Members will know, many coal mines that shut because of the collapse in domestic markets were reopened as the market suddenly expanded into electricity generation. Now those markets have changed again.

This evening we are debating our reaffirmation of what we said in the White Paper in which we made it clear that electricity generation must look for the best fuel in the market. Coal must take its place in the highly competitive world of energy.

This debate has fallen into five sections—first, the talk about markets; secondly, the question of closures and the policy of British Coal; thirdly, regeneration and what will happen to mining communities when their coal mines close; then, a lengthy debate on health and safety; and finally the feeling of Conservative Members, clearly expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Batley and Spen (Mrs. Peacock), that the future of the coal industry must lie in privatisation. It is important to ensure that we get through to that privatisation with the most competitive possible coal industry.

First, then, I want to discuss markets. As we said in the White Paper, it is important that coal takes its place in the market. I must tell the hon. Member for Barnsley, East (Mr. Patchett) that what I believe was in the minds of the miners to whom he referred was not the attraction of money but the facts of the market as it is today——

Mr. Patchett: Rubbish.

Mr. Hunt: I believe that those who work in the industry can see the meaning of the ever-growing stock piles of unused coal. Those stock piles grow by the day.

At the end of the last financial year, 1992-93, stocks stood at more than 47 million tonnes. Already this year another three million have been added to stock. So in spite of the exploration of further markets, British Coal estimates that by the end of this financial year there will be more than 50 million tonnes in stock. The next financial year will thus start with more than a year's supply of coal already in stock.

No industry can possibly operate with stocks as high as these. Doing so not only places an intolerable burden on the taxpayer and the electricity consumer, who must pay the costs of producing and storing unsold coal; it also puts the future of the industry at great risk.

As we pointed out in the White Paper, maintaining stocks would matter less if the market for coal was expanding. Sad to say, it has been in decline for decades. Before the first world war our mines produced about 300 million tonnes of coal a year. By the time of nationalisation, production had fallen to 200 million. The figure is now below 100 million tonnes.

For the next year, British Coal's contract with the generators—the industry's main customer—will fall to 40 million and then to 30 million tonnes. Contrary to the figures claimed by some Members this evening, that coal will be sold at well above the world market price. That price will have to be supported by electricity consumers. We have the advantage in this country of being rich in energy, not only in coal but in gas and oil.

Never let us forget the fact that we pioneered civil nuclear energy in this country. Several of my hon. Friends —in particular my hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns)—made an important point during the debate. If we were to follow the advice contained in a pamphlet written by the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) in the early 1980s, or indeed if we were to follow the

[Mr. Hunt]

implication of the speech of the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson), and shut down the nuclear industry, it would cost approximately 100,000 jobs.

The hon. Member for Delyn (Mr. Hanson) spoke proudly about the colliery in his constituency and I share that pride with him. However, he owes it to the House to point out that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales was in that area earlier today, and also that a substantial number of new jobs will be generated by the Point of Ayr gas development by Hamilton and at the Connah's Quay power station.

I hope that when hon. Members speak in the House about energy and coal they will recognise a fact that has been pointed out by several speakers in the debate—that one constantly must weigh the balance of the effects on jobs in all the energy industries and not in just one.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Does not the Secretary of State realise that he is making a case that the coal industry has made in the past and that many hon. Members have made today, which is that one cannot make decisions about the coal industry nor about its employment prospects in isolation? The industry must be looked at in the context of an energy strategy. The employment implications require that, if one is being just, equal opportunity is given to coal, to gas, to oil and to renewables. Above all, is not it important that hon. Members debate all the industries and the employment implications of all the industries together, otherwise they will never be treated fairly?

Mr. Hunt: The Liberal Democrats have omitted to table an amendment to tonight's Opposition motion. The last time that the Liberal Democrats tabled an amendment, the party spokesman signed two mutually exclusive amendments. The official Liberal Democrat amendment omitted the word "coal" except in reference to the White Paper——

Mr. Joseph Ashton (Bassetlaw): Get on with it.

Mr. Hunt: I am answering the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes).

The Liberal Democrat amendment stated that there should be fair opportunities for all energy sources, but the only one that they highlighted was renewables. I know that the Liberal Democrat party believes that the future of energy lies in windmills, but we need a sense of responsibility when dealing with energy. If the Liberal Democrat party wants to be taken seriously in important debates such as this, it owes it to the House to put its views on the Order Paper in a proper amendment that hon. Members can judge on its merits.

Dr. Keith Hampson (Leeds, North-West): Is my right hon. Friend aware that, not only has the Liberal Democrat party always talked about the anomaly of there not being VAT on fuel bills, but in its most recent document calling for taxation on polluters it has specifically endorsed EC proposals—particularly French proposals—for a carbon tax? Is my right hon. Friend further aware that the Select Committee on Trade and Industry report states that a carbon tax would be most damaging for the British coal industry, and that the Government ought to oppose it?

Mr. Hunt: I agree with my hon. Friend. My hon. Friend the Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim) and others calculated that the effect of that proposal would be to add 58 per cent. to the price of coal. I have not heard that figure challenged during the debate, but I hope that at some stage the Liberal Democrat party will put the facts and statistics in an open way.

Everyone in the House knows that closures are a matter for British Coal. Everyone also knows that under the modified colliery review procedure British Coal will ask the unions and employees for their views when they look into the realities of the market for coal. The corporation has decided to resume consultations with the unions through the modified colliery review procedure. I welcome that. The hon. Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Enright) asked me whether it would be a meaningful consultation. It has to be: I give him that assurance. The resumption of that procedure is a welcome return to the normal consultative arrangements within the industry.

As the House will know, the current redundancy terms for miners were due to expire on 31 December. Several hon. Members have asked about those terms. Of course, the redundancy terms are extremely generous. Payments average £24,000 and may be as high as £37,000. Few of the taxpayers who finance them in either the public or the private sector enjoy such generous terms. However, I believe that I speak for everyone in the House in saying that we do not begrudge those terms. People respect those who have risked their life to work and to win coal. That is why, as my hon. Friends the Members for Davyhulme (Mr. Churchill) and for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) pointed out, coal and coal miners have such a strong impact on the emotions of the House and will continue to do so for years ahead.

I hope that the House will welcome the announcement by my hon. Friend the Minister for Energy of the extension of the funding for those redundancy terms until 30 April next year. My hon. Friend went further in answer to several questions. He made it clear that if consultations are still in progress at that time, the funding will be extended beyond April, if necessary. I hope that that announcement removes any pressure on individual miners to accept redundancy now in the fear that the terms in the early part of next year will be less favourable.

Several hon. Members raised the need to ensure that we provide proper help to those in pit communities affected by closure. I remind the House that the Government have already promised and provided £200 million to regenerate pit communities affected by closure. Some £75 million is available to English Estates to build factory units in the affected areas. Three new enterprise zones are in the process of being established. Assisted area status has been granted to six new coal-mining areas. Through my Department I have arranged for £75 million to be made available through the training and enterprise councils. In all, that amounts to some very substantial assistance.

I attended a meeting with Lord Walker in my Department in the past few days with many people, including local authority and training and enterprise council representatives, at which we worked out the best possible strategy to feed new jobs into coal-mining areas. We shall continue with that policy.

I am not sure whether the House apreciated exactly what we said in the debate about health and safety. The Governmnent are determined that privatisation will bring no compromise whatever in the high standards of safety that have always been present in the industry. To that end, we asked the Health and Safety Commission to produce a

detailed and comprehensive piece of work on all aspects of the post-privatisation safety regime. I believe that that meets the needs of all who have a genuine concern and interest in ensuring that all the relevant safety issues are addressed in the run-up to privatisation. I commend the commission on the thorough way in which it has gone about its task. I am happy to give an assurance on behalf of the Government but, before I do, I will give way to the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy).

Mr. Hardy: Will the Minister answer the question that I put yesterday and last week—to which I have had no reply—and assure the House and the country that no foreign producer of coal which has a grossly unsatisfactory safety record in the mines of its country of origin will be allowed to purchase collieries in this country?

Mr. Hunt: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman raised that question. It is dealt with in the commission's advice, which is available in the Vote Office and the Library. I can assure the House that we accept the commission's advice in full, and that we will ensure that it is implemented.

Mr. Churchill: No Conservative Member doubts the Government's commitment to the maintenance of safety in the mines. I take it that there is reasonably close consultation between the Government and the coal board. Can my right hon. Friend tell the House how many of the 50 pits that were in business a year ago he expects still to be producing coal at the end of this financial year?

Mr. Hunt: My hon. Friend knows that I cannot give a precise figure. As was pointed out earlier in the debate, the principal recommendation in the Select Committee report was that the Government should make available a subsidy —*[Interruption.]* Yes—that the Government should make available a subsidy for additional markets to be secured. We have already announced the granting of the first subsidy, and that money is available provided additional markets can be found. It is for British Coal to make decisions about individual pits.

Will my hon. Friend please bear in mind, when he questions the £20 billion investment announced earlier by my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South, that £8 billion has been spent on capital improvements and schemes for British Coal? Asfordby is not winning coal at the moment, but it has already had £250 million spent on it, with a further £70 milllion still to be spent—and that mine has not yet opened. That is a demonstration that these are not just subsidies but an investment in the future, for which the Government are responsible. I have not even mentioned the £1,500 million that has been invested in Selby. Selby is now producing coal at more than 12 tonnes per man shift, which is a tremendous record.

Mr. Caborn: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Hunt: No; I only have a few minutes left.

The future of this great industry must lie in privatisation, as I, with several of my right hon. and hon. Friends, have already said. I strongly believe that the sooner the coal industry goes into the private sector, the more secure will be the future of the coal miners. That is felt not only by the Government but by some members of the Opposition.

Time and time again we have asked what the Labour party would do if it ever returned to government. Would it renationalise the coal industry once it had moved into the private sector? [HON. MEMBERS: "Yes."] The answer from below the Gangway on the Opposition Benches is, "Yes, we will renationalise the coal industry." During the debate we heard no answer from the Opposition Front Bench Members as to what they would do. They remained silent.

Mr. Robin Cook: I am happy to say that whatever plan there may be to rescue what is left of the coal industry would involve a degree of public ownership. How many pits will be left when the election comes, and how many will the Government close?

Mr. Hunt: The hon. Gentleman ought to consult the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) because she said on the radio today, in answer to a question, that it would not be possible to renationalise. Perhaps he ought to get his policy sorted out.

I urge the House to throw out the Opposition amendment and to accept the Government's motion.

Mr. Don Dixon (Jarrow) *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question, That the Question be now put, *put and agreed to.*

Question put accordingly, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 283, Noes 317.

Division No. 372] **[10 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Alexander, Richard
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Boyce, Jimmy
Boyes, Roland
Bradley, Keith
Brown, Gordon *(Dunfermline E)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Cabom, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Campbell, Ronnie *(Blyth V)*
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Canavan, Dennis
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander *(Montgomry)*
Cash, William
Chisholm, Malcolm
Churchill, Mr
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Cook, Robin *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark

Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gould, Bryan
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hinchliffe, David
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman *(Cumbernauld)*
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport E)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry *(Alyn and D'side)*
Jones, Ieuan Wyn *(Ynys Môn)*
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Brdgn)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ron
Lestor, Joan *(Eccles)*
Lewis, Terry
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McGrady, Eddie
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Prescott, John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Robinson, Geoffrey *(Co'try NW)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'sbury)*
Smith, Rt Hon John *(M'ld'ds E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel *(Dunfermline W)*
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Williams, Rt Hon Alan *(Sw'n W)*
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Jack Thompson and
Mr. Eric Illsley.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter *(East Surrey)*
Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Bates, Michael
Beggs, Roy
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Cartiss, Michael
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcl'ffe)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shr)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davis, David *(Boothferry)*
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry *(Isle of Wight)*
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forsythe, Clifford *(Antrim S)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Grant, Sir A. *(Cambs SW)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Grylls, Sir Michael

Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas *(G'tham)*
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert *(Wantage)*
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Bir'm E'st'n)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Mark
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Mitchell, Sir David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry *(Wirral S)*
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon. Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Roe, Mrs Marion *(Broxbourne)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Smyth, Rev Martin *(Belfast S)*
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Allan
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald *(C'er V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trimble, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Lightbown and Mr. Sydney Chapman.

Question accordingly negatived.

Quesion, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments), and agreed to.*

MADAM SPEAKER *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

'That this House reaffirms its approval for the White Paper "The Prospects for Coal: Conclusions of the Government's Coal Review" (Cm 2235) which accepted the principal recommendations of the Report by the Trade and Industry Committee "British Energy Policy and the Market for Coal" (HC 237) and in particular the offer of a transitional subsidy for additional sales of United Kingdom underground coal for electricity generation; welcomes the help provided by the Government to coal field communities affected by closures; welcomes the offer of subsidy, subject to EC clearance, to British Coal, for coal from the Ellington colliery; welcomes the fact that British Coal have offered to the private sector the pits that they do not themselves wish to keep in production; welcomes the Government's commitment that the present high standards of safety achieved by British Coal be maintained or improved; and welcomes the Government's intention to bring forward as soon as parliamentary time allows the legislation necessary to privatise British Coal since the best future for the coal industry lies in the private sector.'.

Assisted Areas

10.17 pm

Mr. Derek Fatchett (Leeds, Central): I beg to move,

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Assisted Areas Order 1993 (S.I., 1993, No. 1877), dated 23rd July 1993, a copy of which was laid before this House on 23rd July, be annulled.

Madam Speaker: With this it will be convenient to consider the following:

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Assisted Areas (Amendment) Order 1993 (S.I., 1993, No. 1894), dated 27th July 1993, a copy of which was laid before this House on 27th July, be annulled.

Mr. Fatchett: When the Minister of State made his announcement in July on the new map for the assisted areas, he had the audacity to claim a degree of success and to claim that he had squared a number of circles. The reality is that the new map reflects the new geography of Conservative economic failure.

Over the past few years, the north-south divide has disappeared. It has been blurred, but not by the Government creating some new affluence in the north of England. On the contrary, there has been no economic miracle. What happened was that the south of England declined, so the Government faced a new situation. Many once prosperous areas in the south of England were demanding that they should receive assisted area status.

The figures speak for themselves. In London, between 1983 and 1992, 200,000 manufacturing jobs were lost. Between 1990 and 1992 in the banking, insurance and finance sector—where wealth was often created in London—90,000 jobs were lost. In the same two years, 96,000 jobs were lost in retail services and the hotel industry. That proves the depth of the recession and the collapse of the wealth-making sectors in London. The picture is the same in the south of England. More than 8 per cent. of jobs were lost in the south between 1990 and 1992. There are currently 334,000 fewer jobs than there were three years ago.

I am not surprised that Conservative Members do not want to listen to the figures. The reason is that they predominantly represent the south of England, and the simple fact is that they do so very badly. The figures prove that the Conservatives have let down the very areas on which they have traditionally relied for support. The once prosperous south has asked to be included on the assisted areas map. In Harwich, 47 per cent. of all homes and property are owned outright—that is the highest proportion in the country—but one person in eight is unemployed in that travel-to-work area, and Harwich has been designated an assisted area.

Such developments changed the politics and ideology of the Conservatives. Since the announcement was made last autumn until this summer, it was interesting to watch how one Conservative after another said that, despite his commitment to the free market, he wanted Government intervention and support for his area. There was significant dissonance between the professed views of the free marketeers and their demands for assistance for their areas.

In the end, of course, the Government received too many demands on the money available. Even so, my hon. Friends know that the Government have significantly cut that money. Let us take the period 1991-92 as the key year—or 100 per cent.—for regional expenditure. If we compare it with 1978-79, the final year under a Labour Administration, it becomes clear that the Government have cut to one third the amount available for regional assistance. At the same time, unemployment has increased threefold according to the official figures and will have increased even more according to the unofficial figures. At the very time that we need intervention in industry and help through regional policies, the Government are cutting the money available.

Sir Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): To be fair, does the hon. Gentleman agree that the reductions in the Government's proposals for assisted area status were made not by the Treasury or the Conservative party but by a bloke called Mr. van Miert who has complete power to decide how much of our own money we can spend and who reduced the percentage that the Government wanted? Rather than bashing the Government, would it not be fairer to point out the appalling fact that the final decision on how much of the British taxpayer's money the Government can spend to help the British unemployed is decided by one bloke in Brussels?

Mr. Fatchett: The hon. Gentleman knows that, as a matter of policy, the Government have cut regional aid. I am sure that if he catches your eye, Madam Speaker, he will want to mention Southend. I am sure that he knows that Southend was included in the original draft map submitted to Brussels but that it was then excluded. Some of my colleagues thought that that may have been the result of the hon. Gentleman's Maastricht activities during the previous month. I am sure that he has his own thoughts on that.

There have been two problems—first, a collapse of the economy in the south, leading to more areas demanding assistance, and, secondly, a cut in the money available. Those led to the third and key problem that faces us now. I shall ask my right hon. and hon. Friends to vote against the orders because we are concerned about the openness of Government, and the way in which the criteria were used. Incidentally, that concern is not restricted to the Labour party. In *The Guardian* of 4 October the hon. Member for Blackpool, North (Mr. Elletson) is reported as having said:

"It's a disgrace that so many places in the South, which patently don't deserve it, were upgraded when they don't have anything like the problems of our inner city."

He was talking about Blackpool, but he could have been talking about many other places, too.

In his July statement the Minister said that some places were excluded because their unemployment had fallen since 1984. If that was the criterion, the Minister must tell us why the following areas were suddenly included in the map: Barnstaple and Ilfracombe, Bideford, Clacton, Dover and Deal, Folkestone, Great Yarmouth, Torbay and Thanet. Unemployment in all those areas declined over the same period. The Minister may realise that those places all share one common characteristic. Nobody denies that they have problems, but they do have one common characteristic: they are Conservative-held seats.

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Fatchett: I shall not give way again, if the hon. Gentleman does not mind, because the debate is short.

Mr. Gale *rose*——

Mr. Fatchett: No, I shall not give way again. I have said why, and I believe that the Minister wants to make a few comments too.

The fact is that all those areas are Conservative-held. In an article in *The Independent* just before the Christchurch by-election, in the week in which the Minister announced the changes, Colin Brown wrote:

"The towns that will benefit read like a roll-call of endangered Tory seats. In addition to Hastings (Conservative majority 6,634), there are Dover and Deal"—

where the Tory majority is 833 over Labour—

"Great Yarmouth (. . . majority 5,309), Isle of Wight (. . . 1,827), and Torbay"—

I am not sure whether that is official Conservative these days, but at the general election the majority of the then official candidate was 5,787.

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Fatchett: Yes, as I have mentioned the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Allason: What the hon. Gentleman has said is sheer fantasy. Whether I am an official or an unofficial Conservative, I can tell the hon. Gentleman that the number of people who voted for me dropped by 205 between 1987 and 1992. Furthermore, if he honestly thinks that unemployment in my constituency has fallen since 1984 he has his facts completely wrong. I very much regret that unemployment there has considerably increased during that period.

Mr. Fatchett: There may be an argument about the criteria, but many of my right hon. and hon. Friends have the slight feeling that there has been an element of pork barrelling. I apologise to the hon. Member for Torbay for talking about constituencies with majorities of 6,000 as marginal seats. I suspect that these days even a majority of 16,000 or 20,000 means a marginal seat, so perhaps many more should have been included. Although the hon. Gentleman's majority may not be big enough, if the Conservative party goes the way of the Canadian Conservatives he may be one of the lucky two who holds on to his seat, thanks to the extra money that has been made available.

While the areas that I have mentioned have been included, others have been excluded, although they still experience high unemployment, and those are Labour areas. When the Minister replies to the debate perhaps he will answer some questions about areas in the country that still have high unemployment and great poverty yet have lost assisted area status or have been downgraded.

Manchester is a city with high unemployment. As my right hon. and hon. Friends asked at the time of the Government's statement, what justification is there for Manchester to lose assisted area status? Tower Hamlets has 20 per cent. unemployment, yet it does not qualify when other parts of London with high unemployment—not as high as that in Tower Hamlets—qualify. We are not criticising those areas being included, but why is an area such as Tower Hamlets with 20 per cent. unemployment excluded? In Bradford there are 25,000 unemployed people. Bradford is always at the top of the European Commission poverty league tables. Why is Bradford excluded and other areas included?

Parts of the old industrial south Wales, where unemployment is structurally deep and long-term, have been excluded, yet other areas which, for cyclical reasons, have seen a downturn in unemployment in 1993 are included as assisted areas. Workington was downgraded, but it still experiences 15·1 per cent. unemployment.

What will my right hon. and hon. Friends, decent people that they all are, conclude from those figures? The argument is strong. Any decent jury presented with those facts could come to only one conclusion. We have a desperate Government who are trying to help their friends in each of their constituencies. Labour areas become unimportant in that process. Therefore, Workington, Manchester, Bradford, south Wales and Tower Hamlets could be thrown overboard as the pork-barrelling goes towards Conservative constituencies.

Mr. Gale: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Fatchett: I shall not give way; I shall finish my speech in a few moments.

Mr. Gale: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Fatchett: No. It is a short debate. Several hon. Members with constituency interests would like to comment.

We are faced with three problems. First, there is the changing pattern of unemployment and the decline of the once-prosperous south. Secondly, there is a fall in the regional aid budget. Thirdly, there is deep concern that help is being skewed towards Tory areas. For that reason we will vote not to take out areas but to ask the Government to justify the criteria that have been used. The map that the Minister presented in July is hard to explain and hard to justify. The questions that my right hon. and hon. Friends ask tonight are the very questions that the Minister has to answer, otherwise the Government will stand accused of helping their friends and forgetting other parts of the country.

10.32 pm

The Minister for Industry (Mr. Tim Sainsbury): As the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) has said, this is a short debate. I suspect that several right hon. and hon. Members would like to make points about their constituencies. Therefore, I shall be brief. If the House will excuse me, it would be better not to accept interventions and to let people speak for themselves.

We should be clear that the consequences of the House rejecting the orders would be to return to the 1984 map. That is a sign that we have a desperate Opposition, fishing around for something to protest about. There is one question that the hon. Gentleman carefully ducked—what alternative map would he put forward? He is asking us to reject the map. He knows that, if an area is put into the map, another area has to be taken out. He seems to suggest, as I understand his rather unedifying remarks, that the pork-barrelling, as he described it, has rolled the barrel towards Tory seats, whereas he wants it rolled back towards Labour seats.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Quite right, too.

Mr. Sainsbury: The hon. Gentleman, in a characteristic intervention which was more honest than what we heard from the hon. Member for Leeds, Central, said, "Quite right, too." It is clear that he wants the benefits of regional assistance to go to seats occupied by Labour Members.

[Mr. Sainsbury]

That view ignores the underlying objective of the review. I hope that the hon. Gentleman is prepared to accept the objective of directing regional industrial support at those areas that most need it now, not those areas that most needed it in 1984.

The conclusion that we could draw from what the hon. Member for Leeds, Central said is that he does not accept that the map should be redrawn to reflect the current situation if that means that areas represented by Labour Members lose support and areas which need the support more, and which might in some cases be represented by my right hon. and hon. Friends, obtain support. That would mean that areas in the east and west midlands, the south-west, East Anglia and London—the hon. Gentleman complained about London in his speech—would not receive support. Mansfield with 13·3 per cent. unemployment, Thanet with 16·2 per cent. unemployment and Haringey with 20·7 per cent. unemployment would not receive help if the hon. Gentleman's views were accepted by the House.

The hon. Gentleman knows that strict limits are imposed on the coverage of assisted areas that we can have in this country. Those limits are imposed by the European Commission for a good reason. The restriction is imposed on all countries in the Community, which means that our industry has a more level playing field on which to compete than it would otherwise have.

Mr. Elliot Morley (Glanford and Scunthorpe): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Sainsbury: No. Many hon. Members want to speak and I shall finish my remarks as quickly as possible. I have given the reasons why there is a limit to our coverage. It is a sensible reason.

Reviewing the map required some difficult decisions. The review was conducted when, clearly, the pattern of unemployment in the country had changed since 1984. When we looked at the pattern of current unemployment taken as the average in the year to June 1993—it is sensible to take a whole year to avoid seasonal distortions—it was different from the pattern over the past five years. Clearly, in the new map, it would have been wrong to overlook areas with current unemployment well above the national average. Equally, it would have been wrong to overlook those areas—some of them are in Wales—where there were long-standing problems.

Postponing the review would have been unfair. For example, it would have denied assisted area status to a number of areas in the east midlands that have been seriously affected by coal closures. Simply extending the map to cover new areas without removing others would have been impossible. We have a strict ceiling on the overall coverage. I remind the House that that ceiling has had the effect of reducing coverage in Germany from 27 per cent. to 22 per cent. That is a much larger reduction than the one that we had to face.

If we had reflected the current realities, inevitably some areas would have lost assisted area status as a result of the review. I can assure the House that those decisions were not taken either easily or quickly. I recognise that a number of the areas that have lost assisted area status continue none the less to suffer significant levels of unemployment. Understandably, they wish that they had not lost that status. I must tell those areas, and the right hon. and hon. Members who represent them, that the map is designed to identify the areas of greatest need relative to other areas. I recognise that that will be of little comfort to those areas that have lost status, but it is the Government's task to identify the areas with the strongest case for assistance.

In drawing the map, we took account of both past and present patterns of unemployment. The hon. Member for Leeds, Central raised a specific question about some areas, including Manchester. On the current level of unemployment for the year to June 1993, Manchester is not in the worst half of the country. As the hon. Gentleman knows, we are looking at a map that covers slightly more than one third of the country.

The hon. Gentleman also referred to Tower Hamlets. As he knows from what was said at the time the review was announced, the areas in London that we designated for assistance have sites and an infrastructure, and employment can be created to benefit people in not only those areas but areas nearby, including Tower Hamlets.

The hon. Gentleman also mentioned Bradford, which was only just inside the worst half. It came 48.2 in the list on current unemployment and was not even in the worst third on five-year unemployment. He mentioned the downgrading of Workington. We have 16 per cent. of the country in the development areas as opposed to the intermediate areas and Workington is 16.6 and 17.8 on one-year and five-year averages.

The hon. Government says that the map is indefensible. The figures, of which he should be aware, if he is to bandy about these allegations, entirely support the map that we have drawn. The map that he would apparently like to draw favours the seats of his right hon. and hon. Friends and takes no account of the realities of the current pattern of unemployment. He cannot have it both ways. He cannot offer his support to those areas that have lost assisted area status without at the same time denying support to the areas that have gained it. Which areas would he seek to deprive of assisted area status?

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Sainsbury: The hon. Gentleman may catch your eye later, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have already gone on perhaps for longer than I should and I know that many hon. Members want to speak.

I am sure that all hon. Members would be interested to hear which areas the hon. Member for Leeds, Central would take out of the list. I strongly recommend the House to accept a list which reflects the reality of current unemployment and is honest to all parts of the country and both sides of the House.

10.41 pm

Mr. Paul Tyler (North Cornwall): I know that many hon. Members want to speak, so I shall be as brief as possible. There are several important issues at stake.

The first is the issue of criteria. As the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) and the Minister said, the criteria are not easy to interpret in terms of this map. A large number of different criteria have been used, as was made clear at the time of the announcement this summer. The Library brief, which sets out in tabular form all the different criteria for long-term unemployment, persistent unemployment as well as current unemployment, makes it

clear that there is no simple way of approaching the map. We should not set this in concrete today, in 1993, for ever and a day. It also needs to correlate closely with the structural funds of the European Community if it is to be effective.

The Minister was either rather naive or perhaps thought we were rather naive in suggesting that the ceilings put on expenditure are entirely a matter for a foreign power in foreign parts. That is not so. It is perfectly possible for our Ministers within the appropriate Council of Ministers—when this was last discussed, I believe, Britain held the presidency—to initiate a discussion about raising those ceilings. As far as I am aware and as far as the Minister has explained, at no time did the United Kingdom Government take an initiative to raise those ceilings. Therefore, it is expecting a lot of us to ask us to believe that somehow this is imposed on us.

As has been said, in real terms only one quarter of the regional assistance for the 10-year period from 1981 to 1991 is now being offered. During this period unemployment has trebled or even more than trebled, depending on which figures one takes. For Scotland, less than one third is now available for regional development assistance through this programme than in 1982. In Wales, it is 60 per cent. lower than 10 years ago. This reduction has been taking place during a period of substantial recession, hitting the industrial base of our country. If the Government believe that these are useful weapons with which to tackle unemployment, why have they not gone to the European Community and argued the case for more substantial aid?

It is also true that structural funds are available from the Community. However, the question why the United Kingdom map does not precisely correlate with objective 1, objective 2 and objective 5b status of the structural funds is constantly dodged. We in the far south-west are reasonably satisfied with the area assistance offered under the order, but we want to know why it has not been possible for Cornwall and Plymouth, or Cornwall alone, to achieve objective 1 status. That would enable us to receive the assistance from Brussels that we need.

The map has created certain curious anomalies which relate to various parts of the country, but one consistent theme is apparent. I would suggest that the map reveals not just new economic failure, but the new political vulnerability of the Government. Seat after seat in which the Conservative Member is challenged by a Liberal Democrat—particularly after the recent by-election successes—feature on the map. We welcome that acceptance of the new facts of life, which is fine, but some extremely damaging admissions are revealed by the map.

In Folkestone, economic failure has meant that the average unemployment rate has increased from 6 to 12·2 per cent. in just two years. In Hastings, the unemployment rate has increased from 4·9 to 13·4 per cent. The unemployment rate has increased on the Isle of Wight from 6·5 to 12·6 per cent. and in Torbay from 6·2 to 13·1 per cent. What a record of failure that map reveals.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Tyler: The Minister did not give way and nor will I. I do not intend to detain the House, because I know that many hon. Members wish to speak.

The criteria that disturb most people are those to be applied in Scotland, where some curious decisions have been made. In Inverness, the average unemployment rate between 1988 and 1992 was about the same as that in the rest of Britain. In the previous year, 1987, that unemployment rate was less than the national average. For 30 out of 60 months, however, that unemployment rate exceeded the British average, yet Inverness is still unassisted. No doubt the Government have little hope of winning that seat. The criteria have been applied in a similarly idiosyncratic manner to Peebles, Islay, mid Argyll and, to a lesser extent, to Lockerbie, Stirling and Keith.

There are nagging doubts about the way in which the process has been undertaken. The criteria exist for all to see, but their interpretation and the weight that is given to different elements in the package result in curious decisions.

The actual rate of unemployment in a given area should be the basis of the programme.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): Will the hon. Member give way?

Mr. Tyler: No, I will not. If the Minister did not give way nor will I.

If the rate of unemployment is to be the basis of a real investment strategy to deal with persistent unemployment, that strategy needs to be monitored and reviewed regularly and not just every five or seven years. The programme needs to be part of an overall investment strategy, which also co-ordinates the available funds from Brussels and the Community. It is critical that the maps used correlate and co-ordinate.

Above all, we need an assurance from the Minister that he will return to the House—should that prove possible—to inform us that he has started an initiative within the Community to raise the ceiling. In that way, we will receive the investment necessary to deal with the persistent problem of unemployment throughout the country.

10.49 pm

Mrs. Jacqui Lait (Hastings and Rye): Like others, I intend to be brief.

I never cease to marvel at the conservatism of Opposition Members. They cannot recognise success in regional policy and want to hang on to what they have, without realising that some areas have long-term problems. Among those I include both Hastings and the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale).

The hon. Member for North Cornwall (Mr. Tyler) quoted the unemployment figure of 4·9 per cent. That was a good blip in Hastings' history of unemployment which, in 1984, stood at its present level. That is probably why it was left out of the list quoted by the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett). Thanet is in exactly the same position.

Our present problems are precisely those that have been addresed in the past by regional policy, which has allowed the north, north-east, Scotland, Wales and most of the midlands to have the industrial infrastructure required to ensure that businesses can succeed. We hope that, with the awarding of assisted area status, we shall be able to build that infrastructure so that we shall eventually be able to relinquish it when the map is reviewed in, we hope, not less than three years' time.

[Mrs. Jacqui Lait]

Assisted area status has already had some success in Hastings, where we have had more than 200 inquiries from companies, of which at least 45 per cent. are realistic. If companies in my constituency are interested, other constituencies in the south-east must be having a similar number of inquiries and the poor old Department of Trade and Industry in London is clearly being overwhelmed. We are finding that, instead of the three or four weeks that we were promised it would take to get grants up to £25,000, it is taking eight to 10 weeks and the response to inquiries varies, depending on to whom one talks. The public servant at the end of the phone is undoubtedly overworked. Will the Minister consider redeploying some of the more experienced DTI staff from areas that have been able to relinquish assisted area status down to our offices so that we can benefit from high-quality, highly skilled and experienced people to allow us to build on their expertise and take advantage of the grants to which we are entitled?

The key to the issue is roads, a matter which one must pursue with a different Department. We hope that the granting of assisted area status will allow us to put extra pressure on the Department of Transport so that, when the map is redrawn in few years' time, it will be with enormous pleasure that Hastings will be able to give up assisted area status and pass it on to some other constituency or area that needs it more.

10.52 pm

Mr. Stanley Orme (Salford, East): This debate is about unemployment, not just in the north or south but throughout the United Kingdom, and we should be discussing how to deal with that unemployment. If the Government had a policy to fight unemployment, we would be trying not to spread the misery but to create jobs throughout the country.

The Minister says that the EC will give the Government limited funds under the present rules, but it is his job to go back and fight for more resources. We contribute enough and are entitled to a fair share.

It is beyond belief that an inner-city area like Salford in Greater Manchester, where male unemployment is 40 per cent., crime is rife and jobs are being lost week after week, is to lose its assisted area status. It is absolutely criminal. All the local authorities in Greater Manchester are affected in some way. We have seen the decimation of the industrial base in an area where the industrial revolution started.

Mr. David Sumberg (Bury, South): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Orme: No. Like other Members, I am not giving way.

What is happening in our area is outrageous. We are not satisfied, and we shall not meekly accept the situation. We insist that the Government fight to create jobs, and with the EEC to provide better benefits and more finance. The Government's proposals are completely unsatisfactory. We do not accept them, and we shall return to this issue.

10.54 pm

Mr. Nick Hawkins (Blackpool, South): My right hon. Friend the Minister for Industry will be aware that there has been great disappointment in my constituency and in that of my hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, North (Mr. Elletson) that we have not succeeded in recovering assisted area status. We acknowledge that many areas have severe problems, and we want to persuade my right hon. Friend the Minister and his colleagues that when the assisted areas map is redrawn, which I understand may happen in the next 18 months, greater consideration will be paid to drawing the areas more narrowly.

Blackpool's case for assisted area status has always been hampered because the figures for its travel-to-work area have been artificially improved by the much lower rate of unemployment in the more prosperous inland areas of Fylde and Wyre. As right hon. and hon. Members in all parts of the House know, Blackpool is a community in itself. I hope that when the map is redrawn, Blackpool alone will be considered—not a much wider swathe of the country.

If Blackpool's statistic of three in 10 males unemployed in many inner-town wards—not seasonally, but all year round—were considered, it would undoubtedly have qualified on this occasion. There is great concern in Blackpool about the social problems of crime and urban deprivation that follow in the wake of that unemployment.

My right hon. Friend is well aware of the extent of those problems, and I am grateful to him for agreeing to see a cross-party delegation of local authority representatives and councillors that my hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, North and I will take to meet him within the next few weeks. That news, which arrived this afternoon, has been very well received in Blackpool.

The appalling decision by the socialist Commissioner in Brussels, Mr. Bruce Millan—nominated by Labour—not to grant objective 2 status to tourist-related areas, and the refusal of Labour members of the socialist group in the European Parliament to support the Conservative MEP, Mr. Michael Welsh, in his attempt to secure objective 2 status for tourist-related areas throughout the country, is disgraceful. They have sown the wind and, in the next election, they will reap the whirlwind in tourist resorts such as that which I represent.

We hope that a constructive approach will lead to Blackpool securing the assisted area status that it so richly deserves on the next occasion that the map is redrawn.

The situation is particularly severe at present because of the continuing decline in manufacturing industry. It is often forgotten that Blackpool's manufacturing sector has always been significant. Employment in that sector in Blackpool has fallen from 19 per cent. at the beginning of the 1970s to 11 per cent. That is largely due to the crazy employment policies pursued by Labour when in government, which destroyed manufacturing jobs. Even now, we are suffering the consequences of some of those decisions in the loss of jobs in manufacturing.

Only recently, we saw redundancies at Burton's Biscuits in my own constituency, which caused great hardship. It is noticeable that those jobs are going to areas of Scotland and Wales where the multinational that owns that company is developing its plants. I hope very much that we shall hear less rhetoric from the Labour party, that it will acknowledge its shame and responsibility for some of the decisions and that it will accept that all its accusations about the pork barrel are entirely wrong, because many Conservative seats that have been lucky enough to benefit from assisted area status have larger Conservative majorities than my constituency. If it were the politics of the pork barrel, my constituency would have

benefited. The fact that we did not gives the lie to the argument of the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett).

I urge my right hon. Friend the Minister to receive the cross-party delegation and to listen carefully to the case that we shall present.

10.59 pm

Mr. Ernie Ross (Dundee, West): When the Minister announced these changes on 26 July, only one small paragraph dealt with Scotland. He said that the map for Scotland would remain largely unaltered, with one or two changes to travel-to-work areas to reflect changes in relative circumstances.

I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall) hopes to talk about experience in Dumbarton, and the relatively small changes that the Minister mentioned have proved to be quite significant in Dundee, the other area in Scotland that lost full development area status.

Dundee used to rely heavily on the manufacturing sector. It has been in a transitional period and, therefore, has required full support from the Government to continue to develop an alternative to the manufacturing base that was gradually disappearing. The city has made strenuous efforts to achieve that—for example, through tourism with the return of the RRS Discovery, which is a focal point. General Accident was attracted to move its services centre up to Dundee. The city's educational and research centre, particularly the Imperial Cancer Research Campaign, made substantial investment in the Ninewells teaching hospital.

In January, the city will lose full development status and the enterprise zone, leaving us with only objective 2 status, which, it is hoped, will remain. The announcement of those measures has already had an impact on Dundee. Since August, inward investment inquiries have all but dried up and, as the House will know, Dundee has experienced serious job losses. Timex no longer exists in Dundee, with the loss of 500 or 600 jobs. Ballantynes, the card makers, has moved production to Ireland, with the loss of 200 or 300 jobs.

Mr. John McFall (Dumbarton): Does my hon. Friend accept that the decision that the Government made in June is out of date in my constituency, because since then 340 job losses—8 per cent. of unemployment in the area—have been announced? The decision that the Government made is no longer relevant. The Minister accepted from me in a letter that, in the past five years, Dumbarton and its travel-to-work area has had the worst unemployment in the worst 15 per cent. of the country. He accepts the figure for long-term unemployment, but that for current unemployment, which he did as a snapshot, is now out of date in our constituencies. The Government did not serve Scotland well by the decision that they made in July.

Mr. Ross: My hon. Friend is exactly right. Between 1989 and 1991, more than 4,500 jobs were lost in Dundee. My hon. Friend makes a very important point.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Allan Stewart) *rose*——

Mr. Ross: I cannot give way to the Minister. He will have to ask his right hon. Friend the Minister to allow him a minute in the wind-up.

I support the comments made by my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) and the hon. Member for North Cornwall (Mr. Tyler).

The Minister must tell us the criteria used in assisted area status reviews. Do they reflect the real circumstances of the regions in this country? We also need continuous monitoring. The Government must commit themselves to that and, given the change in circumstances that we have outlined, a review should take place immediately.

On 26 July, my hon. Friend the Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) encapsulated everything that Opposition Members are trying to say again tonight. He challenged the Minister to

"name a single area that he has downgraded where unemployment has gone down since the present Prime Minister took office? If he cannot name such an area, will he admit that unemployment has gone up in every single one of the 20 areas that he has relegated?"—[*Official Report*, 26 July 1993; Vol. 229, c. 753.]

That is the real question for the Minister tonight. What does he say to those areas; how does he justify the changes to the map?

11.6 pm

Mr. Gary Streeter (Plymouth, Sutton): I welcome the granting of assisted area status to many parts of the west country. I also thank the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) for letting the cat out of the bag this evening. The people of the west country will have taken note of the fact that it is Labour policy to remove assisted area status from the west country and to take it back, in the hon. Gentleman's words, to where it belongs: the Labour seats up north and in Scotland. So much for Labour's big push for the west country. The people there know where they stand now.

I welcome the Minister's decision to boost the west country. Plymouth has been able to keep its assisted area status, and many parts of rural Devon and Cornwall have been granted it for the first time. The people there warmly welcome it.

This has been a demonstration of the Government's commitment to the west country. It is true that in the past we have sometimes felt ourselves to be the poor relation of other parts of the country. We have even felt like the Cinderella of the United Kingdom. But now, Cinderella is going to the ball.

I am pleased to say that in my constituency, unemployment has fallen in the past 12 months by more than 200—but we still have 4,000 unemployed people, and that is far too many. The retention of assisted area status is a welcome boost to those in my constituency who are looking for jobs. That retention, combined with the work of the Plymouth development corporation and the Trident contract which will come on stream towards the end of the decade, is welcome news for the people of Plymouth and further evidence of the Government's commitment to the west country.

In other parts of rural Devon and Cornwall, unemployment is still far too high. There are reasons for that. Traditional industries such as tourism, defence and agriculture are all in decline, for all sorts of reasons. Even though defence-related job losses are always regretted, the people of the west country know that under a Liberal Democrat Government, with defence cuts of more than 50 per cent., the defence industries of the west country would be decimated. The news that the Labour conference recently voted to scrap Trident did not go down well, as

[Mr. Gary Streeter]

hon. Members may imagine, in Plymouth. Trident is our lifeline for the future, yet the Labour party, without a thought for the people of Plymouth, voted to scrap it—if the party ever took power—and to kick the people of the city in the teeth.

Whenever he comes to the west country, the Minister is very warmly received. We took a delegation from Devon and Cornwall to see him about assisted area status. He listened carefully. I can encourage my hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, South (Mr. Hawkins); I am sure that the Minister will also listen carefully to his delegation. The Minister listened to us. He has responded. He has demonstrated the Government's commitment to the west country. That is to be warmly welcomed.

11.9 pm

Mr. Elfyn Llwyd (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): I shall be brief because I know that many people want to make their points known. I want to speak about my constituency. Aberconwy, the northerly area of my constituency, has recently been recommended for objective 5b status. There has been a great deal of lobbying. I see the Secretary of State for Wales in his place. I note with some satisfaction that the Secretary of State has included the borough of Aberconwy in his proposals for assisted areas and that the Department of Trade and Industry has accepted them.

I have lobbied hard on the issue for some months, as have many members of Gwynedd county council and Aberconwy borough council. So I am pleased. I hope that the Secretary of State will personally continue with the lobby because the designation is a life line to Aberconwy, part of which falls within my constituency. The Secretary of State rightly said in a recent press release that the original exclusion of Aberconwy was an anomaly. That is the precise way in which the campaigners put it. So I believe that the Secretary of State has given the lobby a fair hearing.

However, I pause there because I am very unhappy about the position of the southerly area in my constituency, Meirionnydd. The area has suffered from rural depopulation, the common agricultural policy changes, the effects of poor infrastructure such as roads and lack of inward investment for a considerable number of years. That was recognised in its designation as an intermediate area five years ago. The facts were sufficiently plain then for that status to be accorded to the area. However, during the past three months the Trawsfynydd travel-to-work area, which is geographically vast, has had to come to terms with the impending closure of Trawsfynydd power station. That was announced in July.

Although the announcement was a shock, it was nevertheless on the cards. It was plain as a pikestaff that the station would not run for more than two years in any event, even if it was recommissioned. The Government should have upgraded the assistance to full development status. The criteria have been met since the announcement. Indeed, they were met before that. Now it is a compelling case. The Government have lost a golden opportunity. Despite all the lobbying and arguing and all the deputations that they received, they did not give us much of a fair hearing.

In fairness, the Welsh Office has agreed, in principle at least, through the Secretary of State, that enterprise zones should be set up in the area. That fact alone, welcome as it is, underlines the fact that help is desperately needed. The Secretary of State has been positive and forthright on the issue of Trawsfynydd. But I must reiterate that upgrading the status to full development status would have been both justified and timely.

I urge the Minister even now to reconsider the status of Meirionnydd. The loss of 550 jobs may not seem a huge blow objectively. But I can tell the House that it means the loss of more than 1,000 jobs in the locality, both directly and indirectly. Those jobs will be lost to the local economy, together with more than £12 million. That is in a sparsely populated area of Wales with high unemployment. We need full development status if we are to restore prosperity to Meirionnydd. The area is losing out and there is a paucity of inward investment because we are not playing on a level playing field. The area has to compete with Merseyside, which has objective 1 status, Deeside, which has full development status, and other areas of north Wales.

The Government are always happy to talk about level playing fields in the European context. Give the people of Meirionnydd a level playing field so that they can have job opportunities equal to those in other parts of north Wales, Merseyside and beyond. I ask the Government reconsider even at the eleventh hour and to award full development status to Meirionnydd, coupled with objective 5b status to Nant Conwy, which will enable the constituents to have a fair share of assistance, which they rightly deserve.

Mr. Salmond: While the hon. Gentleman has been defending the interests of his constituency, he may not have had an opportunity to observe the behaviour of the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart). His role throughout the debate seems to have been to sit like a stookie, saying absolutely nothing. When it has been pointed out that the total assistance budget of the Scottish Office is worth a third of what it was worth when the Government took office, the Minister has wriggled uncomfortably in his seat. Does the hon. Gentleman think that the Minister is suffering from a guilty conscience?

Mr. Llwyd: I cannot speak for the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland; but I urge Welsh Office Ministers to do all that they can to address the problems of my constituency. Surely, even at this late hour, it is not beyond them to reconsider.

11.15 pm

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): I am sorry that the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) failed to give way to me. He drew a neat distinction between north and south, as Labour Members normally do. He has probably done many of us a great favour, because it will not be lost on my constituents and many others in south-east England that the Labour party wishes the pork barrel to roll to the north, and is cheerfully prepared to abandon not only our interests but the United Kingdom's interests in the south-east. That point has been very firmly taken, and will be very well made by us.

It was not entirely surprising—certainly to Conservative Members, and, I suspect, to some Opposition Members as well—that the hon. Member for North Cornwall (Mr. Tyler) sat firmly astride the fence. He did

not indicate whether he intended to vote for the motion or against it—or, indeed, whether he intended to vote at all. My guess is that his party will probably not vote at all.

Mr. Tyler: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Gale: I shall be delighted to do so. Which way will the hon. Gentleman vote?

Mr. Tyler: Let me tell the hon. Gentleman and the House that I will certainly vote for the motion.

Mr. Gale: Having opposed all the achievements in my right hon. Friend's speech, the hon. Gentleman is going to vote for the motion. Now we know where we stand.

One issue has not been made clear; let me try to make it clear now. The hon. Member for Leeds, Central referred to the assistance granted to areas of north-east Kent; he referred in particular to Dover and Deal, and to the Thanet travel-to-work area, represented by my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) and myself.

What the hon. Gentleman has signally failed to recognise, and what my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has taken on board so perfectly, is this. For many years, the French Government have been pouring money into Nord Pas de Calais, and jobs have been created over and over again there and around the French side of the channel tunnel that could and should have been coming to the United Kingdom. My right hon. Friend has taken that on board: he has fought extremely hard for the United Kingdom, and has seized the opportunity for us to achieve not jobs for Warrington, Blackburn, Manchester or somewhere else in the north, but jobs that would come to the United Kingdom rather than going to France. I am rather surprised, and a little disappointed, that some Opposition Members are not willing to recognise that.

We shall work very hard in the east Kent travel-to-work area—particularly in Thanet—to ensure that we take maximum advantage of the opportunity that has been afforded to us to create jobs not just for the people of east Kent and the south-east, but for the people of the United Kingdom. That is what my right hon. Friend has sought to achieve.

11.17 pm

Ms Mildred Gordon (Bow and Poplar): I must express deep disappointment that Tower Hamlets has not been included in the list of assisted-area-status regions. The Minister said that neighbouring areas have been included, so that there will be jobs within travelling distance; but those areas themselves have high unemployment, as has Tower Hamlets. He also seemed to imply that the infrastructure was not there. Well, we have had 10 years of the London Docklands Development Corporation, and for years Tower Hamlets has been like a bomb site, with continuous road building and development works. Companies such as Olympia and York have been allowed to take huge areas of land and start a little pile driving for vast development projects—Heron Quays, for instance—which everyone knows will never take place. The roads are there, the land is there, but the money is not there, because it has been spent wrongly by a Government quango. The LDDC, letting market forces rip, has produced a net job loss.

People in Tower Hamlets are desperate. I think that their desperation was shown in the protest vote that allowed a BNP candidate to get on to the council. The people of Tower Hamlets are desperate and are crying out for help. They need help; they need jobs; they need assistance. I hope that, even at this late hour, the Government will change their mind and realise that it is essential that Tower Hamlets be given assisted area status.

11.20 pm

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay): As a result of his ill-considered attack on this order, the hon. Member for North Cornwall (Mr. Tyler) has effectively undermined all the hard work that went into the presentation made by the cross-party delegation to my right hon. Friend the Minister when Torbay made an application for the restoration of intermediate assisted area status. That delegation was led by me, together with the deputy leader of Torbay borough council, who is a Liberal. I shall take great pleasure in telling him of the attack made on the order. The hon. Member for North Cornwall has effectively pulled the rug from under those whose jobs have been lost already—there is 13 per cent. unemployment in my constituency—and those whose jobs are at risk.

In the south-west, we suffer from tremendous problems because of the inevitable rundown of the defence industries and in Torbay we are concerned about the loss of the fishing industry. That is a particular problem which we highlighted when we made our presentation to the Department of Trade and Industry. Also, the recession has hit the tourist industry hard. There are plenty of empty hotels in my constituency.

The long-term unemployed in my constituency will remember that Opposition Members intend to vote against the order. The consequences of the rejection of the order for people who are anxious to find employment will be exceptionally damaging. I shall take the opportunity to remind my constituents of the position taken by Opposition Members.

I urge my right hon. Friend the Minister to take the view that intermediate status is but a first step. The second step must be for his Department to supply information to all those who wish to pursue the grants and other advantages of having intermediate status. Two officials have come to talk to the business community in Torbay, and I am grateful to my right hon. Friend the Minister for that initiative. Will he also undertake to open a separate department so that people can apply to his officials and obtain all the information so that we can take full advantage of this? After all, this is partly European money and, given that this country is but one of the two net contributors to the European Community budget, it is only fair that we should obtain our fair share of it.

I congratulate and thank my right hon. Friend the Minister for his courtesy in receiving the delegation. On this occasion, I take great pleasure in supporting the Government.

11.22 pm

Mr. Alan Milburn (Darlington): Darlington is one of the principal losers from the new assisted areas map. As the Minister is aware, it is a town and area of vast economic potential, but it requires assistance from the Government if it is to realise that potential and overcome the competitive disadvantages faced by an area in the north-east.

We are some distance from the centre of the European single market and we have the same sort of deep-rooted structural problems which assail many parts of the

[Mr. Alan Milburn]

north-east and which have given the region an unenviable record—the highest rate of regional unemployment in every month since the Government took office in the middle of 1979. This map does nothing to put that right. In fact, it makes matters worse. It switches resources away from the north and away from Scotland and Wales.

Mr. Morley: No Opposition Member wants to attack another part of the country that is suffering the same sort of problems caused by the Government, but does my hon. Friend agree that the Government should explain why some constituencies have been granted assisted area status, while constituencies such as mine in Glanford and Scunthorpe and that of my hon. Friend the Member for Darlington (Mr. Milburn) have higher unemployment rates than some of those constituencies that are new to assisted area status? Does my hon. Friend agree that the Minister should explain why that anomaly exists?

Mr. Milburn: Indeed, the Minister should explain the anomaly and I hope that he will take the opportunity to do so.

There is no doubt that the recession has hit hard in once prosperous parts of Britain. Who would have thought in 1979 that Cardiff, Clacton, Wisbech, Wakefield, Hastings and Hartlepool would one day share a common label as areas in need of special economic assistance? The Government's triumph has been the creation of a level playing field in which economic decline and devastation stalk the whole land—not just the north-east, not just Scotland and not just Wales, but the whole country.

I have a great deal of sympathy for people living in Thanet, in Dover, in Deal, in Southend and in the other areas that have gained from the changes. Those areas had lost out through no fault of their own and they deserved help, but their gain should not be our loss. We should not lose out at the expense of overwhelmingly Tory parts of the country. The Government have ended up by playing off area against area and town against town. By cutting the regional aid budget in the middle of a recession, they have forced hundreds of towns to compete for slices of an ever-diminishing regional aid cake.

To make matters worse, we have not even been told by the Minister this evening how the winners and the losers were arrived at. We are left in the dark. All that we know is that Darlington and other losers have been relegated because they have lost out to higher-scoring towns in an assisted areas game being played by rules that have not been made clear even to the competitors. The Minister's failure to come clean about the issue and to publish the individual assessments on each travel-to-work area's bid for inclusion in the new map leaves us with only one clear impression—that the new map is the product of political gerrymandering.

There is other evidence to bear out that assertion. Why did the Government decide to give assisted area status to parts of certain travel-to-work areas, despite an assurance that the map would be based only on whole travel-to-work areas? Like has not been compared with like. As a result, the prospects for statistical jiggery-pokery have been increased massively, which shows in the results.

My hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) alluded to the fact that it was overwhelmingly Conservative areas that were gainers. That is true. Some 109 Conservative areas have gained; just 76 Labour areas have gained. Some 50 per cent. more Labour areas than Tory areas have lost out. Unless the Minister is able to give credible answers to those questions, he will rightly stand accused of fixing the new map for political ends and of vainly trying to prop up crumbling Tory support, especially in the south of England. The fact that Darlington has been made a victim will not be forgotten. I hope that the Minister, even tonight at this 11th hour, will rethink his proposals.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): I call Mr. Sainsbury.

Mr. Sainsbury: There have been a number——

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As I understand it, the Minister is able to speak twice only by leave of the House. As far as I am concerned, he should not have that leave, as he refused to allow interventions during his speech.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Does the House give leave for the Minister to speak again?

Hon. Members: No.

11.27 pm

Sir Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): I am sorry that we cannot hear the Minister. The House will have to make do with me instead.

I shall make three simple points. First, it is clear that whenever these decisions are made, some people feel genuinely aggrieved and some feel delighted. We have to make decisions on a complex formula, considering not just unemployment, but long-term unemployment, future job gaps and activity rates. All Conservative Members know that the Minister, being a straight, honourable and truthful man, will have made decisions for the right reasons. However, it would help to encourage understanding of the decisions if they were made by an independent body and not by politicians, whether Conservative, Labour or Liberal Democrat.

Secondly, we should not be too enthusiastic about regional aid. We should remember that, for every area that receives regional aid, a neighbouring area does not and will therefore suffer and lose employment. The massive improvement in the relative position of Scotland proves that, if one piles in aid, one merely worsens the relative position of other areas.

Thirdly, we should remember that not one penny of this money is Euro-money. Some people may say that we should simply go and get more money, but I remind them that it is not Euro-money. Hon. Members should appreciate that the Government are not able to spend our money to create jobs for our people without the specific permission of a bloke called Mr. van Miert. He was given a list, at the foot of which was Southend. For what I am sure were perfectly good reasons—the same happened to Germany and France—he cut a slice off the foot of the list. Even if we think that that is scandalous, wrong or outrageous, there is nothing we can do——

It being half-past Eleven o'clock, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question pursuant to Standing Order No 15 (Prayers against statutory instruments, &c. (negative procedure)).*

The House divided: Ayes 164, Noes 223.

Division No. 373] **[11.30 pm**

AYES

Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Boyce, Jimmy
Bradley, Keith
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Byers, Stephen
Cabom, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Cann, Jamie
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clarke, Eric *(Midlothian)*
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton N)*
Corbett, Robin
Corston, Ms Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H.
Dowd, Jim
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John *(St Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Gerrard, Neil
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Griffiths, Nigel *(Edinburgh S)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hoey, Kate
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George *(Knowsley N)*
Howells, Dr. Kim *(Pontypridd)*
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Sheffld, H)*
Jamieson, David
Jones, Jon Owen *(Cardiff C)*
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Khabra, Piara S.
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil *(Islwyn)*
Leighton, Ron
Lewis, Terry
Llwyd, Elfyn
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McGrady, Eddie
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Martin, Michael J. *(Springburn)*
Martlew, Eric
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Milburn, Alan
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wy'nshawe)*
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Brien, William *(Normanton)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L.
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Raynsford, Nick
Robertson, George *(Hamilton)*
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Salmond, Alex
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Llew *(Blaenau Gwent)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Tipping, Paddy
Walley, Joan
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. John Spellar and
Mr. Alan Meale.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Allason, Rupert *(Torbay)*
Alton, David
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Bates, Michael
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Bowden, Andrew
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony *(Wyre For'st)*
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Day, Stephen
Dicks, Terry
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Elletson, Harold
Evans, Jonathan *(Brecon)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forth, Eric
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Gale, Roger
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gorst, John
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Greenway, John *(Ryedale)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Harvey, Nick
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Horam, John
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Strat'rd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon David *(G'dford)*
Howell, Sir Ralph *(N Norfolk)*
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela *(Erewash)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Lynne, Ms Liz
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marshall, Sir Michael *(Arundel)*
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick

Merchant, Piers
Milligan, Stephen
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Moate, Sir Roger
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Rendel, David
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin *(Hornchurch)*
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bexl'yh'th)*
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Tyler, Paul
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Watts, John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Timothy Wood and
Mr. Timothy Kirkhope.

Question accordingly negatived.

Antiquities (Registration and Export)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Patnick.]*

11.42 pm

Mr. Richard Spring (Bury St. Edmunds): May I thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for giving me the opportunity of speaking this evening, and may I thank my hon. Friend the Minister for being present to reply to the debate.

In my constituency there is an environmentally sensitive area called Breckland, which was densely populated in prehistoric times. Archaeologists have unearthed numerous objects from the Roman and Saxon periods. Sadly, however, an unknown number of valuable objects have been removed from the area via the use of metal detectors. Many of my constituents have expressed their alarm to me that much of our unique local and national heritage has disappeared unrecorded and illegally. Publicity has rightly been accorded to the valiant efforts of my constituent, Mr. John Browning, to retrieve objects removed from his farm at Icklingham. His costs in doing so have exceeded £100,000.

It would be instructive to consider the succession of events surrounding the illegal removal and exportation of the Icklingham bronzes, as they have become known. In 1982, rumours reached the Suffolk constabulary that a valuable find had been dug up on Mr. Browning's farm, and an investigation was undertaken. In 1983, my constituent was informed that an important hoard had been removed from his farm, coupled with a warning from the police not to approach illicit metal detectorists as they could be violent. Nine years ago, Thames Television produced a documentary showing pictures of pagan temple bronzes apparently removed from Icklingham. In 1985, an archaeologist wrote to the Suffolk archaeological unit to say that the actual find spot and identification of the hoard had been confirmed by the thieving finders. Between 1980 and 1993, 13 illicit treasure hunters were caught and prosecuted—two for assaulting police officers.

The bronzes were traced to the United States. In 1990, the Crown Prosecution Service informed the police, who believed that they had a strong case, that they were unable to proceed with prosecutions and no extradition order would be given. Although the present owners of the bronzes indicated that they would bequeath the bronzes to the British museum, litigation has clouded their future. The 16 or more Romano-British bronzes date from the first or second century BC and have been valued at £1·5 million.

My constituent's farm covers a substantial Roman settlement. In 1974, the site was scheduled as an ancient monument. My concern and that of Mr. Browning and bodies such as the Society of Antiquaries is that this episode highlights weaknesses in the law and voluntary codes designed to stop the illegal looting and export of cultural property. Despite our having extradition arrangements for criminals with the United States, it is clear that there is no adequate mechanism for the seizure and return of cultural property that is patently important to our national heritage.

Before exploring that further, I commend to the House the excellent work done by the Suffolk constabulary in precisely laying out appropriate guidelines which could well be copied by other police forces. My hon. Friend the Minister will be aware that amateur metal detecting is a legitimate hobby. Its governing body is the National

Council for Metal Detecting. Amateur metal detecting has greatly added to our body of knowledge of objects of historic importance However, only the failure to report treasure trove carries legal sanction, and the decision to report other finds is that of the finder and/or landowner. The national council prepared a code of conduct which reflects sensitivity to the landowner, the country way of life and the objects themselves.

The Suffolk constabulary has made it clear that it is unlawful to search in a protected site such as that of Mr. Browning without obtaining permission from the landowner and the Secretary of State via English Heritage. On scheduled ancient monuments, no one may use a metal detector without such prior consent. Of course, treasure trove, largely gold and silver objects, belong to the Crown and a failure to report involves a criminal offence. I should add that any possible cash reward goes to the finder, not the landowners, unless they are personally involved in the finding.

My hon. Friend the Minister will know that the Select Committee on National Heritage took evidence on the export of works of art one year ago, flowing from the EC draft directive on the return of cultural objects unlawfully removed from a member state and draft regulations on the export of cultural goods. I quote from the memorandum submitted to the Select Committee by the Council of British Archaeology:

"National protection of archaeological objects logically begins with a system for the routine reporting, recording and conservation of finds. Such a system is commonplace throughout the world. Sadly, there is no such system in this country. Treasure trove is all that we have; and that mechanism is an absurd and ineffectual anachronism. It protects no more than a fraction of the minuscule element of objects made of silver or gold. In this field also, the CBA has been, for more than a quarter of a century, pressing for legal reform. However, there has been no response from government and nothing has yet been achieved."

In evidence to the Committee, Lord Renfrew of Kaimsthorn specifically alluded to the Icklingham bronzes as a glaring example of looting and illegal exportation.

I fully accept that London must remain the premier art market in the world, generating perhaps between £3 billion and £3·5 billion annually. But however we address the problem of cultural objects, that should not involve a costly and ineffective monitoring process that could either drive the art market abroad or enlarge the black market in cultural objects. As 90 per cent. of all finds are not covered by the term treasure trove, it is clear that a considerable part of our national heritage disappears into the black market or goes abroad via sale rooms every year. The issue is clear. The Icklingham horde has dramatically highlighted the problem. Clearly, our archaeological inheritance is being jeopardised, yet is some new legally enforceable protection warranted?

There is national inconsistency in the treatment of this matter. In Scotland any object of archaeological interest dug up must be registered, with the Crown exercising the right to claim it, subject to compensation. Only treasure trove is afforded similar treatment in England and Wales. However, it is arguable that in practice the problem is more manageable in Scotland. Registration of all objects at least 100 years old could be enshrined in law, but the process could potentially be oppressively bureaucratic. At least then, however, we might be able to measure more precisely the true breadth and depth of our inheritance. Any registration could, for example, be accompanied by the presentation of a certified document which may well enhance the object's saleroom attractiveness in due course. To make this work, finders would be obliged to report and register their discoveries. I shall return to this point and examine its practicality.

What is certain is that all interested parties are unhappy with the present situation. There is basically a similarity of view from the three relevant heritage bodies—the Council for British Archaeology, the Museums Association and the Society of Antiquaries. There is also a clear recognition that dealers in antiquities, given the importance of the London art market, should feel able to operate under any new code or statutory provision. Any tightening should not jeopardise their legitimate business activities.

I have already mentioned the violent behaviour of illegal metal detectorists, which is a source of embarrassment to the National Council of Metal Detecting. Regrettably, the very portability of certain antiquities means that they are an easy way of laundering drugs money across the globe. Some now believe it important that all metal detectors should be licensed. This could help the police to protect scheduled ancient monuments more effectively. Again, however, this may not adequately prevent illegal activity. The previous licensing system was a failure.

One thing is crystal clear: legislation is long overdue to abolish market overt. This is the ridiculous situation whereby in long-established markets, such as Bermondsey, good title will be awarded to the buyer of goods purchased between sunrise and sunset, even if stolen. This is taking national eccentricity to an unwelcome extreme and simply provides a conduit for the alarming upsurge in burglary in Britain of all objects.

What is clear is that there is an increasing revulsion against the looting of cultural objects in the United States, the destination of so many stolen items. In January this year, the *New York Times* highlighted a number of repatriations of dubiously acquired cultural objects. This often flows from settlements of law suits and negotiations, and American museums are now more sensitive to this problem.

Many people believe that it is Britain's failure to sign up to the UNESCO convention on cultural property that has exacerbated our particular problem. Some believe that our failure to ratify has meant that London is the clearing house for stolen artefacts. It is true that the UNESCO convention has attempted to establish a framework to curb looting and the illicit trade in antiquities. But the experience of the United States is instructive; legislation was implemented in 1983 to enable it to become a full partner in the UNESCO covenant. Undoubtedly, pre-Colombian artefacts have been substantially stopped from entering the United States, but the market has simply moved elsewhere. There is no clear unanimity that the UNESCO convention will substantially address the issue of the continuing denuding of our own national heritage.

On 15 December the EC Council directive on the return of cultural objects comes into force. This seeks to allow a requesting member state to apply to another member state for the return of an illegally exported, important, cultural object. The directive has been widely welcomed. It does not apply outside the EC.

I am, however, encouraged by the fact that UNIDROIT, an intergovernmental organisation based in Rome, is seeking to draft codes that would harmonise different countries' laws on the illegal traffic in cultural objects. At

[Mr. Richard Spring]

an international level, the appalling episode of the Icklingham bronzes must be addressed as an object lesson in what can go wrong.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Minister for sending to me the UNIDROIT draft proposals, which simplify the UNESCO convention. I await with interest to learn how much progress has been made in the negotiations aimed at achieving a consensus. It will be extremely useful and important to obtain an international consensus on the illicit trade in cultural objects. Nevertheless, we must return to the present-day situation at home.

There have been calls from distinguished heritage organisations for a comprehensive recording and registering process for cultural objects. Perhaps the narrow definition of treasure trove could be expanded. Obviously there is a balance to be struck. Compulsory reporting of such objects may prove to be expensive and complicated. That may put immense pressure on museums' resources and storage space. Such a process may increase avoidance of the rules. Perhaps, as a compromise, there could be a greater range and/or value limit of items that would require registration so that at least the most important finds would be registered. It would need to be made clear to finders how such objects could be inspected and appropriate advice given. Perhaps also there could be actual incentives to report interesting finds.

All that would require a heightened level of public awareness of the responsibilities of finders to our archaeological inheritance—in effect, an educational process. As a nation, we rejoice in our heritage in a way which makes our civilisation special. Portable antiquities are part of our inheritance, which is irreplaceable if lost. I am pleased that active discussions are under way between the Department of National Heritage and Britain's relevant heritage organisations.

In raising this issue I hope that, at minimum, the reward to my constituent, who has so valiantly fought for justice, with dedication and perseverance—and at great personal cost—will be that the disgraceful saga of the Icklingham bronzes will never, ever be repeated.

11.56 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for National Heritage (Mr. Ian Sproat): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Mr. Spring) for raising the subject of the registration and export of antiquities. I hope that my hon. Friend, and you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will forgive me if I deliver my speech at a rather faster pace than normal because it is such an important subject and I have a great deal to say to my hon. Friend.

The issue is a fascinating and complex issue which is of great importance for archaeological policy. I fully agree with my hon. Friend that the Icklingham case, in his constituency, raises issues about the protection of our archaeological heritage which must be a matter of real concern. I cannot hope to deal with every aspect of those issues, but I should like to comment on some of the very interesting points that my hon. Friend has raised.

This is, incidentally, a subject which clearly demonstrates the wisdom of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister in deciding to create the new Department of National Heritage. Until last year, responsibilities were spread across three Whitehall Departments: treasure trove rested with the Treasury; the export of works of art with the Department of Trade and Industry; and general policy for portable archaeological finds with the Department of the Environment. That situation created serious obstacles to coherent policy making. Now that all those responsibilities have been brought together in one Department, we have a new opportunity to address the issues in a comprehensive way. I hope that I will be able to convince my hon. Friend that we are making a start on this, though there is much still to be done.

I will not repeat the details which my hon. Friend gave of the case of the Icklingham bronzes. That saga has involved a great deal of worry, effort and expense for my hon. Friend's constituent, and well illustrates some of the problems that we need to address. I will give a brief outline of the existing arrangements for the protection of archaeological sites and finds, and indicate where we see a need for further action.

At present the protection afforded by the law varies according to whether or not a site is scheduled, and whether or not a find is classed as treasure trove. I have a great deal to say about treasure trove, but I shall leave it to the end and, if I have time, I shall refer to it. I know that my hon. Friend knows a great deal about it anyway.

The law does, of course, provide a degree of protection for all scheduled archaeological sites and monuments. There are about 14,000 scheduled sites in England. It is an offence to remove any object from a scheduled site by the use of a metal detector without permission. We intend to strengthen the legal protection for scheduled sites at the next opportunity by prohibiting unauthorised removal of objects by whatever means they are found, by widening the definition of "damaged" and "archaeological site" and by providing that ignorance is no defence against a charge of damage. Those steps will have added importance as the number of scheduled sites is doubled over the next 10 years under English Heritage's monument protection programme.

For the many thousands of unscheduled archaeological sites, protection is less adequate. Taking items of value from someone else's land is theft and will usually involve trespass as well. There is therefore scope for action to be taken against illegal treasure hunters under both the civil and criminal law. Some police forces work closely with local landowners and farmers, and with the local museums service, to ensure that as effective action as possible is taken against illegal activity. My hon. Friend will be familiar with the excellent work of the Norfolk and Suffolk police; other forces, such as Surrey, are also very active. But there are often real practical difficulties for the police, and for landowners, in securing convictions: partly because treasure hunting so often takes place at very remote sites, and in darkness; and partly because, once objects are removed from a site, it is difficult to demonstrate their provenance if their very existence was previously unknown. The Icklingham case sadly demonstrates that point very clearly.

Some leading archaeological bodies have argued for a system of compulsory registration of all archaeological finds, or for compulsory licensing of metal detectors. Archaeologists often point to the very different situation in Scotland, where treasure trove legislation effectively applies to all artefacts over 100 years old whose ownership is unknown.

There are differing views on that issue, even within the archaeological world. I have some reservations as to whether compulsory registration of finds, or licensing of treasure hunters, is the right way forward at this stage. The situation in England is very different from that in Scotland: there, the number of archaeological finds is much smaller than in England—probably fewer than in East Anglia alone—and the expectations of treasure hunters are coloured by the fact that the requirement to report finds has been part of Scottish law for hundreds of years. To seek to impose compulsory registration in England, in the face of likely opposition from metal detectorists and others, would present the police with an impossible task and risk bringing the law into disrepute. Many museums would also face considerable resource problems in handling reported finds, let alone finding the money to buy them. The system could become discredited if reporting had no outcome of real practical benefit to archaeological research.

As I have already mentioned, the Government intend to strengthen legal protection for scheduled sites. Reform of treasure trove legislation may also offer the opportunity to bring some further limited categories of finds within the scope of the reporting requirements. Beyond that, I agree with my hon. Friend that we have to see the process initially as one of education, persuasion and reassurance rather than as one where a change in the law can be effective overnight. What is needed is a change in public attitudes and understanding, rather similar to the changes which have taken place in other areas—for instance, in relation to the theft of birds' eggs from nests and the destructive picking of wild flowers. At this stage, I see little point in introducing a compulsory system that could easily prove to be both bureaucratic and largely ineffectual.

We intend to publish a public discussion paper on the whole issue of portable archaeological finds in the first half of 1994. Our current view is that the best way forward now may lie in the formulation of a voluntary code of practice that has the support not only of the archaeological and museum communities but of bodies representing the treasure hunters themselves. Those who join national organisations probably act responsibly in any case, for the most part, but the more we can get agreement among all parties on a voluntary basis of reporting, perhaps by offering a measure of reassurance on confidential reporting for instance, the more likely we are to make progress with this difficult issue. A code of practice could, at any rate, provide a starting point. But we shall want to consider all aspects of the issue in the light of responses before finally deciding on the way ahead.

The UK's non-ratification of the 1970 UNESCO convention has often been mentioned in relation to the Icklingham bronzes; but ratification of that convention would not have helped in their recovery. It is a public law convention that deals with the illicit removal and subsequent recovery of publicly owned objects. It does not apply, therefore, to archaeological objects that have been illicitly removed in the United Kingdom, as here the ownership of such objects does not rest with the state.

I fully appreciate my hon. Friend's concern about the potential loss to the United Kingdom by export of important archaeological material. As the House knows, an export licence is required for any archaeological object recovered from the soil in the United Kingdom or from our territorial waters. That applies regardless of the monetary value of an individual item, the identity of the owner or the item's export destination.

It is for Her Majesty's Customs and Excise to enforce licensing controls at ports—and it does so on a wide range of goods whose export is either prohibited or restricted. However, with the volume of trade and passengers, those controls must of necessity be highly selective. Effective targeting greatly depends on the timely availability of information, but evidence of breaches of export restrictions is actively pursued.

The completion of the single market has meant the removal of a customs presence at internal borders but, as allowed for under the treaty of Rome, we have adopted additional measures of protection for cultural objects. A Council regulation on exports to destinations outside the Community has been in operation since 1 April, and a complementary directive will soon be in place.

The directive will provide a mechanism for one member state to request the return of a "national treasure" from another member state where the national treasure has been unlawfully removed from the first member state. That includes any archaeological object, irrespective of its monetary value, provided that it is a national treasure. In the United Kingdom, a "national treasure" would be an object declared to be of Waverley standard before or after its unlawful removal.

We aim at implementing the directive in United Kingdom law by mid-December, and are currently undertaking public consultation on the way in which we intend to undertake that implementation.

As my hon. Friend mentioned, on the wider international front we have been actively participating in discussions of a draft UNIDROIT convention on stolen or illegally exported cultural objects. That is an innovative attempt to address the public law provisions of the 1970 UNESCO convention and to take some of those concepts into private law. Again, it would apply to archaeological material, although, by its nature, evidence of the date and place of clandestine removal will always be a problem.

I cannot anticipate whether the United Kingdom will become a signatory to the UNIDROIT convention, but we have been working constructively with other countries participating in those discussions. As with the Community directive, we hope that we can achieve a convention that could be a mutually acceptable compromise to as many states as possible. We await a revised draft, following a meeting of national experts that took place in Rome at the end of last month and the beginning of this month.

I hope that I have made it clear that the Government are well aware of the problems to which my hon. Friend drew attention and are addressing the issues energetically. We are examining the possibility of reforming the law of treasure trove, and intend to consult publicly early next year on the possibility of introducing a voluntary code of practice for other portable archaeological finds. We are fully involved in international efforts to regulate trade in antiquities and the problem of illegal exports. I hope that that demonstrates to my hon. Friend the new Department's determination to get to grips with the issues without delay.

The law of treasure trove is fascinating. Its origins can be traced to at least the 11th century. Essentially, finds of gold or silver objects, wherever found, must be reported to the coroner. If he confirms that they are treasure trove, the find is the property of the Crown. The practical effect of that now is that national and local museums are given the opportunity to acquire the find. If they want to do so, they

[Mr. Ian Sproat]

are required to pay the full market value to the finder. If they do not, the finder is free to keep the treasure or to sell it, as he or she wishes.

Within its limits, that system can work well. It provides a mechanism whereby responsible treasure seekers can report their finds without fear of financial loss. They know that if a museum decides to acquire the find a fair market price will be paid. It is of course crucial that finders continue to have confidence that ex gratia awards reflect full market value. The fact that they have that confidence reflects great credit on the treasure trove reviewing committee, which has the difficult task of making a fair and independent valuation of whatever has been found.

But treasure trove has severe shortcomings in its present form. It relates only to objects with a substantial gold or silver content, reflecting its origins as a means of raising revenue for the Crown rather than furthering archaeological research. Even when objects of base metal are found closely associated with gold and silver objects, they cannot be declared treasure trove, whatever their potential archaeological importance, and even gold and silver objects are treasure trove only if they were deliberately hidden with the intention of later recovery—a point that may be virtually impossible to decide after 2,000 years or more.

We recognise these inadequacies and are considering proposals for a private Member's Bill to reform the present law—that is a thought for my hon. Friend—put forward by Lord Perth and the Surrey Archaeological Society, with support from the British museum. As my right hon. Friend made clear to the sponsors of the Bill earlier this year, we felt unable to support some of their original proposals, but detailed discussions are now under way and I certainly hope that it will be possible for us to give our support to a modified package before long.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at ten minutes past Twelve midnight.

House of Commons

Thursday 28 October 1993

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

CITIBANK INTERNATIONAL BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

UNIBANK BILL *[Lords] (By Order)*

Orders for Third Reading read.

To be read the Third time on Monday 1 November.

EAST COAST MAIN LINE (SAFETY) BILL *(By Order)*

Order for Second Reading read.

To be read a Second time on Thursday 11 November.

BRITISH RAILWAYS (NO. 4) BILL

Ordered,

That the Promoters of the British Railways (No. 4) Bill shall have leave to suspend proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office not later than the day before the close of the present Session of their intention to suspend further proceedings and that all Fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid;

Ordered,

That, on the fifth day on which the House sits in the next Session, the Bill shall be presented to the House;

Ordered,

That there shall be deposited with the Bill a declaration signed by the Agents for the Bill, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill at the last stage of its proceedings in this House in the present Session;

Ordered,

That the Bill shall be laid upon the Table of the House by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office on the next meeting of the House after the day on which the Bill has been presented and, when so laid, shall be read the first and second time and committed (and shall be recorded in the Journal of this House as having been so read and committed);

Ordered,

That since no Petitions remain against the Bill no Petitioners shall be heard before any committee on the Bill save those who complain of any amendment as proposed in the filled up Bill or of any matter which arises during the progress of the Bill before the Committee;

Ordered,

That no further Fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which Fees have already been incurred during the present Session;

Ordered,

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House.—*[The Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

To be communicated to the Lords and their concurrence desired thereto.

BRITISH WATERWAYS BILL *[Lords]*

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That the Promoters of the British Waterways Bill *[Lords]* shall have leave to suspend proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office not later than the day before the close of the present Session of their intention to suspend further proceedings and that all Fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid;

That, if the Bill is brought from the Lords in the next Session, the Agent for the Bill shall deposit in the Private Bill Office a declaration signed by him, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill which was brought from the Lords in the present Session;

That, as soon as a certificate by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office, that such a declaration has been so deposited, has been laid upon the Table of the House, the Bill shall be read the first and second time and committed (and shall be recorded in the Journal of the House as having been so read and committed);

That all Petitions relating to the Bill presented in the present Session which stand referred to the Committee on the Bill, together with any minutes of evidence taken before the Committee on the Bill, shall stand referred to the Committee on the Bill in the next Session;

That no Petitioners shall be heard before the Committee on the Bill, unless their Petition has been presented within the time limited within the present Session or deposited pursuant to paragraph *(b)* of Standing Order 126 relating to Private Business;

That, in relation to the Bill, Standing Order 127 relating to Private Business shall have effect as if the words "under Standing Order 126 (Reference to committee of petitions against Bill)" were omitted;

That no further Fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which Fees have already been incurred during the present Session;

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House.—*[The Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

CROYDON TRAMLINK BILL *[Lords]*

Ordered,

That the Promoters of the Croydon Tramlink Bill *[Lords]* shall have leave to suspend proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office not later than the day before the close of the present Session of their intention to suspend further proceedings and that all Fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid;

Ordered,

That, if the Bill is brought from the Lords in the next Session, the Agent for the Bill shall deposit in the Private Bill Office a declaration signed by him, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill which was brought from the Lords in the present Session;

Ordered,

That, as soon as a certificate by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office, that such a declaration has been so deposited, has been laid upon the Table of the House, the Bill shall be read the first and second time and committed (and shall be recorded in the Journal of this House as having been so read and committed);

Ordered,

That all Petitions relating to the Bill presented in the present Session which stand referred to the Committee on the Bill shall stand referred to the Committee on the Bill in the next Session;

Ordered,

That no Petitioners shall be heard before the Committee on the Bill, unless their Petition has been presented within the time limited within the present Session or deposited pursuant to paragraph *(b)* of Standing Order 126 relating to Private Business;

Ordered,

That, in relation to the Bill, Standing Order 127 relating to Private Business shall have effect as if the words "under Standing Order 126 (Reference to committee of petitions against Bill)" were omitted;

Ordered,

That no further Fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which Fees have already been incurred during the present Session;

Ordered,

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House.—*[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Message to the Lords to acquaint them therewith.

LETCHWORTH GARDEN CITY HERITAGE FOUNDATION BILL

Ordered,

That the Promoters of the Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation Bill shall have leave to suspend proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office not later than the day before the close of the present Session of their intention to suspend further proceedings and that all Fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid;

Ordered,

That on the fifth day on which the House sits in the next Session the Bill shall be presented to the House;

Ordered,

That there shall be deposited with the Bill a declaration signed by the Agents for the Bill, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill at the last stage of its proceedings in this House in the present Session;

Ordered,

That the Bill shall be laid upon the Table of the House by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office on the next meeting of the House after the day on which the Bill has been presented and, when so laid, shall be read the first and second time and committed (and shall be recorded in the Journal of this House as having been so read and committed);

Ordered,

That all Petitions relating to the Bill presented in the present Session which stand referred to the Committee on the Bill, together with any minutes of evidence taken before the Committee on the Bill, shall stand referred to the Committee on the Bill in the next Session;

Ordered,

That no Petitioners shall be heard before the Committee on the Bill, unless their Petition has been presented within the time limited within the present Session or deposited pursuant to paragraph *(b)* of Standing Order 126 relating to Private Business;

Ordered,

That in relation to the Bill, Standing Order 127 relating to Private Business shall have effect as if the words "under Standing Order 126 (Reference to committee of petitions against the Bill)" were omitted;

Ordered,

That no further Fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which Fees have already been incurred during the present Session;

Ordered,

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House.—*[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

To be communicated to the Lords and their concurrence desired thereto.

LONDON LOCAL AUTHORITIES BILL *[Lords]*

Ordered,

That the Promoters of the London Local Authorities Bill *[Lords]* shall have leave to suspend proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office not later than the day before the close of the present Session of their intention to suspend further proceedings and that all Fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid;

Ordered,

That, if the Bill is brought from the Lords in the next Session, the Agent for the Bill shall deposit in the Private Bill Office a declaration signed by him, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill which was brought from the Lords in the present Session;

Ordered,

That, as soon as a certificate by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office, that such a declaration has been so deposited, has been laid upon the Table of the House, the Bill shall be read the first and second time and committed (and shall be recorded in the Journal of this House as having been so read and committed);

Ordered,

That all Petitions relating to the Bill presented in the present Session which stand referred to the Committee on the Bill shall stand referred to the Committee on the Bill in the next Session;

Ordered,

That no Petitioners shall be heard before the Committee on the Bill, unless their Petition has been presented within the time limited within the present Session or deposited pursuant to paragraph *(b)* of Standing Order 126 relating to Private Business;

Ordered,

That, in relation to the Bill, Standing Order 127 relating to Private Business shall have effect as if the words "under Standing Order 126 (Reference to committee of petitions against Bill)" were omitted:

Ordered,

That no further Fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which Fees have already been incurred during the present Session;

Ordered,

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House.—*[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Message to the Lords to acquaint them therewith.

LONDON UNDERGROUND (GREEN PARK) BILL

Ordered,

That the Promoters of the London Underground (Green Park) Bill shall have leave to suspend proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bill, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament, provided that the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office not later than the day before the close of the present Session of their intention to suspend further proceedings and that all Fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid;

Ordered,

That on the fifth day on which the House sits in the next Session the Bill shall be presented to the House;

Ordered,

That there shall be deposited with the Bill a declaration signed by the Agents for the Bill, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill at the last stage of its proceedings in this House in the present Session;

Ordered,

That the Bill shall be laid upon the Table of the House by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office on the next meeting of the House after the day on which the Bill has been presented and, when so laid, shall be read the first and second time and committed (and shall be recorded in the Journal of this House as having been so read and committed);

Ordered,

That all Petitions relating to the Bill presented in Session 1991-92 or the present Session which stand referred to the Committee on the Bill, together with any minutes of evidence taken before the Committee on the Bill, shall stand referred to the Committee on the Bill in the next Session;

Ordered,

That no Petitioners shall be heard before the Committee on the Bill, unless their Petition has been presented within the time limited within Session 1991-92 or deposited pursuant to paragraph *(b)* of Standing Order 126 relating to Private Business;

Ordered,

That in relation to the Bill, Standing Order 127 relating to Private Business shall have effect as if the words "under Standing Order 126 (Reference to committee of petitions against Bill)" were omitted;

Ordered,

That no further Fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which Fees have already been incurred during the present Session;

Ordered,

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House.—*[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

To be communicated to the Lords and their concurrence desired thereto.

PRIVATE BILLS *[Lords]* (SUSPENSION)

Ordered,

That so much of the Lords Message [26th October] as relates to the Humber Bridge Bill *[Lords]*, the London Docklands Development Corporation Bill *[Lords]*, the London Local Authorities (No. 2) Bill *[Lords]*, the Malvern Hills Bill *[Lords]* and the River Calder (Welbeck Site) Bill *[Lords]* be now considered.

Resolved,

That this House doth concur with the Lords in their Resolution.—*[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Message to the Lords to acquaint them therewith.

GREATER NOTTINGHAM LIGHT RAPID TRANSIT BILL

DUNHAM BRIDGE (AMENDMENT) BILL

KING'S CROSS RAILWAYS BILL

Ordered,

That, in consideration of the Lords Message [26th October], the Promoters of the Greater Nottingham Light Rapid Transit Bill, the Dunham Bridge (Amendment) Bill and the King's Cross Railways Bill shall have leave to suspend proceedings thereon in order to proceed with the Bills in the next Session of Parliament provided that in the case of each Bill the Agents for the Bill give notice to the Clerks in the Private Bill Office of their intention to suspend further proceedings not later than the day before the close of the present Session and that all Fees due on the Bill up to that date be paid;

Ordered,

That on the fifth day on which the House sits in the next Session the Bills shall be presented to the House;

Ordered,

That there shall be deposited with each Bill a declaration signed by the Agents for the Bill, stating that the Bill is the same, in every respect, as the Bill at the last stage of its proceedings in this House in the present Session;

Ordered,

That each Bill shall be laid upon the Table of the House by one of the Clerks in the Private Bill Office on the next meeting of the House after the day on which the Bill has been presented and, when so laid, shall be read the first, second and third time and shall be recorded in the Journal of this House as having been so read;

Ordered,

That no further Fees shall be charged in respect of any proceedings on the Bill in respect of which Fees have already been incurred during the present Session;

Ordered,

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House.—*[The First Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.]*

Message to the Lords to acquaint them therewith.

Oral Answers to Questions

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Forestry

1. **Mr. Marland:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when she last met the chairman of the Forestry Commission to discuss the forestry policy review; and if she will make a statement.

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mrs. Gillian Shephard): I plan to meet the Forestry Commission chairman next month. I met the commission's director general last week, when we discussed a range of issues.

Mr. Marland: I know that my right hon. Friend is aware that great concern is being expressed in many quarters about the possibility of access being denied to woodland sold off by the Forestry Commission. Will my right hon. Friend undertake to pass on those concerns to the chairman of the forestry review group? Will she ensure that if any recommendations are made by the group, there will be adequate opportunities for interested parties to discuss and comment on them before any changes are made?

Mrs. Shephard: Woodlands managed by the Forestry Commission provide very important opportunities for nature conservation, access to the countryside and a wide range of other recreational and environmental benefits. The review group will have to take full account of the need to safeguard those public benefits. I know that my hon. Friend lives close to the Forest of Dean—indeed, it is in his constituency—and I live very close to Thetford forest. I have been left in no doubt whatever of the degree of public anxiety about access. I will certainly pass on my hon. Friend's concern, as I have been doing, to the review group. There is nothing to consult about at present because the review group has not yet made any proposals. Nevertheless, sufficient time will need to be allowed for consultation about whatever proposals the review group puts forward.

Mr. Tipping: Will the Secretary of State remind the Forestry Commission chairman that people have had the right to roam in Sherwood forest for many years and that Robin Hood will turn in his grave if that right is forbidden? Will she ask the chairman of the Forestry Commission to ask his review group to stick to its previous timetable? The changes to the timetable are causing concern and I do not want to see Robin coming into the Chamber to tackle the Secretary of State.

Mrs. Shephard: I shall certainly pass on to the Forestry Commission chairman the hon. Gentleman's message about Robin Hood and his more serious message about the need for a clear timetable so that, at the end, there is time for full consultation on whatever proposals might be made.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Will my right hon. Friend join me in welcoming the tenfold increase in broad-leaf planting that has taken place?

Mrs. Shephard: Yes. That is a considerable achievement by the Forestry Commission and as a result of Government policy. We need to get the balance right

between broad-leaf planting and softwood, given that softwood makes up the bulk of our timber consumption. That will be another concern to be considered by the forestry review group.

Dr. Strang: How can we believe what Ministers say on this issue? First, the Prime Minister gave an election pledge that the Forestry Commission would not be privatised, but then that was repudiated on the ground that that commitment was given during the
"frenzied activity of the campaign".
Next, the review group was set up. We then discovered that some forests have been offered privately to national conservation groups. Now we are told that that review group has appointed a merchant bank and a land agent to advise it. Does the Minister not appreciate that millions of people derive great enjoyment from the freedom to roam in our state forests and that that freedom would be lost were they to be privatised? Will she stand up and fight for the people on this issue?

Mrs. Shephard: I have already made my feelings plain on the question of access. I can certainly reassure the hon. Gentleman, who I know has a keen interest in this matter. Perhaps I should remind him that forestry is a multi-million pound industry which brings many economic and environmental benefits to this country. The review is intended to ensure that we get the best value from the Government's investment and that we are to provide the right climate for private-sector investment. The consultants will help the review group in that work. I should repeat to the hon. Gentleman that there is no pre-determined outcome of that review and one option could be to do nothing.

GATT

2. **Mr. Whittingdale:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what progress has been made in the discussions on agricultural trade in the current GATT round.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The Government are making every effort worldwide to maintain the momentum of the GATT negotiations so that a conclusion to the Uruguay round can be reached by 15 December.

Mr. Whittingdale: Does my right hon. Friend agree that thousands of jobs depend upon the successful outcome of the GATT talks and that trade in agriculture is central to that success? Will she remind our Community partners of that fact and, in particular, remind the French when she next has the opportunity to do so?

Mrs. Shephard: I reassure my hon. Friend that, on several occasions, I have already reminded my European Community counterparts, and in particular my French counterpart, that far more depends on the successful outcome of the GATT negotiations than agriculture, France or, indeed, the EC. It is a question of the liberalisation of world trade. The successful conclusion of the round would boost that trade by $213 billion. The EC is the world's largest exporter and everybody stands to gain. It is essential that there is a successful conclusion to the GATT round by the end of December.

Mr. Skinner: What a load of claptrap. Almost every day that passes one hears Government Ministers talk about GATT and the level playing field. When that is discussed by the people who represent the farmers, what does it really mean? It means that Britain, with its climatic conditions, is going to compete with Mediterranean countries and California, which can grow——

Madam Speaker: Order. I heard only a quarter of a question. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman has a proper question to put to the Minister.

Mr. Skinner: When will they realise that if they want to ensure a balance of payments surplus in Britain we cannot have a level playing field for agricultural produce from here? Intervention will always be the name of the game. All those Tory Members who represent the shire counties will back the farmers to the hilt. It has all been a load of baloney from beginning to end.

Mrs. Shephard: Perhaps I could thank the hon. Gentleman for his illuminating and meaningful contribution to this afternoon's affairs. The question is about GATT and if he had taken a moment to study either the question of my hon. Friend or, indeed, my answer he would have known that British agriculture stands to gain everything from a successful conclusion to the GATT round and the liberalisation of world trade. I hope that the hon. Gentleman does better next time.

Fishing Vessels (Decommissioning)

3. **Sir Fergus Montgomery:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what resources have been allocated for the decommissioning of surplus United Kingdom fishing vessels.

The Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Michael Jack): A total of £25 million has been allocated for decommissioning, of which £8·4 million is to be made available in 1993-94 under the Fishing Vessels (Decommissioning) Scheme 1993.

Sir Fergus Montgomery: What measures will my hon. Friend take to ensure that the boats that have been allocated for decommissioning are taken out of service?

Mr. Jack: I thank my hon. Friend for his interest in the matter. The funding for the measure will be of interest to his constituents. The order on decommissioning that we took through the House laid down in meticulous detail the arrangements for disabling a fishing boat so that it could no longer fish. People have to produce a certificate to that end before they can be paid. That should give the guarantee that my hon. Friend seeks: that boats will be stopped from fishing by decommissioning.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: It is disappointing to learn that the sum allocated for decommissioning this year is a pathetic £8·4 million. That is nothing compared with the scale of the problem. It will mean that more fishing effort will have to be taken out by days-at-sea limitations and a disproportionate sacrifice will be made by the fishermen. Why does not the Minister recognise that we are in this situation because his predecessors did not achieve the multiannual guidance targets from 1987 to 1991? It is the Department's fault and the only fair action would be for him to suspend the operation of the Sea Fish Conservation Act 1967 while proper conservation measures are imposed in agreement with the industry and to expand the decommissioning scheme.

Mr. Jack: I was almost distracted by the hon. Member's neck wear from composing a suitable reply. He seems to have reclaimed the Union flag for his own purposes. There were faults in the previous decommissioning scheme because we were removing fishing capacity at the same time as paying for new capacity and therefore increasing fishing effort. My hon. Friends who did the job before me should be congratulated on their persuasive powers over the Treasury to get a £25 million decommissioning scheme off the ground as part of a package of measures that we are putting forward to try to reduce fishing effort. I would have hoped for the hon. Gentleman's support because the end-point of the exercise is to help conserve fish stocks for the long-term good of the industry.

Mr. Harris: I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale (Sir F. Montgomery) on speaking so well on behalf of his fisherman. But may I put it to the Minister that, although welcome, the £25 million for decommissioning goes nowhere near to solving the real problem of bringing effort under control? Will the Minister look with great seriousness at the constructive and extensive proposals put to him by the National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations, because some Conservative Members, including myself, think that its proposals are a much better way to conserve fish than the wretched tie-up scheme that the Government have unfortunately put to the House.

Mr. Jack: I thank my hon. Friend for his continued lobbying on that point. He does much credit to himself and to his constituents for assiduously voicing the concerns of the fishing industry. He will know that during September I conducted detailed discussions with fishermen around our shores, including many of his constituents. He will also know that I have attached importance to what they said about conservation, but he will be aware that our proposals to reduce fishing effort are not solely dependent on decommissioning. The capacity reduction through licence aggregation and through further measures to reduce effort play their part. I assure my hon. Friend that we will look, and are looking, carefully at the National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations' proposals. I wish that I could be more specific in my response, but that organisation has thrown a spanner in the works and prevented us from announcing our views quickly because of its court case.

Mr. John D. Taylor: The Minister will know from his recent visit to Portavogie in Strangford that some 16 vessels in our 100-strong fleet are to be decommissioned. How does one decommission a fishing vessel?

Mr. Jack: I was aware from my visit, which was very successful and useful, of some of the difficulties that Northern Ireland's fishermen anticipated with decommissioning. Those of us who have seen in the national press some sad photographs of the disposal of timber boats will realise that the decommissioning process has begun. I understand the impact on some of the fishermen and have talked to some of them, but, as far as I am aware, the practical problems of decommissioning boats in the ports of Northern Ireland appear to have been resolved.

Mr. Ward: I thank my hon. Friend for listening to the fishermen—especially those from Poole—during the long recess. He will, therefore, be aware of the chaos caused by uncertainty, so will he come to a conclusion as quickly as he can? Above all, will he assure the fishermen on the south coast that our continental partners are just as rigorous in enforcing the regulations as his inspectors?

Mr. Jack: My hon. Friend has put his finger on a very important point. I recently visited Commissioner Paleokrassas to put exactly that point to him. I said that if enforcement is not perceived to be effective by all fishermen throughout the Community, there will be no credibility for the common fisheries policy. He appreciated that and I think that he is going to make some useful proposals to ensure that when the new control regulation comes into force on 1 January, enforcement can be seen to be effective throughout the Community.

Mr. Tyler: Is the Minister aware that among fishermen in the south-west in particular, he and his colleagues on the Treasury Bench are now referred to as the little, little and large show, for the obvious reason that the Minister is continually recycling the script of his predecessors? When will he and his colleagues listen to the industry, to the people in the south-west and to the Select Committee on Agriculture and, in particular, to what they have to say about the size of the decommissioning budget, the tie-up provisions and days at sea? When will he listen to his own district inspector from whom I have received a copy of the following recommendation—*[Interruption.]* I am not permitted to read it, but it states that the only thing to be done with the days-at-sea provisions is to abandon them. When will the Minister listen to his own officials?

Mr. Jack: That is an illustration of why the Liberal party should be decommissioned—it is utterly bankrupt and bereft of individual thought about fishing policy. The best that it can do is get its hands on stolen goods, a personal communication from a fishing inspector to officials in my Department. If that is the sum total of Liberal fisheries policy, let it be broadcast throughout the south-west.

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: Will my hon. Friend confirm that the Government are on target to achieve a 5 to 6 per cent. reduction in fleet capacity? Will the rules of the scheme be changed to target specific sectors where conservation is essential?

Mr. Jack: I thank my hon. Friend for that question. Certainly, the results from the first tranche of decommissioning have been very encouraging. The spread of boats was good throughout the major fishing areas, in particular the demersal, beam and pelagic vessels. We have said, however, that we shall learn the lessons from the first decommissioning exercise to ascertain whether the eligibility rules have to be adjusted to meet exactly the point at the centre of my hon. Friend's question.

Mr. McGrady: First, may I thank the Minister for visiting South Down where he had what I hope was a fruitful dialogue with the fishermen there. However, after the consultation period, he must realise that the fishing industry as a whole has rejected the days-at-sea scheme because it is wholly impractical and uneconomic for fishermen to contend with and certainly it does not deal with the depletion of fishing stocks. Will he therefore take on board the suggestions made and introduce a new licensing scheme, enhance the decommissioning scheme and introduce new tactical conservation measures?

Mr. Jack: I hope that the fishing industry will look positively on the announcement that we are to make as a result of the consultations. I have taken the matter seriously. I bothered to go round to major fishing centres, including the one that the hon. Gentleman mentioned. We have Community obligations in terms of effort reduction, which we must meet. We have introduced a programme. We have said that we will try to modify the days-at-sea programme under the Sea Fish (Conservation) Act 1992. I promise that we are looking carefully at the proposals that have been made by the Scottish Fishermen's Federation and the National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations.

Mr. Morley: Will the Minister confirm that his Department has taken out an injunction to prevent the publication of a letter from one of his inspectors in the south-west, Mr. C. R. George, who wrote that his staff felt that deep down there is a feeling that the legislation is so ill-conceived and so unpopular that it will not be workable? It went on to say that he felt——

Madam Speaker: Order. I have just cautioned one hon. Member. Quoting is not allowed at Question Time.

Mr. Morley: I was not quoting directly, but I will certainly follow your guidance, Madam Speaker.

The conclusion of the inspector was that, in its present form, the days-at-sea legislation should be abandoned. Is not it the case that the Minister has received detailed and excellent proposals for alternative schemes and ways of managing our fish stocks from the fishing organisations? Will he give those proposals careful consideration, act on them and abandon the legislation, which his staff feel is unworkable?

Mr. Jack: I am really disappointed that the hon. Gentleman, whom I have always regarded as an honourable Member of the House, should be fingering that stolen document. It was an internal document from a member of our fishing inspectorate. I was aware of that. So seriously did I take those remarks that I invited the inspector together with the other inspectors to a meeting. I listened carefully to what they had to say. The point at issue is that the particular document concerned was written months ago, before we had started the exercise of consultation with the industry. The inspector had a view; we have taken it into account. The hon. Gentleman will have to wait to see the results.

Apple Day

4. **Mr. Dickens:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what support she is giving to Apple Day.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Nicholas Soames): My ministerial colleagues and I have been pleased to participate in a number of recent events to promote the launch of the 1993 English apple season.

Mr. Dickens: Will my hon. Friend concede that there are many inefficient growers of tasteless apples in Europe, which swamp the market and cause surpluses, taking a lot of subsidies as a result? Does he agree that the money could be better used to promote the great English apple —I am thinking of the Blenheim Orange, Egremont Russet, Ashmead Colonel, Worcester Pearman, Chivers Delight, not to mention the Cox's Orange Pippin and a new apple called Kingdom. Is not that why the English apple pie is the envy of the world?

Mr. Soames: My hon. Friend should know. He is perfectly right. The traditional English apples have never been more popular in this country. It is right that consumers in Britain should be reminded now and again of the outstanding quality of English apples against less-flavoured foreign imports. It would be quite wrong for us to consider banning foreign imports, however. It is for consumers to decide what they want to eat. There is no doubt that, if they were to test the British apple against any foreign apple, the British apple would always win hands down.

Mr. Enright: First, may I congratulate the Minister on his forthcoming connubial bliss? Secondly, now that we have had a successful Apple Day, will he throw his weight behind a special day for Yorkshire rhubarb?

Mr. Soames: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. We would be happy to do anything that we can to assist Yorkshire rhubarb.

Mr. David Nicholson: I also support the congratulations that have been given to my hon. Friend. Will he in turn congratulate the catering authorities of the House, which celebrated Apple Day by producing a rather imaginative menu using apples in all the restaurants of the House? Will he also have regard to the cider industry of Britain, which contributes significantly to the positive side of the balance of payments, and give it a degree of fiscal stability so that it can use British apples rather than foreign apples in its production?

Mr. Soames: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I agree that the House catering authorities did a marvellous job on Apple Day. The House will be interested to know that, also on Apple Day, my right hon. Friend the Minister was presented with a traditional apple pie made with apples from the original Bramley tree, 180 years old on that day.

My hon. Friend asked about cider and fiscal stability. That is entirely a matter for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor, who I am sure will have heard my hon. Friend's remarks.

Common Agricultural Policy

5. **Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what will be the cost of the common agricultural policy to the United Kingdom in 1994.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The United Kingdom contributes to the EC budget as a whole, not to parts of it. Expenditure on CAP in the United Kingdom in 1993-94 is estimated to be £2·5 billion.

Mr. Mackinlay: Does the Minister recall her speech to the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds on 10 August, in which she announced a number of new environmental measures as part of the CAP reform package—in particular, the expansion of environmentally sensitive areas? Will she undertake that there will be no delay in implementing those measures, and no cuts in projected expenditure on the promotion of such measures following this year's Budget?

Mrs. Shephard: I do, indeed, recall my speech to the RSPB on that very pleasant occasion. I also recall that I spoke of the excellent contribution that ESAs make to environmental protection and sensible and profitable farming—the whole being tailored to the needs of local areas. The hon. Gentleman will be aware that all aspects of all spending in all Departments are being closely examined at the moment by the Departments in conjunction with the Treasury. I can say no more than that at this stage.

Sir Ralph Howell: Does my right hon. Friend regard the fact that the harvest fell from 22 million tonnes to 19 million tonnes—11 per cent.—in 1993 as success or as failure? Bearing in mind the heavy imports of foodstuffs into this country, what will be the implications for the balance of payments?

Mrs. Shephard: Part of the aim of the CAP reform package is to limit production by using set-aside to reduce expenditure on costly intervention and storage, which I know that my hon. Friend abhors. I consider an 11 per cent. reduction in production this year as a success for set-aside.

Mr. Strang: May I put it to the Minister that the Opposition regard it as quite indefensible that next year we shall be spending about £2 billion on intervention buying, adding to the food mountains? Does the right hon. Lady agree that expenditure on intervention buying should be cut and that some of the money should be used to encourage farmers to farm in a more environmentally sensitive way? Is she aware that any public expenditure review cut in the increased £30 million allocation that she announced under the agri-environment regulations will be bitterly resented by everyone who has the future of the countryside at heart?

Mrs. Shephard: I think that the hon. Gentleman and I agree that the cost of the CAP remains too high. I should have thought that he would also agree that the CAP reform package cuts prices and therefore brings the industry closer to the market, that it reduces intervention and that it places increased emphasis on benefits to the environment—all effects which I should have thought he would welcome.

Exports

6. **Mr. Brazier:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action her Department is taking to assist the export of British agricultural produce.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I am taking forward in a number of ways the marketing initiative of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister.

Mr. Brazier: Will my right hon. Friend join me in congratulating our farmers and growers—a truly successful industry—on halving the trade gap in food over the past 30 years? Does she agree that the seminars that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has set up are playing an important role in continuing that process? Does she further agree that it is essential that we provide our farmers and growers with a level playing field in as many respects as possible, from research and development through to pesticides?

Mrs. Shephard: I agree with my hon. Friend that a level playing field is important for farmers, as it is for all our manufacturers. It is is important to reduce the trade gap, and the marketing work of Food from Britain, which has been recently reconstituted to focus on export work, will make an important contribution in that respect.

Whaling

7. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when she last met her Norwegian counterpart to discuss the subject of whaling in the north Atlantic; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: I am sure that my right hon. Friend's counterpart, Mr. Olsen, is left in no doubt about the strength of feeling of the Government, the House and the public about Norway's decision to resume commercial whaling.

Dr. Godman: The Minister will know that Norwegian whaling ships have slaughtered more than 220 minke whales already this year. What action will the European Community take if the Norwegians decide to resume whaling next year? Does the Minister agree that Norway's membership of the EC is incompatible with whaling, so that if Norway becomes a member of the EC it will have to give up its whaling industry?

Mr. Jack: The hon. Member will know that the EC's present position effectively makes commercial whaling incompatible with Community regulations, and there has been no change in that. Certainly, there has been no change in the Government's position on whaling and on the International Whaling Commission.

As for Norway's accession to the EC, I would draw the hon. Gentleman's attention to the remarks made by my right hon. Friend the Minister on 10 June, when she pointed out that anybody contemplating joining a particular club should be fully aware of the implications of membership.

Mr. Peter Atkinson: Is my hon. Friend aware that the decision by Norway to restart commercial whaling is having a serious impact on the Scottish salmon farming industry? My hon. Friend will know that the industry is facing a serious crisis because of overproduction and the dumping of salmon by Norwegians.

Is my hon. Friend aware that, to circumvent bans by European consumers of Norwegian products because of whaling, hundreds of tonnes of unlabelled Norwegian salmon have been shipped to Europe and then relabelled as Scottish salmon, thus squeezing Scottish salmon out of the European market? We know that English apples are the best, and we also know that Scottish salmon is the best. Will my hon. Friend do his best to stop the relabelling?

Mr. Jack: Norwegian whaling is a serious issue, and the action of the Norwegian salmon industry is an issue of equal seriousness. I am aware of the considerable concerns that have been expressed by the Scottish industry and by the Irish industry over the impact of the considerable increase in production from the Norwegian farm salmon sector.

The Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, my hon. Friend the Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro), and I have raised the matter with Commissioner Paleokrassas, who has visited Norway to make a personal assessment of the situation. He is considering the matter and what action

can be taken. If my hon. Friend provides concrete evidence of relabelling, I will give him the best advice as to what he should do.

Mr. Tony Banks: The Government have made perfectly clear to the Norwegians their opposition to Norway's limited whaling, but what further action do the Government propose to take against the Norwegians to drive home the fact that whaling is totally unacceptable to the thinking of this country?

The arrogance of Mrs. Brundtland is breathtaking. She parades her credentials as a "green" person around the world, while her country flouts an international whaling agreement. What further action do the Government propose to take to put pressure on the Norwegians?

Mr. Jack: The most important action that we can take is to continue our stance of supporting the International Whaling Commission. The hon. Gentleman will be aware that, on 26 April this year, he received an unambiguous letter from my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister that spelled out the Government's position on the matter. That position has not changed.

I know that individuals are taking action to demonstrate their strong feelings about Norway, while others have taken different action. The Government's position remains as was stated in my right hon. Friend's letter to the hon. Gentleman.

Beer

8. **Sir Anthony Durant:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether she will be attending the great British beer festival in 1994 to discuss the promotion of British beer.

Mr. Soames: My right hon. Friend and I are always keen to promote the interests of our drinks industry.

Sir Anthony Durant: I am pleased to hear my hon. Friend's comment. Is he aware that the British brewing industry can compete adequately in the home market, but it is being damaged by the difference between the duty rates here and in France? Some 12 per cent. of take-home beer now comes across the channel into Britain. Will my hon. Friend have a look at that, bearing in mind that some of the southern breweries are having difficulties? My brewery, Courage, has just laid off 250 men. Will my hon. Friend talk to my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer about the matter?

Mr. Soames: I am very sorry to hear about the position at Courage, which affects my hon. Friend's constituents. Certainly, we are aware of the serious anxiety in the industry about duty-paid allowances. I will ensure that my hon. Friend's points are raised with my right hon. Friend the Chancellor.

Mr. Cryer: Will the Minister examine the reverse side of the promotion of British beer—the enormous damage which is done by alcohol abuse? Alcohol abuse costs the nation dear in expenditure by the national health service and in other ways. Will the Minister ensure that he remains completely at arm's length from the brewing industry? Will he examine the possibility of promoting a ban on the advertising of alcohol products? Only by doing that will he ensure that the Government's reputation of keeping themselves at arm's length from the brewers is retained, especially in view of the massive donations that the brewing industry makes to the Tory party.

Mr. Soames: I am pleased to be able to tell the hon. Gentleman that I am completely at arm's length from the brewing industry because I do not drink beer. "The Health of the Nation", a document which has been broadly welcomed in the House, contains references to the points that the hon. Gentleman made. Although we would not consider some of the more extreme suggestions that he made, I will certainly make sure that his views are represented to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health at a meeting that I am to have later today.

Mr. John Marshall: May I first congratulate my hon. Friend? Does he accept that it would be wrong to ban the advertising of products, the consumption and production of which are legal? Does the suggestion not show that the Labour party is full of misery guts?

Mr. Soames: I am not sure that I wholly agree with my hon. Friend, but his central point is correct. It would be improper to do such a thing.

Animal Welfare

9. **Mr. Livingstone:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans she has to improve the welfare of animals transported from the United Kingdom to the rest of the EC.

Mr. Soames: We have maintained strict national rules to safeguard the welfare of animals during transport both within this country and for export. Further detailed Community rules are currently being discussed, and we are pressing for our high standards to be adopted elsewhere.

Mr. Livingstone: Does the Minister agree that, although three years ago we in Britain banned the barbaric procedure of putting calves in veal crates, more than 20,000 calves were exported to Europe last year, of which about 40 per cent. in weight came back after being put through the veal crate process? Does he believe that British consumers should have a choice? Will he agree to consider the Labour party's proposal that all veal in Britain should be labelled to allow consumers to avoid buying that which has been created in such barbaric conditions?

Mr. Soames: As the hon. Gentleman knows, we banned the use of close confinement veal crates in 1990. Although the directive that followed imposed small welfare improvements on other member states, it did not abolish the veal crate as we would have wished. Therefore, we voted against the directive. The directive will be reviewed and we shall continue to fight for welfare improvements. Our ban on veal crates will not be lifted. I will consider carefully the points that the hon. Gentleman has made.

Sir Jim Spicer: Does my hon. Friend accept that there is a strong case in terms of welfare for giving every encouragement that we can to the export of lamb in carcase form rather than on the hoof? Is not that case reinforced by the fact that when lambs go over to France and are slaughtered there, they are marketed as French, not British lamb?

Mr. Soames: Plainly, my hon. Friend is correct. But, of course, a substantial premium is paid for the excellent

products that farmers in Britain produce. The central point, on which my hon. Friend is right, is that whatever happens, none of the welfare arrangements is worth the paper it is written on unless the Commission enforces the arrangements on the continent. That is the central task of Her Majesty's Government.

Common Agricultural Policy

10. **Mr. Gunnell:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what will be the cost of the common agricultural policy to EC member states in 1994.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The draft EC budget for 1994 provides for expenditure on the CAP of £28·4 billion.

Mr. Gunnell: The Minister knows that the Agriculture Commissioner has already stated that it will be extremely difficult to live within the legal limits of the budget in 1994 and he expects to use creative accounting to be within that limit. Does not the Minister agree that the cost of the CAP is spiralling and has gone through the roof? What practical measures is the Minister taking to ensure that the CAP is brought under control and that the British contribution does not go through the roof as well?

Mrs. Shephard: I entirely agree with the hon. Gentleman that the cost of the CAP is far too high. It is always good to welcome a convert to the cause of sensible public spending. It is perhaps a little late, but late converts are none the less very welcome. I assure the hon. Gentleman that the guideline for the EC budget, and for the agriculture part of that reached at Edinburgh, will not be exceeded. It cannot be exceeded and the United Kingdom will not agree to its being exceeded.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Shersby:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 28 October.

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning, I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Shersby: As a result of my right hon. Friend's discussions today, does he agree that the fight against crime calls for a partnership between the Government, the police and the people? Will my right hon. Friend's Administration do all in their power to raise the morale of the police so that the police can do more effectively the difficult job of protecting the lives and property of every citizen of our country?

The Prime Minister: I believe that my hon. Friend is quite right to talk about the importance of police morale and the need to form a partnership between the police, the Government and the public in tackling crime. Nothing does police morale or public morale more harm than to see criminals uncaught or unpunished. I give my hon. Friend a complete assurance that crime will remain at the centre of our concerns in the months and years ahead.

Mr. John Smith: Can the Prime Minister tell us whether it is really the case that, after accepting an amendment that British Rail should be allowed to bid for rail franchises, the Government now intend to table further amendments which will remove that right if there are any other bids? How can the right hon. Gentleman justify such a blatant and discreditable manoeuvre?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. and learned Gentleman will have to wait and have a look at the amendments which my right hon. Friend will table this afternoon. The right hon. and learned Gentleman would be wise to wait and see.

Mr. Smith: Will the Prime Minister deal with the clear point of principle? If British Rail put in a bid for a franchise and that was clearly the best offer, why should that be knocked out in favour of a worse offer from a competitor? What is the justification for that in terms of the taxpayer or traveller?

The Prime Minister: I advised the right hon. and learned Gentleman to wait, and he might have been rather wiser to have done so. The Government accept that there might be circumstances in which it might be appropriate for British Rail to be a franchisee. However, we remain of the view that it would not be right to treat British Rail in the same way as other potential franchisees and that measures for this provision should be made in relation to British Rail's role in the franchising process.

Mr. Smith: Is not the Prime Minister revealing that the Government are accepting an amendment and then seeking to nullify it? Instead of those cynical tricks, would not it be better to take this legislation away altogether, because 80 per cent. of the British public know that rail privatisation means higher fares and fewer services? It is a rotten deal for taxpayer and traveller.

The Prime Minister: It is precisely to produce a better deal for taxpayers and travellers that we are bringing in private sector skills to ensure that British Rail is run more efficiently. The Labour party on this, as on other issues, really needs to make up its mind. The right hon. and learned Gentleman effectively accuses us of making sham concessions. *[Interruption.]* Yes, oh splendid. In that case, his hon. Friend who speaks for his party said that it was a U-turn. It cannot be both.

Q2. **Sir Anthony Durant:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 28 October.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Sir Anthony Durant: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister will be aware of the two bombs that were put in Reading station last weekend. Will he pass on, through my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport, the grateful thanks of the people of Reading for the fact that the railway police, the Army and the railway staff defused that bomb, which would have caused major damage and loss of life? Will he, therefore, as Prime Minister, take tough action against those vicious terrorists?

The Prime Minister: I am happy to join my hon. Friend in paying tribute to the Army, the police, the emergency services and the staff of British Rail for the magnificent way in which they dealt with the incidents at the weekend. I believe that they deserve the utmost thanks and credit for the way in which they sought to protect the public.

The terrorists will achieve nothing whatsoever from those crimes of violence. Their readiness to kill and their readiness to inflict injury will merely reinforce the Government's determination and, I hope, the determination of everyone in the House to ensure that they gain nothing whatsover now or in the future from their actions.

Mr. Faulds: Does the Prime Minister recall that he gained considerable international kudos when he mounted the initiative to safeguard or to try to safeguard the Kurds in northern Iraq? Now that his Government and other European Governments have so abysmally failed the Bosnian Muslims, would he perhaps restore his credibility, even only fractionally, were he to launch an initiative to try to safeguard the Marsh Arabs—the Shi'ias—in southern Iraq, an issue which the Prince of Wales raised in his admirable speech to the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies yesterday?

The Prime Minister: I do not accept for one second the hon. Gentleman's strictures on helping the Bosnians, in particular the Bosnian Muslims. There is no country in Europe or beyond that has such a proud record of humanitarian assistance over the past two years. It would be more graceful of the hon. Gentleman to acknowledge that fact. I fully share the concerns expressed by His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales about the draining of the marshes in southern Iraq. It is a matter on which the Government have spoken before.

We and the Security Council have repeatedly condemned repression of the Shi'ias and have repeatedly demanded full access for the United Nations. That, we believe, is the right way for us to continue in this matter. I give the hon. Gentleman the assurance that we do not regard this as a light matter to be casually pushed aside. We will continue to pursue it in the right way and in the right place, and that is the United Nations.

Q3. **Mr. David Atkinson:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 28 October.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Atkinson: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, with social security abuse and fraud costing our constituents many billions of pounds a year, they will welcome the introduction of an identity card scheme, which will do nothing to threaten civil liberty but do much to support and encourage individual freedom and responsibility?

The Prime Minister: I know that my hon. Friend speaks for many people, and I share whole-heartedly his wish to stamp out social security fraud. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security is looking at a range of options to step up the fight against fraud, and as part of that he is looking at the practicalities of the introduction of an identity card scheme. Frankly, I find the principle of such a scheme to be attractive, but there are many practical difficulties to be overcome.

Q.4 **Mr. Austin Mitchell:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 28 October.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Mitchell: It looks very much as though the Government are not reducing interest rates because they are covertly shadowing the deutschmark once again. At the same time, other European Governments are saying that Maastricht is not dead, that the exchange rate mechanism should be reconstituted and that the timetable for monetary union can and should be followed. In other words, we are probably in for Europe's biggest ever outburst of necrophilia. What will the Prime Minister be saying about stage 2 of monetary union and about the burdens, the timetables and the obligations that it imposes?

The Prime Minister: I commend to the hon. Gentleman an excellent article he may have seen in *The Economist* not very long ago which set out clearly the way in which the Government will proceed in terms of the future of our policy in Europe. Stage 2 of economic and monetary union involves no infringement whatever of sovereignty over monetary affairs. It is fixed in the international treaty and it is fixed in our legislation. But it does not mean that we proceed to stage 3 and it does not infringe in any way our own monetary sovereignty.

Q5. **Sir Peter Tapsell:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 28 October.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Sir Peter Tapsell: May I join its author in congratulating the writer of the article in *The Economist* on 25 September, which set out clearly and in a masterly fashion the traditional policy of the British Government towards the European Community? May I express to my right hon. Friend the belief that almost the whole of the Conservative parliamentary party and, indeed, the British electorate will be able to unite behind his total rejection in that article of economic and monetary union, a single European currency and a united states of Europe? Will he repeat the points he made in that article in forceful terms to the 11 Heads of Government whom he will meet in Brussels tomorrow?

The Prime Minister: I rather fancy that the other Heads of Government noticed what I wrote while on holiday in Portugal, which was subsequently printed in *The Economist* article, so they will be in no doubt about the Government's position. As appropriate, I will re-endorse it tomorrow and on other occasions.

Mr. Purchase: The Governor of the Bank of England has made it perfectly clear that he regards zero inflation as the overriding goal of economic policy. Has the Prime Minister made an assessment of the effects of such a policy on unemployment and growth?

The Prime Minister: I made clear to the House well over three years ago how important I regarded ensuring that we got inflation down to the lowest possible level. No one has ever been in any doubt about the determination of the Government to achieve that. We have achieved it. We have inflation now at a lower level than we have seen for 30-odd years. We have interest rates at a lower level than we have seen for a very long time. They are the essential prerequisites to sustainable growth over the medium and long term.

Q6. **Mr. Bates:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 28 October.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Bates: Will my right hon. Friend join me in welcoming the announcement made by Nissan yesterday of a £26 million expansion to its car plant at Sunderland? Does he agree that that investment will further strengthen the manufacturing base of the north-east and that it is a substantial vote of confidence in favour of the work force in Sunderland and in the strength of the British-led economic recovery?

The Prime Minister: It is certainly a substantial vote of confidence in the work force at Sunderland, and I am absolutely delighted at this increased investment by Nissan. I have to make the point that if we had followed policies that piled on employers social costs such as the minimum wage and the social contract, I strongly suspect that that investment would not have come to this country but would have gone elsewhere.

Mr. McGrady: In view of the grave political and security problem in Northern Ireland caused mainly by the political vacuum of the past 12 months because the Democratic Unionist party and the Conservative and Unionist party refused to attend the conference table, will the Prime Minister, in union with the Irish Government, reconvene the round table conference of all the democratic parties so that the private documents of the DUP and the official Unionist party, and the document of my hon. Friend the Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume), can be placed on the table? More than that, the distrust and the fears of the people of Northern Ireland can be removed by proper political dialogue and some hope for the future can be given.

As a writer, will the Prime Minister take note of the statement made in the Dail yesterday by the Tanaiste, Dick Spring, setting out six principles that all fair-minded people would regard as a fair basis of political progress in Ireland as a whole?

The Prime Minister: It is precisely to ensure that we get a proper political process and the return of constitutional rights to the people of Northern Ireland that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has been pursuing with such skill and vigour—as did his predecessor—the three-stranded approach in Northern Ireland. I saw with great interest the remarks of the Tanaiste yesterday and I hope to have the opportunity of discussing them with the Taoiseach tomorrow.

Q7. **Mr. Fabricant:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 28 October.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Fabricant: My right hon. Friend will be aware of my love of motor biking. Can he imagine the distress that I felt when some years ago I motor biked across Europe and had to do so on a Yamaha—a Japanese motor bike? Will he join me in congratulating Triumph on producing more motor bikes in the large motor bike league than either Suzuki, BMW or Harley Davidson?

The Prime Minister: I was delighted to see the success of Triumph and I hope that my hon. friend will soon be again riding a Triumph motor cycle across Europe, and perhaps elsewhere.

Police Responsibilities and Rewards

3.30 pm

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Michael Howard): With your permission, Madam Speaker, I would like to make a statement on behalf of the three Secretaries of State for the Home Departments on our decisions about police pay and conditions of service in the light of the Sheehy report.

The police are of unique and vital importance to everyone in the country. They are the front line in the fight against crime, and essential to maintaining public order and ensuring safe communities. As was demonstrated only too tragically in Clapham last week, policemen and women face lethal dangers, often quite unexpectedly. They have to cope with the many pressures of providing a service to the public 24 hours day, seven days a week, 52 weeks a year.

The inquiry led by Sir Patrick Sheehy was appointed to consider afresh the rewards and responsibilities of that vital public service. I am grateful to Sir Patrick and the other members of his team for their valuable work in producing that wide-ranging report so quickly. The report was published at the end of June. Since then, we have consulted widely and have received many helpful responses, including, in particular, those of the police staff associations, police authorities and the local authority associations. Today I am setting out the Government's decisions about the best way forward for the police service. In deciding on those changes, I have been mindful at all times of the special nature of our police service and the work that it does.

We all want to create an up-to-date framework of arrangements which will encourage police officers to give of their best. Change is necessary to ensure that the British police remain the best in the world. In the police service, pay has too often been too dependent on length of service. Bureaucracy and chains of command have increased, leaving too many officers behind desks instead of on the streets. The present rank structure can act as a barrier to the rapid progress of more able officers. I want a modern and effective police service. That means less bureaucracy, rapid promotion for able officers, rewards for hard work and the highest priority for front-line duties.

This afternoon I am placing in the Library of the House copies of a letter which I am sending to all chief officers in England and Wales which sets out our proposals in detail. My right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland and for Northern Ireland are also writing to their chief officers. I shall now explain those proposals to the House.

The Committee was expressly asked to consider the future of the ranks. It recommended that the ranks of deputy chief constable, chief superintendent and chief inspector should be abolished. That would eliminate the overlap between ranks at present. It will enable those with the greatest ability to move more quickly through them. Reducing the ranks would also give chief constables the opportunity to put more police constables on the beat. All the responses to our consultation agreed that some change in management structure was necessary.

We believe that this proposal is the key to the streamlining of middle management in the police service, which is essential to free up resources for front-line policing. We have therefore decided to accept it. Many forces have begun to reduce the number of chief superintendent and chief inspector posts to meet the changing needs of policing. That process will now be completed by 1 April 1995.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland has decided to make a limited number of adjustments to the overall package to accommodate the special and different circumstance of the Royal Ulster Constabulary. In particular, the rank of deputy chief constable will be retained to meet the unique operational demands of policing in Northern Ireland.

The report recommended that fixed-term appointments should be introduced for all ranks. We have decided to accept that recommendation, in so far as it applies to future appointments to chief officer ranks, for whom it was almost universally regarded as appropriate. We shall consider extending the appointments to the superintendent rank when we have monitored their effectiveness for chief officers.

Different considerations apply to other ranks. I have already announced new procedures for dealing with unsatisfactory performance and misconduct in England and Wales, and we shall legislate as soon as possible to allow for the consequences of restructuring. I want people entering the police service to see it as a career. The skills and knowledge of ordinary police officers, their experience and their accumulated wisdom form the backbone of British policing, which is admired throughout the world. We do not consider that fixed-term appointments are appropriate for ranks below superintendent, and so we have decided not to accept that recommendation.

The report recommended significant changes to police pension arrangements. Those were closely related to the proposals for fixed-term appointments and must therefore be reconsidered, so we shall undertake a full review of police pensions. One of its principal objectives will be to produce greater flexibility.

One aspect of the recommendations excited controversy: that officers of all ranks should be expected to serve for 40 years to receive a full pension at the age of 60. That would not help to encourage mature people with experience in other walks of life to join the police, as we wish. Patrol duties are not appropriate for people in their late 50s, and we do not think that it is reasonable for constables and sergeants, in particular, to be expected invariably to continue to serve until then. We have therefore decided not to accept that proposal.

On performance-related pay, the report suggested that that objective could best be met by the application of a matrix determining police pay according to the scope of the job and the level of responsibility, experience, skills and performance. The Government fully accept the principles behind that recommendation, but we do not think it practicable or desirable to examine each job in the way that the report suggests and have therefore decided not to use the matrix recommended in the report. Instead, we will introduce—as soon as they can be worked out—arrangements which depend on the overall appraisal of performance. That will take account of an officer's experience, skills and the circumstances in which they are exercised, and will determine progress up or down the pay scale.

The report also recommended replacing the Edmund-Davies pay formula. In considering how police pay levels should be determined and on what basis pay should be uprated, the inquiry took account of the fact that police officers are often called upon to put their lives in danger

and, moreover, they do not take industrial action. The inquiry recognised—as do the Government—that that type of dedication deserves a consistent and clearly defined way of setting policy pay.

The report recommended linking pay uprating to the median of non-manual, private sector pay settlements. That linkage recognises both the professionalism of the police service and its special nature, which justifies the comparison with settlements in the private sector. We accept that recommendation.

The report recommended that pay levels should also be linked to the median of pay levels in the private sector. Although we agree with the inquiry that there should be some private sector benchmark, the case has not been made out for it to be that particular one. We shall be carrying out further work to form the basis for our decision on the most appropriate benchmark for future police pay levels.

The report also made proposals on the whole range of allowances received by police officers. The most significant of those is housing allowance, which the report recommended should be abolished as police officers are no longer automatically required to live in a particular location. We accept that recommendation for new officers recruited after 1 September 1994. For those already in service, housing allowance will remain. It will be frozen at its present level but will not be removed or reduced.

The report suggested that, at present, starting pay is higher than is needed for the recruitment of able police officers. The recommendation was based on evidence about the starting pay of 18 to 22-year-olds. We believe that our police service benefits substantially from having older recruits with wider experience and that starting salaries should be pitched so as to continue to attract them as well as high calibre younger recruits. We have therefore decided not to accept that recommendation.

The report recommended that the range of other allowances received by police officers, which represent only a small proportion of take-home pay, should be a matter for local discretion. That is clearly in line with the proposals in the White Paper for police reform for allowing police authorities and chief officers greater discretion to match resources to needs locally. We accept that recommendation.

I have set out the decisions of principle that we have reached on the main recommendations of the Sheehy report. A great deal of further work remains to be done on their detailed implementation. I am therefore today inviting the independent chairman of the Police Negotiating Board, Professor Laurie Hunter, to convene the board to consider the details of implementation of the decisions of principle that I have announced. I have asked him to do so on the basis of the proposals put forward by the official side during the consultation period. The board will make recommendations which we can take into consideration before preparing the detailed regulations needed to give effect to changes in pay and conditions of service from September 1994.

I am glad to be able to end the uncertainty which the police service has, inevitably, faced while I consulted it and others on the Sheehy proposals. As our decisions show, we have listened carefully to what the police service had to say. Our objective must be to create the framework that will encourage our police service to be as effective as possible in the fight against crime. To be effective, it must be properly led, managed and rewarded. It must have the flexibility that it needs to deploy its resources as modern policing and local communities require.

The proposals that I have announced today will help achieve those objectives. By cutting down on middle management we shall allow chief constables to put more resources into fighting crime. That could mean more work on crime prevention; or more computers and modern technology to fight crime; or up to 3,000 more police officers on the front line, protecting the public. That is what the changes will do, and that is my blueprint for our police service for the future. I commend my proposals to the House.

Mr. Tony Blair (Sedgefield): I thank the Home Secretary for his statement. There has unquestionably been the great clamour of a Government retreat, but the direction in which they are retreating is still entirely unclear.

The Home Secretary said that the details of the proposals are set out in a letter that he has put in the Library. I have that letter now and can tell the House that the details are still far from clear. While the implications for ordinary officers, in pounds, shillings and pence, are not clear and uncertainty remains, so will the undermining of police morale which the Government have caused.

May I put six specific points on the details which have a direct implication on what an officer will get?

First, the Secretary of State is ending, is he not, the Edmund-Davies pay formula. He said that he is accepting the principle of the Sheehy recommendation that there should be a private sector median formula. Will he confirm that under the Sheehy formula there will be pay cuts for the ordinary police constable of on average up to 33 per cent.? Will his formula mean pay cuts? We should be told.

Secondly, on performance-related pay, the Secretary of State presumably accepts the principles behind the Sheehy report. Is he keeping the present fixed pay scale but merely introducing an element of appraisal, or is he abandoning the present pay scale and putting a different pay scale in its place? If there is to be a change, what is the implication of that pay scale for officers? If the issue is to be dealt with by the Police Negotiating Board, is its decision binding or is it a recommendation? Is that board the new police negotiating board that Sheehy recommends or is it the board that exists?

Thirdly, on fixed-term contracts, I have studied the letter in the Library. The objection of the police to fixed-term contracts was that they would make it possible to terminate contracts, not on grounds of misconduct or incapability, but on structural grounds—cost-saving grounds. Does the recommendation that there should be termination on structural grounds still stand? If that power remains, it has a vital impact on how the report will be viewed.

Fourthly, the Secretary of State did not mention overtime. Does he accept the Sheehy recommendation that incidental overtime should be banned? If he is banning it, will he confirm that the effect will be that, if an arrest is made at 11.30 on a Friday night and the officer ends his shift at 12 o'clock, the next four or five hours spent processing the arrest will be unpaid? Is that true, and, if so, will it be accepted?

Fifthly, Sheehy estimates that up to 5,000 officers will be removed as a result of the abolition of the ranks. Is that also the Secretary of State's estimate? Most important of all, has his right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of

[Mr. Tony Blair]

the Exchequer guaranteed the £200 million severance package for those officers? Is that part of his proposals? The Secretary of State's letter says nothing about that. If that package is not forthcoming, the basis of the Sheehy report, which was that those officers would go and others would be put on to the beat, cannot be maintained. Will he answer that argument specifically?

Sixthly, on a matter of detail, there is an agreement about short-term contracts for chief constables. Will the Secretary of State accept that there is concern about the combination of the change—involving short-term contracts for chief constables—and the policing White Paper, which means that chief constables are now to be appointed by the Government through the police authority, not elected authorities, and are to operate under guidelines of finance from the Government? Will he accept that there is a legitimate concern that even if he has barred the Sheehy report from the front door—I do not think it is clear that he has—it may slip in through the back?

The test of any reform, whether the Secretary of State's or Sheehy's—and of the extra work that has to happen before we know the true outline of the proposals—is whether it will cut crime or is designed merely to cut costs. Will it put more police officers on the beat? Will it make our communities safer? While the confusion surrounding the Home Secretary's proposals remains, the undermining of police morale through what the Government have been doing in the past few months will continue and the fight against crime will be impaired.

Mr. Howard: The most extraordinary aspect of the tirade that we have heard from the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) is that he has not said a word about the attitude of the Labour party to the decisions that I have announced today. He talks of retreat. He decided to sit firmly on the fence on the day that he took his present job. He has been there ever since—he has never come off it.

We are still waiting to hear from the hon. Gentleman what his party's position is on the 27 announcements that I made in my speech at Blackpool and on those that I made today. All he can do is practise his soundbites in the *Daily Mirror* and fail to come to the House with any inkling of the attitude of his party on these proposals.

Let me deal now with the points that the hon. Gentleman raised. He suggested that using the Sheehy formula instead of the Edmund-Davies formula would lead to cuts in police pay. That just shows how little he understands these matters. We are talking about a different formula for uprating police pay. One cannot uprate police pay in order to cut police pay; the idea is nonsense. We are using the Sheehy formula: the median of private sector non-manual pay. That is what Sheehy recommended and it is what I said clearly in my statement. It deals with uprating. The formula will not cut any police officer's pay.

We will introduce an appraisal-based system of performance pay. Its precise relationship with the pay scales will be a matter on which I shall await proposals from the Police Negotiating Board. That will not be the board recommended by the Sheehy committee; it will be the board in its present form, operating under the Police Negotiating Board Act 1980. As the hon. Gentleman should know, under that Act the board makes recommendations to me. They are not binding recommendations, but I have every confidence that the board will come up with sensible answers.

This applies also to the extent to which the board will consider overtime arrangements. I accept the recommendation of the Sheehy report that overtime for inspectors should be abolished, and they will be compensated by the increase in salary. Overtime for other ranks will be changed; details will be worked out by the Police Negotiating Board on the basis of the official side proposals.

So the answers to all the hon. Gentleman's questions are clear. If I correctly understood him, he regretted—perhaps even deplored—the fact that we were remitting the details of these proposals to the Police Negotiating Board. He suggested that that might lead to continuing uncertainty and might have an impact on the morale of the police.

I thought that the hon. Gentleman might have talked to the police over the past few weeks. If he had talked to the staff associations, he would have realised that they were keen on having the details of these matters remitted to the Police Negotiating Board, which is the proper place for them to be resolved. Indeed, I have a legal obligation to listen to what that board says before reaching final decisions on these matters. I was therefore sorry to learn from the hon. Gentleman's response that he is completely unaware of how the staff associations wanted the detailed decisions to be implemented.

The truth of the matter is that, some weeks ago, the hon. Member for Sedgefield wrote an article about the Sheehy report. He said in it "If the Government got it right, we should not be reluctant to praise them." It is a great pity that the hon. Gentleman did not have the guts today to live up to what he wrote several months ago. Instead, he came to the Dispatch Box with weasel words that did not include one sentence about the attitude of his party to these matters.

Mr. Kenneth Baker (Mole Valley): I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend on his sensible, practical and realistic response to the Sheehy proposals. It will be widely welcomed. The shadow Home Secretary owes it to the House to set out exactly what the Labour party's attitude is to the Sheehy proposals, not to disappear into a morass of footnote details.

I have two questions—first, on the appraisal of officers' performance. Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that during his career a police officer will be subject to appraisal at regular intervals and that there will be assessment of his performance? I trust that those who regularly do not come up to standard will be expected to leave the force.

Secondly, will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that the proposals set out three years ago on community policing—smaller operational units, local police officers staying longer in their areas and being more visible on the beat—remain the chief principle behind the reform of the police service?

Mr. Howard: I am extremely grateful to my right hon. Friend for his support, and I can certainly give him the assurances that he seeks. Under arrangements that have already been announced police officers will be regularly appraised on performance. If performance is unsatisfactory over a period of time, there will be procedures to enable the chief constable to take the necessary action to terminate the appointment of that police officer.

I am as enthusiastic as I know my right hon. Friend is that community policing should occupy a most prominent place in the approach of chief constables to policing arrangements. I pay tribute to my right hon. Friend for the steps that he took when he held my office to encourage that development. Under our White Paper proposals, chief constables will have much greater discretion on the way in which they manage their forces than has been the case hitherto, and I know that they will continue to place the greatest value on community policing and that they will take it forward in a way that I know my right hon. Friend would welcome.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): I am relieved, and no doubt the police will feel relieved, that the Home Secretary has shown more wisdom than did his predecessor in setting up Sheehy by rejecting the core of the report's findings and disposing of almost all its significant recommendations, which were effectively demolished by the Touche Ross report on behalf of the Police Federation.

To ensure that performance appraisal makes a significant contribution to police efficiency and does not simply drown the police in a torrent of further paperwork, will the right hon. and learned Gentleman ensure that forthcoming proposals are properly pilot tested?

On restructuring, will the Home Secretary make sure that his proposed changes do not result in increased costs being borne by a reduction in the number of police in the front line, even temporarily, as was proposed by Sir Patrick Sheehy?

Mr. Howard: The hon. Gentleman's response was a trifle more graceful than that of the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair). I shall consider the hon. Gentleman's suggestion about pilot appraisal, although I am not convinced that that is necessarily the best way forward. It will take a little time to put effective appraisal arrangements in place, but we shall take his suggestion into account.

I have made it clear that, for my part, the object of the exercise is to improve the effectiveness of policing and, to achieve that objective, to increase the number of front-line officers on our streets. In my statement I said that I thought that the results of these changes could be to increase the number of such officers by about 3,000 in addition to the 2,300 who could be released by the changes in paperwork that I announced last week. That is at the forefront of our objectives, and we shall strive to make sure that everything possible is done to achieve it.

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): Will my right hon. and learned Friend totally reject the nonsense we have heard from the Opposition Front Bench? They have not the faintest idea of what their view is on Sheehy or what to do about crime generally. My right hon. and learned Friend should disregard them completely.

My right hon. and learned Friend has taken an extremely sensible line in accepting what is good in the Sheehy report and rejecting what is bad. He is particularly wise in his line on starting salaries and fixed-term contracts. Will he ensure that every encouragement is given to ex-servicemen who are so unhappily available as a result of "Options for Change" and who have great experience, a great deal of ability and a tremendous amount to contribute to the good of the police service?

Mr. Howard: I am most grateful to my hon. Friend for his words of welcome for my proposals. I entirely agree with him. As I said in my statement, mature recruits have a great deal to offer the police service. That applies especially to ex-servicemen who may wish to apply for positions in the police service in the circumstances to which my hon. Friend referred. That is one of the principal reasons why I have rejected the Sheehy recommendation on the levels of starting pay. I hope that the police service will continue to benefit from the entry of mature recruits such as those mentioned by my hon. Friend.

Mr. Chris Mullin (Sunderland, South): Does the Home Secretary have any plans to deal with what the Metropolitan Police Commissioner, Mr. Paul Condon, defined as noble cause corruption in the police which has caused so much damage to public confidence in recent years? Does he have any plans to deal with the high incidence of freemasonry in the police force which is so deeply resented by officers who are not freemasons and so corrosive of public confidence in the police?

Mr. Howard: The law applies to police officers as it does to everyone, and it is to the law that we have to look for safeguards against corruption. The police are as enthusiastic as anyone—indeed, rather more so, than anyone else—to root out corruption where it exists in the police service; I know that the commissioner and other police officers are determined to leave no stone unturned to get to the root of such matters where there is evidence. Freemasonry is not a crime.

Sir Ivan Lawrence (Burton): Since the Sheehy committee was totally independent of Government, and since my right hon. and learned Friend has never from start to finish identified himself with any of its provisions until today, does not the Opposition make itself look foolish by calling for him to retreat? Did not the BBC announcers make themselves look foolish and perverse by calling it a climb-down? Is not my right hon. and learned Friend aware that the police want their force to be efficient and effective? They want more young men and women to join it as a career and they want more policemen on the beat. Is he aware that his proposals will achieve that end and should be widely welcomed by the police?

Mr. Howard: I am grateful to my hon. and learned Friend. He is right in the strictures that he passes on the BBC announcer this morning, but, to be fair to the BBC, its home affairs correspondent immediately pointed out that, as the Government were not in any sense and had never been committed to the proposals in the Sheehy report, there could be no question of climb-down or retreat. The response of the hon. Member for Sedgefield to that point was absolutely pathetic. The hon. Gentleman is in danger of elevating indecision to the level of a constitutional principle.

Mr. Ken Maginnis (Fermanagh and South Tyrone): The Ulster Unionist party, with the majority of law-abiding citizens in the United Kingdom, will be pleased and relieved to hear that the Government have met the legitimate concerns of the police. The realistic and objective approach to Sheehy that the Home Secretary has brought to the House today should not cloak the reality that the police are open to reasonable change, as is required. They recognise that they must endeavour to open up proper channels of communication with the general public if the

[Mr. Ken Maginnis]

ills of society are to be overcome. However, we all recognise that any drop in the morale of the police would be totally unacceptable to that end.

The special and different role of the RUC that has been mentioned today is acknowledged, but as the parliamentary adviser to the RUC federation, let me say that the RUC would not set themselves on a different plain from their colleagues throughout the United Kingdom and will be deeply relieved that their work will not be hindered by some of the less acceptable aspects of the Sheehy report.

Mr. Howard: I am very grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his words of welcome. In responding to him, let me pay tribute to the Royal Ulster Constabulary, a force which carries out its duties in such difficult circumstances in an exemplary fashion.

Mr. Michael Shersby (Uxbridge): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that his wise and statesmanlike decision this afternoon will go a long way towards alleviating the understandable concerns of the police during the past few months while the Sheehy report has been considered? In particular, his decision to refer points of detail to the Police Negotiating Board will be warmly welcomed by the Police Federation and other staff associations. I believe that the police know that today they have a listening Home Secretary whom they can trust and with whom they can work, and that he will have their full support.

Mr. Howard: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his remarks. I pay tribute to the part that he played in my discussions with the Police Federation during the months of the consultation period. It responded most positively to the consultation exercise, recognised the need for change and came forward with proposals of its own. I have by no means been able to accept all the federation's proposals, but I am absolutely clear that we now have a basis on which to move forward together in order to give this country the improved policing that it wants and deserves.

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): Does the Home Secretary now regret that his predecessor embarked on this sad, sorry and disturbing process? If the right hon. and learned Gentleman does not like the word "retreat", does he accept that his tactical withdrawal will be widely welcomed? An even bigger welcome will follow the Home Secretary's decision to ensure that the centralisation process promised in the White Paper does not proceed.

Mr. Howard: There is no question of retreat or of withdrawal. I have consistently said that the Government never previously declared their views on the Sheehy recommendations.

I will certainly directly answer the first of the hon. Gentleman's questions. I do not regret for one moment the committee's establishment. It did extremely valuable work and helped to promote general recognition, not least in the police service itself, of the need for change. I have accepted many of its recommendations, and I pay tribute to the work of Sir Patrick and his committee.

Sir George Gardiner (Reigate): My right hon. and learned Friend will know of my connection with the National Association of Retired Police Officers, all of whom will surely welcome the fact that my right hon. and learned Friend has consigned Sheehy's proposals on police retirement and pensions to the waste paper basket, where they belong.

Will my right hon. and learned Friend elaborate on his proposed review of the exit arrangements for police officers? Will it be an internal review, how long will it take, and how will it relate to the other discussions that he outlined this afternoon?

Mr. Howard: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's remarks. The review will be internal, and it will be completed as soon as possible. We would like the new arrangements to be in place as soon as practicable. When we have particular proposals, we shall want to consult upon them.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Is the Home Secretary aware that, instead of spending all that time trotting out that long-winded retreat, he needed only to say, "It wasn't me, guv'nor—it was that Ken Clarke wot done it"? Better still, the Home Secretary did not need to come here at all: he could have demanded the right to remain silent.

Mr. Howard: That was not up to the hon. Gentleman's usual standard, but no doubt we shall hear better from him in due course. In an earlier answer, I paid tribute to the work of the committee, which provided a valuable service. I do not believe that we would have reached today's position, with widespread recognition of the need for change, had it not been for the committee's work.

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): My right hon. and learned Friend will have noted the importance that official Opposition Members attach to his significant statement this afternoon, demonstrated by the fact that barely 20 of them are present.

Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that appraisal is not new to the police force and that the best forces already appraise their men on their performance? The tie-up with pay is novel, but by failing to fall into the trap of the matrix system, my right hon. and learned Friend will not negate all the people that he has taken off paperwork duties and put back on the force. It is good news that we are not to have the highly bureaucratic scheme recommended by Sheehy.

Mr. Howard: I think that my hon. Friend was a bit hard on Opposition Back Benchers. After all, if their spokesman is not prepared to say a word about his party's attitude to the proposals, how can he expect them to turn up? Were I in their position, I would not have bothered to come and listen to the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair).

I agree with my hon. Friend about appraisal. One of the criticisms of the Sheehy matrix was that it might have led to excessive bureaucracy. We want to cut the amount of paperwork that deflects and diverts the police from the work that we want them to do, rather than add to it.

Mr. Mike O'Brien (Warwickshire, North): When exactly will we see the extra policemen and policewomen on the beat? The rank restructuring of which the Home Secretary spoke will cost money. Will he implement the severance package proposed by Sheehy? Will he put the extra resources into carrying out that restructuring, and will he also put extra resources into putting more policemen and policewomen on the beat?

Mr. Howard: That last observation was a bit rich, coming from a Labour Member. It is a bit rich for Labour

to talk about putting more policemen on the beat when the Government have put nearly 17,000 more people into the police service—in addition to the 16,000 more civilians who are now working for the service—and nearly doubled the amount that we spend on it, in real terms. We will take no lectures from the Labour party about police officers on the beat or money for the police service.

Restructuring will be a matter for chief constables. We believe in devolved management: we believe that chief constables are the best people to decide the pace at which they introduce changes to their force. As the middle-management posts disappear, they will be able to recruit the extra front-line constables to whom I referred in my statement.

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): Is it not clear from what we have heard today that the single event that would do most to undermine police morale would be the election of a Labour Government, given Labour's record of failure to support the police in the 1960s and 1970s? Is it not equally clear that what the public want is a consistent, continuing and abiding relationship with their local police officers? Is my right hon. and learned Friend satisfied that the new arrangements that he has outlined will provide a career structure in front-line policing for new policemen?

Mr. Howard: Given his experience of these matters, my hon. Friend is entirely right to emphasise the importance of a career structure—and, in particular, the importance of a career structure for front-line officers. That is one of the great advantages of the changes that I have announced today: they will enable a police constable who is excellent at his job, but has no desire to be promoted to any other rank, to gain the recognition that his good performance demands. That has not always been possible under the existing arrangements; it will be possible to a much greater extent under the new arrangements that I propose. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for identifying and recognising their benefits.

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): I warmly welcome the Home Secretary's rejection of the more contentious parts of the Sheehy report. Will he ensure that any future discussion of pay and structure genuinely includes all staff associations at an early stage? The Sheehy process has undermined morale for several months in many of our constituencies.

May I ask the Home Secretary a specific question about pay? He referred to the private sector. Will comparison be at national level, or will it be at local or regional level? That is a matter of concern in many areas. May I also ask whether the islands allowance in Scotland will continue?

Mr. Howard: Comparison will be at national level, as it is now. It will be based on a different formula—the formula recommended by the Sheehy committee.

As I said in my statement, we are abolishing central payment of allowances other than housing allowance for currently serving officers; but the future of those allowances will be at the discretion of local chief officers. If a local chief officer decides that the islands allowance would be appropriate, it will be perfectly possible for that allowance to continue to be paid. Those matters and others will be considered by the Police Negotiating Board.

I can give the hon. Lady the assurance that I think she is seeking. The staff associations are fully represented on the Police Negotiating Board at the moment, and I do not envisage any changes to those arrangements while these matters are being sorted out. The Police Negotiating Board has its own plans for restructuring itself in due course.

Mr. James Hill (Southampton, Test): My right hon. and learned Friend is to be congratulated. When the Sheehy report first came out, it was met with horror by most on the Tory Back Benches, and throughout, certainly, the Hampshire police service. If we had not moved directly against some of the worst aspects of the Sheehy report, we would not have been able to call on the police to defend us from anarchy in the future—it is as serious as that—and we would have moved away from the close bond that politicians have always had with the police. The police would have seen the Sheehy report as some sort of retail commercial project and would not have understood what was in the mind of the Sheehy committee. My right hon. and learned Friend has performed a very worthy service for the House and the United Kingdom.

Mr. Howard: I am very grateful to my hon. Friend for his kind words. Views on the Sheehy report recommendations have varied widely. What I have announced today are not the Sheehy recommendations, or some version of them, but the Government's decisions on the way forward for the police service.

Mr. John McFall (Dumbarton): What the police will learn from this report is that the Edmund-Davies formula, which was established by the Labour Government in 1978, is to be abandoned. Is there not a hidden agenda, where the Home Office mission to extend control has been achieved at the expense of community policing? The police consider the elimination of some ranks to be crude and unproductive. How many extra police will be put on the beat, and how will crime be affected by that? Is it not the case that the Home Secretary is doing something for the police but nothing about crime?

Mr. Howard: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. He is the first Opposition Member to have expressed a view on any of the decisions that I have announced. At last we have a voice from the Labour party that is prepared to express a view on these matters. As far as I can tell, that view is one of total opposition, which is typical of the Labour party. It harks back to a decision of the last Labour Government —which was not honoured—and totally ignores the changes that have taken place in the world ever since. Truly, the hon. Gentleman spoke for the antediluvian tendency of the Labour party.

The hon. Gentleman said that none of the decisions that I have announced will have any effect on fighting crime. I do not know what sort of world the hon. Gentleman lives in if he believes that 3,000 more officers on the front line will not have any effect on combating crime. That is the kind of dream world of fiction in which the Labour party lives. We will see a thinning of middle managment ranks, which will make more resources available to chief officers to recruit constables for front-line duties. That is something that the people of this country will warmly welcome, whatever the curmudgeonly antics of the Labour party.

Mr. Henry Bellingham (Norfolk, North-West): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that his balanced and pragmatic package will help to restore not only the morale of the police but that of people in the communities that have been victimised by a rising crime wave? In rural Norfolk, people particularly welcome his plan to put more

[Mr. Henry Bellingham]

bobbies on the beat and his scheme for the introduction of parish constables. Will my right hon. and learned Friend tell the House what plans he has for reviewing police force boundaries, which often inhibit efficient policing?

Mr. Howard: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his welcome for the proposals, particularly on parish constables, who I believe could play a significant part in helping to combat crime in rural areas. I have no plans at present to review the boundaries of police areas, but if any local police authority wishes to put forward proposals to me, including the Norfolk police authority, I shall study them with great interest and care.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Can the Minister give some balanced and pragmatic details about the overtime payments, which will relate to the number of officers who are available? For instance, in the Royal Ulster Constabulary a great deal of overtime must be worked because of terrorism and that force would require another 3,000 officers to cover the overtime that is required now. What does the right hon. and learned Gentleman propose to do about overtime?

Mr. Howard: I repeat to the hon. Gentleman what I said earlier: overtime for inspectors will be abolished and inspectors will be compensated for that by an addition to their salaries. The basis of overtime for other ranks will be changed, but the details of those changes will be worked out by the Police Negotiating Board. On the official side, detailed proposals have been put forward relating to changes to overtime and they will be a starting point for negotiations in the PNB.

Mr. Edward Garnier (Harborough): Will my right hon. and learned Friend join me in congratulating Mr. Barjat Singh of Leicestershire who has recently joined Leicestershire constabulary as a mature entrant at the age of 33 and has been accepted on to the accelerated promotion scheme? My right hon. and learned Friend should particularly congratulate Mr. Singh because, until last week, he was the chairman of the Labour-controlled Leicestershire police authority. Does not his decision to join the police prove how successful the Government's policies have been in advancing better policing in this country?

Mr. Howard: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that information. It is proof of their success and perhaps it is some indication of the extent to which people in such positions are thoroughly fed up with left-wing Labour politics.

Mr. John Gunnell (Morley and Leeds, South): Given the benefit of the experience that the Home Secretary has gained in the past few weeks, does he agree with two propositions? First, many of the difficulties that have been encountered in the past few weeks and, in particular, the uncertainty felt by the police would have been eased if, given we are dealing with a professional service, consultations could have taken place at an earlier stage, perhaps before the terms of reference were stated.

Secondly, since the Home Secretary has accepted relatively few of Sheehy's major proposals, does he agree that perhaps it is not such a good idea for business men to study that public service? Perhaps it would be a good idea if the right hon. and learned Gentleman were to abandon his proposals to appoint business men as chairmen of police authorities.

Mr. Howard: On the hon. Gentleman's final point, no, I certainly do not accept his strictures on the role of business men in this matter. I have said on many occasions that I believe that Sir Patrick Sheehy's committee has performed a valuable service. Those whom I shall appoint to police authorities will by no means necessarily be business men. I am sorry if behind the hon. Gentleman's question there existed that prejudice against business men which still infests the Opposition.

On the hon. Gentleman's first question, I do not believe that anyone could accuse the Government of lack of consultation in relation to this exercise. There were extensive consultations while the Sheehy committee was at work and I announced that there would be a further consultation period after it reported. That consultation period ended on 30 September. I came to the House as soon as possible thereafter with my decisions in order to keep to the absolute minimum the period of uncertainty to which the hon. Gentleman referred.

Sir Fergus Montgomery (Altrincham and Sale): I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend will ignore the carping criticism from the Opposition because he should be aware that his statement will be warmly welcomed by the overwhelming majority of police officers who were horrified by some of the controversial proposals in the Sheehy report. Before he brings in any legislation, may I have an assurance that there will be meaningful consultation with our police forces because they represent the people who do the job and they therefore know far more about it than anyone else?

Mr. Howard: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his remarks. As I have said, there has been extensive consultation with the police and others since the report was published and, of course, the staff associations will be directly involved with the Police Negotiating Board in working out the details of the decisions and principles that I have announced.

Mr. Elfyn Llwyd (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): I am also pleased that most of the far-fetched suggestions of the Sheehy report have been rejected by the Government, but since it appears that 90 per cent. of the report has been rejected, I must ask the Home Secretary how much has Sir Patrick Sheehy been paid? If his pay is performance-related, he does not deserve anything at all. I am pleased that the Government have listened to common sense over the report, but I draw the House's attention to the fact that the White Paper is far more dangerous and insidious and I hope that the Government will listen to common sense over that too.

Everybody knows the benefits of community policing, but it is an expensive form of policing. In the past year in north Wales we were 70 members under-manned and were refused one extra policeman. How will the chief constable allow for community policing?

Mr. Howard: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will withdraw his especially churlish and ungenerous observation about Sir Patrick and his committee in view of the fact that they were all offered payment for their work and all refused payment. It may be inconceivable to Opposition Members that anybody should undertake

public service of that kind without payment, but it happens and the hon. Gentleman ought to be ashamed of himself for what lay behind his question.

Community policing is entirely at the discretion of chief constables. We are devolving management of the police service to chief constables and it is for them to decide what emphasis to place on community policing. I know, however, that they recognise its value, to which they will attach a high priority.

Mr. James Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): May I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend on consigning the majority of the Sheehy report to the waste bin? As the father of a police officer serving in Warwickshire, I know that his statement will give a lot of pleasure to the Pawsey household.

In his statement, my right hon. and learned Friend referred to the lethal and dangerous job of police officers. Will he seek to make that job a little less dangerous by making body armour more readily available and by speeding up the evaluation of the side-handled baton?

Mr. Howard: I am always happy to bring pleasure to the Pawsey household and happy that today's announcement has done that. My hon. Friend was not quite right in his characterisation of my response to the Sheehy recommendations. I have already said that the committee did valuable work, I have accepted many of the recommendations, and on some others I sought to achieve the same objectives in different ways.

The question of body armour is under constant evaluation. Its deployment is a matter for chief constables. As my hon. Friend will know, side-handled batons are presently being evaluated and I hope that that evaluation and the trials of the batons will be completed as soon as possible so that we can make them available to the police as soon as possible.

Mr. Bob Dunn (Dartford): Will the Secretary of State confirm that those who hold the ranks that are to be abolished will be moved into other posts and on moving that their pay will not be reduced?

Mr. Howard: What happens to officers of those ranks will be a matter for the chief constables. I can assure my hon. Friend that if they are regraded, they will not suffer any loss of pay.

Mr. Tim Devlin (Stockton, South): May I thank my right hon. and learned Friend for the sensitive and helpful way in which he responded to the concerns of the Cleveland constabulary and for withdrawing three aspects of the Sheehy proposals that especially vexed them—the matrix, the retirement age and the pay isssues? Those aspects would have demoralised the officers in Cleveland, who have managed significantly to reduce crime over recent years and who, I am sure, will warmly welcome what he has said today.

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend has correctly identified the three aspects of the proposals which caused most concern to police officers, not only in Cleveland but elsewhere. I met many officers from all parts of the country and discussed their concerns in great detail, so I am especially grateful to my hon. Friend for his comments.

Business of the House

4.29 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): With permission, Madam Speaker, I should like to make a statement about the business for next week, which will be as follows:

MONDAY 1 NOVEMBER—Consideration of Lords amendments to the Railways Bill.

TUESDAY 2 NOVEMBER—Consideration of Lords amendments to the Railways Bill.

WEDNESDAY 3 NOVEMBER—Supplemental timetable motion on and consideration of Lords amendments to the Cardiff Bay Barrage Bill.

Proceedings on the following Bills, which are consolidation measures:

Crofters (Scotland) Bill *[Lords]*
Scottish Land Court Bill *[Lords]*
Health Service Commissioners Bill *[Lords]*
Probation Service Bill *[Lords]*
Pension Schemes Bill *[Lords]*
Pension Schemes (Northern Ireland) Bill *[Lords]*
Statute Law (Repeals) Bill *[Lords]*

Motions relating to the Football Spectators (Designation of Football Matches in England and Wales) Order, the Safety of Sports Grounds (Designation) Order and the Football Spectators Act 1989 (Commencement No. 4) Order.

Motions relating to Members' pay and motion on the Ministerial and Other Salaries Order.

THURSDAY 4 NOVEMBER—Motions relating to a scheme for additional voluntary contributions for Members and to the Parliamentary Contributory Pensions Fund.

Motions relating to the First Report, Session 1992-93, from the Select Committee on Procedure entitled "Parliamentary Questions" (House of Commons Paper No. 687).

Motion relating to financial assistance to Opposition parties.

FRIDAY 5 NOVEMBER—Subject to the progress of business, the House is expected to be prorogued.

The House may also be asked to consider any Lords messages which may be received.

The House will also wish to know that European Standing Committees will meet at 10.30 am to consider European Community documents as follows:

TUESDAY 2 NOVEMBER

Committee B, document No. 6625/93 relating to the special rehabilitation support programme in developing countries.

WEDNESDAY 24 NOVEMBER

Committee A, document No. 7825/93 relating to reduced prices for school milk. Committee B, document Nos. 7390/92 and 7133/93 relating to postal services.

[Tuesday 2 November:

European Standing Committee B—Relevant European Community document: 6625/93, Overseas aid; relevant report of the European Legislation Committee: HC 79-xxxiii (1992-93).

Wednesday 24 November:

European Standing Committee A—Relevant European Community document: 7825/93, school milk; relevant report of the European Legislation Committee: HC 79-xxxvii (1992-93).

[Mr. Tony Newton]

European Standing Committee B—Relevant European Community documents (a) 7390/92, postal services; (b) 7133/93, the single market for postal services. Relevant reports of the European Legislation Committee:

(a) HC 79-vi (1992-93); (b) HC 79-xxxv (1992-93), HC 79-xxxvii (1992-93).]

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): I thank the Lord President for that statement. Will he take on board the fact that there is considerable concern in all parties about the Child Support Agency? I think that all hon. Members would welcome an early statement from the Secretary of State for Social Security on the Government's proposals as the present position is clearly unsatisfactory.

May I also draw his attention to the reviews of London's specialist health services? He will recall that in June, or thereabouts, there was a demand for a statement on the reports but that the Government resisted on the ground that time was needed to take them into account, alongside the Tomlinson report and other factors. However, there are now extremely strong and, I understand, well-founded rumours that the Government are ready to come to a conclusion on these issues but are thinking of announcing it in the recess rather than before the House rises. That would be unacceptable to all hon. Members, so I hope that the Leader of the House will advise his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health accordingly.

I remind the Leader of the House that we are still seeking debating time on public expenditure. We give him advance notice that we should like at least one, but preferably two, Supply days before Christmas.

I realise that the following matter may have been resolved, but a number of hon. Members are worried about the business for tomorrow. There have been some rumours about whether or not it can proceed. Many of us regret the fact that the Government chose to discuss the issue on a Friday when some of us who would have liked to be here cannot be. I shall be working a full day, but, unfortunately, I shall not be able to be in the House to vote on the order. Some hon. Members are still worried about whether the business can validly be discussed tomorrow because of the legal position, and it would help us if the Leader of the House clarified that point.

Mr. Newton: The right hon. Lady has asked a variety of questions. As to her comments on the Child Support Agency and her question about an announcement on London's health service, I will of course undertake to consider her requests.

The right hon. Lady asked about public expenditure and Supply days. I was not sure whether the questions were linked or whether the Opposition wished to debate public expenditure on Supply days. I will take note of her request for Supply days in my usual and helpful way. It will be well within the right hon. Lady's knowledge that public expenditure will be dealt with alongside other matters in what will be the unified Budget shortly after the House returns. There will be opportunities to discuss those matters. The right hon. Lady will be aware of the suggestions that both she and the Procedure Committee have made in that respect.

Lastly, as to the right hon. Lady's question about tomorrow's business, I do not accept her suggestion that it is inappropriate to be debating the measure tomorrow; by so doing it will enable us to devote a full day to matters —not necessarily that one—such as the Church which in the past were debated much more briefly and late at night. On this occasion we have a full day.

There has been legal action but the right hon. Lady will be aware that the Church of England authorities today won their case in the High Court. I understand that the High Court indicated that, in its judgment, there was nothing to delay the debate. Nor, I think I can say, is there anything in the procedures or rules of the House. In the end, of course, the question to move the motion is a matter for those concerned with the motion. I know of no reason to put pressure on them and not proceed tomorrow. If it is of any comfort to the right hon. Lady, I, too, was planning to be elsewhere but have adjusted my programme to ensure that I shall be here.

Mr. Paul Channon (Southend, West): I support what the right hon. Lady said about the need for a statement on the Child Support Agency. Is my right hon. Friend aware of the widepread concern and considerable confusion, especially in the light of the recent court ruling? It would be extremely helpful if we could have an authoritative statement.

Mr. Newton: I am aware of the concerns expressed in various quarters, as are my right hon. and hon. Friends. I will bring that request to their attention.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): I would like to take this opportunity to make that request all-party and say that it is vital that we have a statement from a Social Security Minister next week before Parliament prorogues, because of the widespread misgivings that the legislation in its practical operation is causing in the country. I am sure that Members from both sides and from all parties would welcome such a statement.

I thank the Leader of the House for finding time in this spillover session to find time for an important debate as far as we are concerned on a motion for financial assistance to Opposition parties. It is essential that the Opposition are properly financed as that will enable us to do our job properly. Although it has taken a long time to achieve, I am grateful to the Leader of the House for finding that time.

I hope that we shall be able to welcome the motion on Members' pay. When we see the terms of the motion I hope that it will bear out the assurance that the Leader of the House gave on behalf of the Government that Members' pay will not lose out in terms of the freeze on pay that we have had over the past 12 months.

Mr. Newton: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his comments about what is known in the trade as "Short money". It has taken a long while to find time. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will think it a reasonable and just outcome. So far as Members' pay is concerned, I cannot give a precise undertaking about when the detailed resolutions will be tabled; I am not seeking to delay them. I can say in a clear-cut fashion that, in my judgment—though in the end others will wish to bring their judgment to bear—what will be proposed fulfils completely the undertakings that I gave the House at this time last year.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): If it could be arranged, a statement next week on the workings of the Child Support Agency would be ideal. Is my right hon. Friend aware that the creation of that agency had support on both sides of the House? What was designed as a

measure to catch up with people who were not honouring their obligations to their children is now being used as an instrument to punish those who are doing their best. That was not intended by hon. Members on either side of the House, and it is essential that we have an early debate so that we can see what can be done to alleviate the distress and anguish that that is causing.

Mr. Newton: The point made by my hon. Friend has been made in other quarters, too—indeed, I note that the matter has now been raised four times in the course of our exchanges today. I cannot add to what I said earlier but I will bring that fact to my right hon. Friend's attention.

Mr. John Cummings (Easington): The Leader of the House will be aware of certain assurances given to me by the Minister for Energy during questions on the coal statement last week, to the effect that pumping operations at Easington colliery would not cease until detailed investigations had been carried out. It was therefore with alarm that I learnt today that, during yesterday's debate on the coal industry, pumping operations at Easington colliery ceased. That will destroy the colliery, which was up for bids. It may also pollute the main potable water supply in the county of Durham, with consequential effects not just on the people of Durham but on the people of Tyne and Wear. Will the Leader of the House invite the Minister for Energy to come to the House as soon as possible to explain to us precisely what has happened? The pit is being sabotaged and the people in Easington and Tyne and Wear are living with a time bomb.

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman will appreciate that I am not in a position instantly to make substantive comment on what he said. I can, however, undertake to ensure that the attention of my hon. Friend the Minister for Energy is called to the hon. Gentleman's remarks, and I have no doubt that my hon. Friend will seek to be in touch with him.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Will my right hon. Friend find time next week to discuss the ingenious proposal by a Lancaster city councillor that drivers of untaxed cars using city car parks should be fined? That is already done in the constituency of one of my hon. Friends, where such drivers are charged £30. People do not like freeloading scroungers and, if they were fined under such a scheme, which could spread throughout the country, the Revenue would make an enormous amount. In my constituency alone, the Revenue is losing about £130,000. That is in one district. If the scheme operated countrywide, we should make an enormous killing and would not necessarily need to put VAT on fuel.

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend's ingenuity is mind bending, as is her optimism. If I may, I will concentrate on the first part of her remarks. My right hon. and hon. Friends and I would be in favour of anything that could properly be done to ensure that people paid their taxes. My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary has had to leave, but I will ensure that his attention is drawn to that suggestion.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Madam Speaker: Order. Will hon. Members keep in mind—as I am keeping in mind—that two minority parties have motions on the Order Paper and that it is right that they should be heard? I ask hon. Members to refrain from making speeches and to ask one question addressed directly to the Leader of the House.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): When will the Prime Minister make a statement on the Commonwealth Heads of Government conference and so enable hon. Members, including me, to ask what action the Government are taking to persuade the Indian Government to lift the siege of the Hazratbal mosque in Kashmir?

Mr. Newton: Perhaps the most appropriate opportunity to which I can draw attention is Wednesday 3 November when my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary will be answering questions.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Will my right hon. Friend find time for a short debate next week on the Sheehy report, to allow those hon. Members whom you, Madam Speaker, were unable to call today—no doubt for reasons of time—to make their points, especially bearing in mind my long discussions with my own police force and the long document that I sent to the Home Secretary? My police force were particularly concerned to know that——

Madam Speaker: Order. I want no speeches. The Leader of the House is answering questions.

Mr. Greenway: I am asking for a debate so that I can raise a specific point that was more important to my police force than anything else: they do not want performance-related pay but would accept appraisal if it took account of the fact that someone who arrested——

Madam Speaker: Order. This is an abuse of guidelines that I have just given. Obviously I cannot call all hon. Members who wish to ask questions on a statement or at business questions. Business questions should not be abused. I believe that the Leader of the House has understood the hon. Gentleman's question and I await his reply.

Mr. Newton: I was about to observe, Madam Speaker, that if my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway), who is known to be assiduous in these matters, remains in the Chamber until you permit me to sit down and waits long enough for the Liberal Democrat spokesman to get through what will no doubt be a short speech, he will have an opportunity to take part in a debate entitled "Prevention of Crime", in which mention of the Sheehy report might well be in order.

Mr. John Garrett (Norwich, South): Will the Leader of the House make a statement on the action that he proposes to take to make this place more visitor friendly? For example, why are there notices at the St. Stephen's entrance saying that the public are not admitted, when in fact the public are admitted to Committees that sit upstairs and so on?

Mr. Newton: One of the curiosities of the way in which this place is now run is that the responsibilities that the hon. Gentleman attributes to me are properly those of the Accommodation and Works Committee, which at this very moment is considering ways in which the place can be made—to use the hon. Gentleman's term—more user friendly, not least, to disabled people.

Mr. Nigel Evans (Ribble Valley): In the light of the £375 million fine imposed on the Spanish and Italians for

[Mr. Nigel Evans]

their failure to abide by milk quotas, will the Leader of the House find time to allow hon. Members to discuss the enforcement of European Community directives, especially as we now face more of them? Yesterday, I served on a Standing Committee that discussed the waste packaging directive which, if enforced, will add £2·6 billion to the costs of British industry.

Mr. Newton: Much as I would like to, I do not know that I can undertake to find time for precisely what my hon. Friend asks but I can assure him—as is clear from everything that the British Government said and did in respect of the Maastricht treaty—that we are determined to do everything possible to ensure that Community legislation is enforced uniformly among all those who sign up to it.

Mr. John Spellar (Warley, West): May I draw to the attention of the Leader of the House the fact that, since tabling early-day motion 2436 on the Child Support Agency, I have been approached by a considerable number of hon. Members whose postbags, like mine, are swelling with letters on the subject?

[That this House is alarmed at reports of the operation of the Child Support Agency and, in particular, the targeting of those who are already making maintenance payments rather than those who are evading their responsibilities; and accordingly calls for the operations of the Child Support Agency to be suspended until it can be given new and more appropriate guidelines.]

Will the Leader of the House convey to the Secretary of State for Social Security the strong feeling in the House and outside it that this matter needs to be addressed and is causing enormous anxiety?

Mr. Newton: I cannot add to what I said earlier, but the hon. Gentleman has added to the number of mentions of the subject that I must draw to my right hon. Friend's attention.

Mr. Michael Stephen (Shoreham): Will my right hon. Friend find time for a debate on the conduct of some of the newspapers and film companies and, in particular, on the great offence that is caused to all our constituents when the media pay large sums to criminals and their relatives for their stories? It is time that we had a debate leading to legislation to ban that scandalous practice.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Newton: I cannot undertake to find time for a debate on that precise subject, but I am sure that my hon. Friend's words, which clearly draw support from elsewhere in the House, will be noted by those at whom they were directed.

Mr. John Austin-Walker (Woolwich): Hon. Members will recently have received from the Department of the Environment a document on the creation of the construction sponsorship directorate, which acknowledges that the construction industry contributes one third of our manufacturing base. May I draw the right hon. Gentleman's attention to written question 147, tabled by the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), and to early-day motion 2529, which stands in my name?

[That this House notes with concern reports that the bulk of tunnelling contracts for the Jubilee Line have been awarded provisionally to foreign companies; believes this will adversely affect the ability of British companies to compete with foreign competition for future tunnelling contracts such as Crossrail and the Hackney/Chelsea link; is further concerned to learn that Italstrade may be one of the companies involved in the Jubilee contract; and asks the Government to make a statement on the current fraud investigations taking place in Italy into Italstrade.]

My hon. Friend's question and my EDM identify the consequences of the failure to invest in our infrastructure. Will the right hon. Gentleman find time next week for the Secretary of State for Transport to come to the House so that we can discuss the implications of such matters for our manufacturing industry?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman has drawn a number of matters to my attention. I imagine that he is concerned principally about the Jubilee line, a matter which is also of concern to the House authorities, for reasons that he will understand. The hon. Gentleman will know that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport and other Ministers have been working hard on that matter; I shall bring his remarks to their attention.

Mr. Geoffrey Clifton-Brown (Cirencester and Tewkesbury): My right hon. Friend the Leader of the House will be aware that my constituents, like those of many other hon. Members, want the Sunday trading issue to be resolved. Subject to what might be in the Queen's Speech, will the Leader of the House give us an assurance that we will at least have the opportunity to vote on this matter before Christmas?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend will understand the delicacy of any comment pre-empting the Queen's Speech; but I certainly do not wish to give him an assurance that the matter will not be discussed before Christmas.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Would it be possible for the Government to make a statement next week about their intentions regarding a Select Committee on Northern Ireland? Is the Leader of the House aware that anything that would further divide the constitutional parties in Northern Ireland would be extremely wrong—the more so bearing in mind the bloodshed that is now occurring daily in Northern Ireland. I hope that the Committee will not go ahead—although rumour has it that it was the subject of a deal made by the Prime Minister during the Maastricht debates.

Mr. Newton: The Government have made clear repeatedly that a Select Committee may be desirable in principle. However, that is a matter for the House. I have noted, as will the hon. Gentleman, that the Procedure Committee is re-examining the possible composition of such a Select Committee and, of course, the Government will consider any report which the Procedure Committee produces.

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud): Will my right hon. Friend arrange an early debate on equal opportunities for men and women, following the disgraceful situation that has arisen following the shadow Cabinet elections? Is it fair that hon. Ladies such as those for Bow and Poplar (Ms Gordon) and for Halifax (Mrs. Mahon) should be consigned to the Back Benches for ever because of the sexist prejudices of their male colleagues?

Mr. Newton: That question sounds as if it were calculated to get me to inflame someone about something. I will observe, as others have done, that there is some irony in the fact that a system which was supposed to produce fewer Scots and more women has succeeded in producing exactly the reverse. Whether those who brought forward that proposition had in mind the hon. Ladies mentioned by my hon. Friend is not for me to say. I will say to the right hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) that all of us were pleased that she did not have to get involved in the elections.

Mr. Paddy Tipping (Sherwood): In the light of comments made by the Prime Minister in the House earlier this week, will there be time for an urgent statement—I am sure that a statement will come—on whether there will be a full and independent inquiry into the Bilsthorpe colliery disaster?

Mr. Newton: That matter was covered at some length, both in the statement last week on the coal industry and in the debate yesterday. I do not wish to add to what was said on those occasions.

Mr. Bob Cryer (Bradford, South): The usual procedure for Prorogation is that Black Rod comes down to prorogue Parliament. Instead of that, can the House have a resolution, subject to debate, about the length of time between Prorogation and the new Session of Parliament which is disgracefully lengthy? All hon. Members could contribute in the usual way to such a debate, and the wide-ranging concerns about the Child Support Agency could be raised. The concerns primarily involve a change of policy from pursuing irresponsible fathers who are not paying maintenance to pursuing the easy targets of fathers who are responsible, who are accepting court decisions and who are making maintenance payments. Those fathers are now subject to an unprecedented, vicious and unscrupulous attack, which will wrest every last penny from them and prejudice their new families.

Mr. Newton: If I may leave aside the first part of the hon. Gentleman's remarks about the forthcoming recess, or whatever one wants to call it, I will take note of the second part of his remarks along with those words uttered earlier by other hon. Members on the same subject.

Mr. Thomas Graham (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): Will the Leader of the House arrange for the Secretary of State for Scotland or Secretary of State for Health to make a statement regarding a rumour in my constituency that I have been trying to check out? The rumour is that one of the local hospitals is burning toxic waste commercially. Will the Government state whether there is any truth in the rumour that other hospitals in the country—either trust or national health service—are using their incinerators to burn waste commercially?

Mr. Newton: I am not in a position to provide immediate substantive comment on that matter, as was the case with an earlier question. I will bring the matter to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Mr. John Gunnell (Morley and Leeds, South): When will the House have the promised debate and statement on the Minerals Planning Guidance No. 3 and its revision?

Mr. Newton: I cannot at present give the hon. Gentleman an exact date, but I will look into the matter for him.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Scrutiny by hon. Members of the actions by Ministers at meetings of the EC Council of Ministers is very important. Ministers must act on occasion upon the decisions of Standing Committee A and Standing Committee B, and upon decisions which have been passed by the House. For that hon. Members require information on what is happening in the Council of Ministers meetings.

At the Edinburgh summit of Heads of State it was said that a record of the votes at Council of Ministers meetings would become available, and some figures were starting to come through in parliamentary answers. There has now been a decision by the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Council of Ministers that, in future, votes will be published only if a resolution has been tabled about a vote and if that resolution is not then blocked by a majority of the Ministers present.

Is not that a serious situation, and should not there be a statement from the Prime Minister about how that can be done in line with the decision taken at the Edinburgh summit?

Mr. Newton: For the second time in the exchanges today, I will say that the sensible course is to draw the hon. Gentleman's attention to the fact that my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary will be here next week to answer questions.

Opposition Day

[20TH ALLOTTED DAY]

Crime

Madam Speaker: I should tell the House that I have selected the amendment standing in the name of the Prime Minister.

4.57 pm

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): I beg to move,

That this House notes that the level of recorded crime has more than doubled since 1973, that only two per cent. of all crimes results in conviction and that the threat of punishment no longer constitutes a sufficient deterrent to offenders, and that amongst the young there is a growing experience of a culture of violence and drug use; condemns the allocation by Her Majesty's Government of only one quarter of one per cent. of the criminal justice budget of £8,770 million in 1991-92 to specific crime prevention measures; and calls upon Her Majesty's Government to support, monitor and promote effective locally based preventative measures where they are required and to provide both resources and support to families and schools to educate young people in their personal duties to society in general.

The very purpose of a civil society is to protect the individuals within it from unrestrained and harmful behaviour—in other words, from crime. Britain today is falling very far short of that aim. The problem is neither new nor is it confined to this country. However, it is causing increasing anxiety and, in some quarters, a sense of despair and helplessness.

The purpose of the debate is to propose practical policies to tackle crime around which the House could unite. It is to offer hope when previous policies have only induced cynicism, and even despair. I will not linger on the well-known evidence that crime, and violent crime in particular, is a growing scourge. However, falling crime rates as the proper measure of a successful law and order policy is not working. The public will not accept from us the alibi that crime is rising elsewhere in other countries; nor will anxieties be allayed by the political competition for the title of "Official party of law and order".

Concern about crime will decline only when crime itself declines. This afternoon we heard from the Home Secretary about his proposals for police pay and responsibilities. It is always right to seek measures to increase the efficiency and the effectiveness of the police. I have been impressed by the evidence that police forces throughout the country have themselves been eager to innovate measures. For example, while the Home Office dithered, the Kent constabulary introduced an electronic fingerprint recognition scheme which reduced by 75 per cent. the time it took an officer to put a name to a fingerprint. The Thames Valley constabulary did not wait while the Government deliberated on the future structure of the police. The Thames Valley force slimmed down its own middle ranks on an experimental basis.

I hope that the Home Secretary will do nothing to detract from the valuable and innovative experimentation by the police. The last thing that we want in this country is a structure imposed from the centre. The debate on efficiency has been badly skewed by Sir Patrick Sheehy, who has been seeking to import commercial irrelevancies into a discussion on efficiency.

Despite that, one fact stands out. The police service in Britain is more efficient today than it has ever been. Twice as many crimes are cleared up today as were cleared up 20 years ago. However, even the most efficient police service will not be able to deal conclusively with the crime problem on its own. Half of all crime is not even reported to the police, according to Home Office figures. Even a "Robocop", as seen in the recent science fiction film, which was programmed to shoot anyone who refused to obey its commands within 20 seconds would still require to be informed of the crimes. Tackling crime must be a matter for every citizen, every community and every public body.

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): On reflection, does not the hon. Gentleman agree that the claim that half the crimes committed are not reported is a little spurious? Almost certainly, those figures must include minimal crimes such as minor scratches on cars, theft of milk bottles or whatever, which the ordinary citizen would not feel it worth reporting. Therefore, the matter has to be put in a different perspective from that in which the hon. Gentleman puts it.

Mr. Maclennan: I do not agree. The one aspect of the Home Office that stands almost beyond criticism is the research capability of its research unit. The unit does not produce such figures and facts without a good deal of careful reflection. The figures have been subjected to academic scrutiny by many institutes of criminology throughout the country. They are the most reliable figures that we have.

I take it that the hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) would not seek to diminish the importance of unreported or unrecorded crimes. It is a substantial problem and one of the matters which the police wish to have addressed.

Mr. Gary Streeter (Plymouth, Sutton): I hope that the hon. Gentleman can explain something to me. He will probably agree with me that the increase in the use of drugs is one of the most significant causes of crime. Can he explain how the Liberal Democrat policy of legalising cannabis, which would put far more people in touch with the drugs culture, could assist us in reducing crime?

Mr. Maclennan: That policy is supported in parts of the Liberal party. I understand that the party in Scotland recommended it. I notice that several journals, including *The Economist*, have long advocated legalisation of cannabis. The subject is worthy of debate, but it is certainly not the official policy of the party of which I am a spokesman.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): Before we lose sight of the issue of unreported crime, perhaps the hon. Gentleman will say what contribution he and his hon. Friends were making to the law and order debate in 1988 when they voted against legislation which gave the Attorney-General the ability to appeal against lenient sentences? Does he think that that sets a good example, or was it a good example of unreported crime?

Mr. Maclennan: Far from being unreported, the matter is recorded in *Hansard*. The reasons were well set out on that occasion.

The need for crime prevention is unarguable. I am glad to say that my party and its predecessor party has placed

the prevention of crime at the heart of the debate on law and order for almost a decade. We recommended neighbourhood watch, crime prevention panels and local authority action as long ago as 1985, when those ideas were popularly regarded as marginal to the problem of crime. Indeed, to some extent, Home Office Ministers regard them as marginal even today.

The marginality in the Government's attitude was demonstrated even this afternoon by the Home Secretary in his remarks on Sheehy. In the last paragraph of his statement, when he was speaking about the possible benefits that would flow from more efficient structures, he said:

"That could mean more work on crime prevention."

That does not suggest that there is any serious commitment to use additional resources for what is plainly the most effective step that can be taken to tackle the problem.

I do not wish to be unfair to the Government. They have shown some recognition of the relevance and potential of crime prevention.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Charles Wardle): I thought that I heard the hon. Gentleman say a moment ago that he was against greater centralisation. Surely, then, it is up to chief officers to decide how to deploy their resources.

Mr. Maclennan: I am sure that when the Minister speaks in the debate he will tell us what the Government are doing. It is my purpose to show that they should be doing substantially more. No doubt the police will think it appropriate to deploy their resources effectively in crime prevention. But the success of crime prevention schemes depends on pulling together private voluntary agencies, local authorities and the police, and on the Government monitoring the work, promoting best practice and putting money into schemes in which they have seen value in the past yet to which they now show less commitment than they should.

I take one example. The safer cities programme was initiated in 1988. The locally managed schemes have had a good and successful run. I am sorry to see them progressively strangled by lack of funds. We have been told that the projects are temporary. I have to tell the Minister that crime, and crime under Conservative Governments, is not temporary. The need for crime prevention does not lessen simply because the Home Office has decided not to invest in it any further.

I hope that the Minister will assure the House today that the safer cities programme will not only be continued indefinitely but be expanded. The Minister should not be too preoccupied with the balance sheet, because crime prevention is a blue-chip investment. The cost in policing, court time, legal aid and custodial and community sentencing incurred by a single crime far outweighs the cost of preventing that crime from occurring in the first place.

Despite initiatives such as the safer cities programme, the Government's commitment to crime prevention deserves only two cheers. Last year the Home Office spent £15·7 million on specific crime prevention measures out of a total criminal justice bill of some £8·7 billion. That imbalance reveals the Government's true priorities. Crime prevention remains at the bottom of the list. It is almost an afterthought.

Of course, crime prevention does not deliver the headlines that the Government wish to achieve. "Bang 'em up" is far more appealing than "Practical partnerships work".

Mr. Michael Stephen (Shoreham): Does the hon. Gentleman accept that some crimes cannot be prevented and some criminals cannot be deterred? We have to do something with that residue of hard-core criminals. I put it to him that the only way to deal effectively with them is, as he puts it, to "bang them up".

Mr. Maclennan: I agree with the hon. Gentleman without cavil or qualification, as I shall make plain.

Mr. John Sykes (Scarborough): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Maclennan: No. This is a short debate and I have already given way many times.

The Home Office's own research has estimated that prison sentencing would need to increase by 25 per cent. to reduce crime by about 1 per cent. The cost involved in building and maintaining the new prisons that would be needed is out of all proportion to their value. To my mind, the public get the biggest bang for their buck from crime prevention. It is preferable to ever greater expenditure on prisons which have little discernible effect on the actual levels of crime.

Mr. John Ward (Poole): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Maclennan: I must make it plain to the hon. Gentleman and the House that I do not intend to give way again. This is a two-hour debate and it is a rare opportunity to discuss the issue. I do not wish to delay the House.

The Government give the appearance that they tailor their policy rather more to the needs of the party conference than to the needs of the public in general. Such an approach has the effect of moving the spotlight away from the practical measures which are needed, and which are open to every community, to curtail crime. One example will be well within the recollection of Conservative Members. The joyriders legislation was a crisis measure rushed through the House in a frenzy. It grabbed some headlines. In my discussions with the police they have told me that the legislation has been far from effective. I doubt whether a single joyrider has been deterred by it.

Crime Concern, a charitable body partly funded by the Home Office, has operated so-called motor projects for young people to divert them from joyriding and from crime. Crime Concern has claimed a 98 per cent. success rate in preventing joyriders from reoffending. The contrast between the two approaches of the Home Office—both are favoured by the Home Office—is striking.

I bow to no one in my determination to punish serious criminals with an appropriate time in prison. However, I will not be diverted from my belief that prevention is better and more reliable than cure. The Minister must accept the disproportion between the great costs and the small benefits of imprisoning even the most minor offenders. Is not it better and cheaper to keep people out when there are better ways to protect society from their crimes and, ideally, to prevent those crimes from being committed in the first place?

Mr. Nigel Evans (Ribble Valley): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Maclennan: I regret that the hon. Gentleman is deaf.

Two specific types of crime in respect of which crime prevention has an important role to play are domestic violence and racial violence. Some people believe that crime prevention is little more than an attempt to put locks on doors and seek to elevate that into great public service. I admit that it can sometimes look like that. However, even if that were true, it would not be wholly unacceptable. Good locks can prevent crime and leave households intact and the police free to do other things.

I believe that crime prevention has great relevance to violent crime. The degree of violence in our society has risen steadily over several decades. Every year we expect the level of violent crime to remain at best static; if it rises one year, we adjust ourselves to that level and expect it to do the same in future. As Edmund Burke once said,

"Custom reconciles us to everything."

We reserve the harshest penalties and the most condemnation for violent offenders, and that is right. However, the existence of such penalties and the high clear-up rates associated with violent crimes do not appear to me—and, I suspect, to Conservative Members, some of whom have intervened today—to constitute a sufficient deterrent to potential offenders.

The commandment that is most observed in this matter is "Thou should not get caught." That is particularly true in cases of domestic violence. We have moved a long way with regard to our acceptance of the seriousness of domestic violence. Wife-beating remained legal until 100 years ago. However, we have not gone far enough. It may be a crime that takes place between intimates, but it is violence and it must be treated with the seriousness that it deserves.

Research conducted by a number of sources, most recently by Manchester university, revealed two significant facts about domestic and racial violence. The first was the extent to which they are under-reported. One in 35 domestic assaults and only six in 10 racial assaults are reported to the police; even fewer are recorded as crimes and investigated further.

Mr. Streeter: What is the hon. Gentleman's policy?

Mr. Maclennan: I am coming to that. I want the House to accept the fact that both domestic and racial attacks tend to be repeated within short periods. The majority of recorded offences are associated with relatively few victims and offenders. That is where prevention has a role.

The evidence suggests that once an offence is reported to the police, another is likely to follow soon after. Our responsibility is to break that pattern. The Government have failed in their duty to support the victims of domestic and racial violence. As long ago as 1975, a Select Committee recommended that there should be three times as many women's refuges in this country as there are today. That is a manifest failure of commitment.

The Law Society has drafted a Family Homes and Domestic Violence Bill which would allow the courts to make an ex parte exclusion order against a violent partner or ex-partner if that is in the interests of the victim. The Government have not yet stated their position on that and I hope that the Minister will take the opportunity of this debate to tell us the direction in which his mind is moving. The law needs to be amended.

The police have an immensely important part to play in preventing crimes of violence, as in other respects. The police have made considerable strides in that regard. For example, a police officer in south Yorkshire constructed on his kitchen table devices for recording attacks in the home on video and audio tape. Those devices are installed at the invitation of a victim where a repeat offence is expected. The victim feels more secure as a result of those devices and the police can gather valuable first-hand evidence. Devices like that, and the devices which were used to catch people who abused the owner of a Chinese takeaway on an almost nightly basis, are immensely important to help prevent crimes of violence and other crimes.

As I want to draw my remarks to a conclusion fairly speedily, I want now to consider racial violence. The Government have attempted a partnership approach. I believe that that is the key to preventing racial violence. There must be a good working relationship of mutual support and interest between the vulnerable communities, the police and the local authorities. The law provides for the eviction of council and housing association tenants who racially harass or attack their neighbours. However, it provides for such offences to be dealt with without reference to race as an aggravating factor. The law is not being enforced to its full potential because we do not have a systematic approach to the problem.

I put it to the Minister that there should be specialist officers in police stations with the sole responsibility for collating the details of every suspected racial incident in an area and for analysing those details and recommending a strategy to the senior commanding officer. That would enable the police to identify immediately the patterns of offending and allow them and the local community to be prepared for the next incident.

I am aware that many hon. Members want to participate in this short debate and that there are many aspects of the problems and possibilities in relation to crime prevention that I cannot possibly cover. If my hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) is fortunate enough to catch your eye at the end of the debate, Mr. Deputy Speaker, he will address a number of the specific issues referred to in the motion on which I have not touched.

We all recognise that there are no easy answers to crime. The problem is complex and varied, and so must be our policies to tackle it. A policy of severe punishment has its place and is not incompatible with a policy of strong commitment to crime prevention; indeed, the one can enhance the other. However, we are in danger—this point was brought home to us in the Home Secretary's speech to the Conservative party conference—of moving towards a more unbalanced, single-track policy. Crime prevention is not an additional or optional add-on. It is a vital component of a successful law and order policy.

5.17 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Charles Wardle): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question, and to add instead thereof:

"commends the Government's determination to tackle crime through a broad range of measures aimed at preventing crime, punishing offenders and helping the victims of crime; recognises

that government support of crime prevention takes many forms, including support of the police and support through the programmes of several government departments; believes that the key to preventing crime lies in partnership between the police, other agencies and the public; and applauds the work being done by this Government to promote and support partnership at both local and national levels."

I welcome the opportunity of today's debate. There can be no doubt about the scale of the challenge that we face in tackling crime. Recorded crime has increased in every decade since the second world war. People are understandably concerned. That is why the Government's first duty is to protect the public and that is why law and order is at the top of our agenda.

The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) raised a number of points and I am pleased to say that I will be able to respond to several of them. However, I am bound to remind him that some of his statistics were wrong. The incidence of violent crime has remained at around 5 per cent. of the total of reported crimes for the best part of the past five years. I am sure that the House will recall that crimes involving firearms represent about one fifth of 1 per cent. of recorded crime.

The hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland referred to sentencing. Sentencing must be a matter for the courts and the courts must decide whether a custodial sentence is appropriate. He also referred to racial violence. He will recall from our long debates earlier this year in Standing Committee on the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Bill that we agree that racial violence and racial prejudice are to be abhorred. However, I did not hear him say during those debates that it was important, as the Government believe it to be important, to maintain firm but fair immigration controls as a fundamental principle in ensuring good race relations in this country.

I cannot resist reminding the House that, in March, the hon. Gentleman issued a press release—he has claimed credit for his party on several crime prevention initiatives—about local authority crime prevention schemes. He also spoke of increased public awareness of crime prevention in Alnwick, but he omitted to mention that the lead in crime prevention in Alnwick came not from his party but from a £2·3 million Department of the Environment-funded renovation scheme.

Mr. Maclennan: I happen to have a copy of that press release with me. Nothing in it suggests that crime prevention schemes are being promulgated only by Liberal Democrat authorities. Happily, they are being pursued by several authorities in which the Liberal Democrats are represented. The impression was never given and it was certainly never intended that it was only Liberal Democrat authorities, although it is undoubtedly the case that they are taking a lead.

Mr. Wardle: The press release did not mention the Department of the Environment scheme, but the House will be grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his clarification.

Last week, the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) made a speech about law and order. That does not happen often, so I read his speech very carefully. It was flawed from start to finish. The right hon. Gentleman concluded that the criminal justice system was irrelevant in the fight against crime. That must be nonsense.

We need action to make sure that all elements of the criminal justice system work better. That is why the Government are taking action to prevent crime, to do all that we can to help the police to catch more criminals—too many criminals are never caught—to ensure that fewer criminals are cautioned—too many criminals are cautioned and not prosecuted—to ensure that criminals are tried fairly and quickly, and to ensure that those who are found guilty are punished appropriately. Those are exactly the powers that my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary is addressing. That is why we are taking action across the board. We intend to tilt the balance against the criminal and in favour of the victim.

Mr. Sykes: Bearing in mind my hon. Friend's comments about the Liberal Democrats, he might be interested to hear of a feature that I received from the Scarborough district housing forum. The politically correct and liberal tendency is well represented. The forum recently heard a lecture from the probation service and the minutes state:

"The Probation Service explained that the Scarborough area was piloting a scheme for their clients which could hopefully be extended to include other vulnerable people."

Does my hon. Friend agree that many people in Scarborough would regard such people not as vulnerable, but, rather, the kind of people who would take a crowbar to an old lady's head in order to rob her of all her savings and all her life's treasures?

Mr. Wardle: My hon. Friend is absolutely right to make it clear that society should unequivocally condemn criminals. I am sure that he will agree that much hard work is done by many honourable members of the probation service.

The right hon. Member for Yeovil does not seem to understand that an efficient and effective system of criminal justice with tough punishments forms an essential part of preventing crime. No other Government have taken crime prevention more seriously. Listening to the Opposition parties and to the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland, one would think that they have been pushing us all the way. The hon. Gentleman talked of Crime Concern as though his party should claim credit for it. He talked in the same vein about neighbourhood watch.

Of course, the Government are the largest funder of Crime Concern. The Government set up Crime Concern and they continue to support it in that fashion. The Government backed the police with neighbourhood watch. When neighbourhood watch was set up, some Labour councils refused to co-operate. There are now 115,000 neighbourhood watch schemes throughout the country. We have had car crime prevention year, the safer cities programme, parish constables and the creation of the National Board for Crime Prevention. All those ideas were developed and taken forward by the Government.

The most telling feature of the hon. Gentleman's interest in crime prevention has been his party's voting record on law and order legislation. They voted against the Public Order Act 1986, against the Criminal Justice Act 1988, and against the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984. I believe that I am right in saying that, this year, only seven members of his party voted for the renewal of the Prevention of Terrorism Act.

Ms Liz Lynne (Rochdale): The Minister mentioned safer cities projects. Will he guarantee that no further funds will be cut from safer cities projects?

Mr. Wardle: The hon. Lady should realise—it is already in the public domain—that, in addition to the 20 safer cities projects that have already been run, we intend

[Mr. Wardle]

to have a further 40 safer cities projects. It was made clear from the outset that those safer cities projects would run and that they would prompt and stimulate local investment, local partnerships and local involvement and would then move on. The hon. Lady talks as though one should continue to repeat the same investment. Does she expect us, having put locks on doors on an estate one year, to spend taxpayer's money, undo those locks and put them back again? I shall return to safer cities in a moment.

Partnership is fundamental to successful crime prevention. It involves all of us—that is, the Government, the police, local authorities, local groups, local businesses and the man or woman in the street—in the fight against crime. We all have a part to play in preventing crime from happening in the first place.

Mr. Ward: Does my hon. Friend agree that, in respect of crime prevention, it is what people do rather than what they say that matters? Does my hon. Friend agree also that television surveillance has a useful part to play in crime prevention? In Poole, backed by the police, the Conservative group wants television surveillance of an area in town to protect the lives and the property of people in Poole high street. The Liberal Democrat council is more concerned with a potential interference with civil liberties. It is ignoring the civil liberties of those who want to go about their work and their play in the centre of the town in safety. Is not that hypocrisy?

Mr. Wardle: My hon. Friend is absolutely right and Conservative councillors in his constituency are right. Throughout the country there is a growing number of examples of success with closed circuit television. That form of surveillance adds security and a feeling of safety and it also adds to watchfulness against crime.

I believe that the first duty of any Government is to protect the public and maintain law and order and to provide the police and the courts with the powers that they need to catch and punish offenders so that the public are protected. The Government have acted decisively to respond to concern about crime. This month, my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary announced a comprehensive programme of action to crack down on crime and the criminal. As the House will be aware, he announced 27 new measures covering all aspects of the fight against crime.

Mr. Alun Michael (Cardiff, South and Penarth): If the Minister is going to refer to the empty promises that were made by the Home Secretary in his speech to the Conservative party conference, I should be grateful if he would give simple answers to questions which have not been answered. When will he keep those promises? How much money will be provided? Where is the detail? The Minister has answered none of those questions because the matter has not been thought out.

Mr. Wardle: The hon. Gentleman knows that we are approaching prorogation. He understands parliamentary procedure, he knows that the House will reconvene, he knows that there will be a state opening of Parliament, and he knows that there will be a Queen's Speech. My advice to him is to listen carefully to the Queen's Speech. No doubt he will learn more to his and to the country's advantage.

I shall briefly remind the House of some of the measures that we have announced.

Mr. Maclennan: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Wardle: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will allow me to make a little progress, but of course I give way. He knows that my good will is reasonably limitless. I shall give way to him once more and I hope that his colleagues will allow me to make progress.

Mr. Maclennan: I apprehended that the Minister was about to leave the subject of crime prevention. Does he really think that it is defensible that the Government should spend on specific crime prevention measures a mere £15·2 million out of a total criminal justice budget of £8·6 billion?

Mr. Wardle: I am delighted that the hon. Gentleman has raised that matter. I can assure him that I intend to explode that myth shortly—nothing will give me greater satisfaction.

I have referred to further powers for the police and the courts to tackle offending on bail. We will impose tougher sentences for offenders. We will double the maximum sentence in young offenders institutions to two years. New guidelines will be provided to tighten the use of cautioning by the police. There will be acceptance of all the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Criminal Justice, which was directed at the Government to help victims of crime. We will abolish the right of silence. The Government are determined to help the police in their job of catching criminals.

This afternoon, the House heard my right hon. and learned Friend announce his decisions on the Sheehy report —a report to the Government, not a report by the Government. Those decisions are a demonstration of the Government's commitment to support the police in their vital work.

But that is by no means all that we are doing. As my right hon. and learned Friend announced this month, we are scrapping the restrictions on the use of DNA samples and reducing the paperwork burden on the police to free more officers for operational duty. The police need have no doubts about the continuing commitment of the Government to support their work.

We are determined to make life tougher for persistent offenders and hardened criminals. We make absolutely no apology for that. But it has been suggested by Liberal Democrat Members that, in doing so, we are neglecting or abandoning efforts to prevent crime and tackle criminality at its roots. Nothing could be further from the truth. We simply do not agree that being tough on crime and preventing crime through partnership must in some way be regarded as mutually exclusive alternatives. They are not. The Government remain totally committed to crime prevention and partnership.

Before I outline the action that we are taking, I shall deal with the point raised by the hon. Gentleman. It is completely misleading to suggest that less than one quarter of 1 per cent. of expenditure on the criminal justice system goes on crime prevention. In 1991-92 public expenditure on the criminal justice system in England and Wales was £8,700 million. During that year, over £5,400 million of that sum—62 per cent.—was expenditure on the police.

What are the core functions of the police? We should look at the Police Service Statement of Common Purpose and Values. I quote the opening sentence:

"The purpose of the Police Service is to uphold the law fairly and firmly; to prevent crime; to pursue and bring to justice those who break the law;"

The prevention of crime is one of the key functions of the police.

In 1992-93, estimated expenditure on the police increased to £5,900 million. That is an increase in real terms of 83 per cent. since 1978-79. Therefore, it is nonsense to suggest that Government spending on crime prevention is insignificant. Nor does it make sense to look only at expenditure on the criminal justice system. We have estimated separately that other expenditure on crime prevention across Government Departments was £200 million in 1992-93, compared with £167 million in the previous year. That is an increase of about 20 per cent.

If we look at Government spending on the inner cities on a wider front, we find that, taken together, expenditure on the Government's city challenge and urban programmes will increase from £319 million in 1992-93 to £408 million in the current financial year. Those programmes include crime prevention and community safety elements and provide significant additional benefits for inner city residents.

So the repeated suggestion by Liberal Democrat Members that Government expenditure on crime prevention amounts to less than £20 million is both inaccurate and misleading. It is irresponsible and alarmist to understate the real extent of Government expenditure on crime prevention. In doing so, hon. Members merely underline the paucity of their contribution to the challenge of tackling crime.

I shall return to the subject of partnership and crime prevention. Our partnership strategy has many strands to it.

Mr. Donald Anderson: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Wardle: I shall give way in a moment. The hon. Gentleman will understand if I wish to make some progress and not detain the House.

Our partnership strategy has a number of clear aims: it must provide a range of opportunities for the public actively to support the police; it must seek to get agencies working together at the local level; and it must maintain partnership at the national level. The Government are taking effective action in all those areas. More members of the public are willing to help the police to tackle crime. But, of course, some are able to do more than others. That is why we have developed a range of opportunities for individuals who want to do their bit.

The special constabulary has a long tradition of giving valuable public service. Being a special constable is the finest way in which ordinary people can help the police to crack crime. It forges a link between the police and the community. It creates an additional resource which can allow the greater experience and training of regular officers to be put to the best use.

The police reform White Paper recommended that the deployment of special constables should focus on tasks such as crime prevention and beat and patrol duties. In that way, they can contribute positively to reducing the fear and incidence of crime. That is why we are aiming to recruit an extra 10,000 special constables by 1996.

Another way in which we hope to see special constables contribute is by volunteering to take part in the parish constable initiative. That initiative offers the local community the opportunity to have a real stake, if it wants it, in local arrangements for keeping the peace. We ran a competition to generate suggestions from parishes about what powers and responsibilities such a figure should have and we have based the pilot schemes on the two most common blueprints that emerged. Whether a local community ends up with a parish special constable or a parish warden, the process will involve a real partnership with the police.

I come to neighbourhood watch to which the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland alluded in his speech.

Mr. Stephen: Will my hon. Friend join me in paying tribute to victim support schemes? Does he agree that a high proportion of the vast amount of money that is used to help organisations whose principal object is to help criminals should be shifted to victim support schemes?

Mr. Wardle: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. He will be aware that expenditure on victim support has increased to £8·7 million in the current year, so the emphasis is exactly as he described, and that victim support is represented on the National Board for Crime Prevention. Incidentally, that board has been looking at Home Office studies on repeat victimisation, among other things.

I return to neighbourhood watch. As I said earlier, we now have 115,000 schemes across the country covering 5 million households. That is a considerable achievement.

The second limb of our strategy on partnership is co-operation between agencies at the local level. On that, the way has been shown by our safer cities projects. The hon. Member for Rochdale (Ms Lynne) is interested in safer cities. I am sorry that she is at least temporarily not in her place. I am sure that she will return.

Safer cities is a successful programme. It has had many positive results in combating crime and the fear of it. Because of time constraints, I shall give only two examples. In Leicester, domestic burglaries in the South Highfields area were reduced by 62 per cent. as a result of security improvements. In Sunderland, over 3,000 elderly people who had security lights and locks fitted felt much safer in their homes. To revert to my earlier point, what should we do? Should we start other schemes, as we plan to do, or take off the locks and put them on again? I think that hon. Members understand the point.

The safer cities programme has brought together local authorities, the police, probation, business and the voluntary sector in an effective partnership to fight crime. It has tackled local issues that are of real concern to local people. Since 1988, it has sponsored more than 3,300 individual crime prevention schemes with Home Office grant amounting to more than £20 million. By next March, 16 of the 20 current projects will have been running for more than four years. They are to be succeeded by 40 new projects which will be set up in new areas so that other parts of the country can benefit.

Safer cities is not the only Government contribution to local partnership. Another example appeared this month, when the Home Office published a "Practical Guide to Crime Prevention for Local Partnerships". As I have said,

[Mr. Wardle]

the Departments throughout Whitehall make their contribution to crime prevention through their local programmes.

We also have to demonstrate a commitment to crime prevention through national partnership, which is undertaken by the Ministerial Group on Crime Prevention and by the recently formed National Board for Crime Prevention. We have recruited talented people to the national board to identify best practice and to produce creative, innovative but above all practical ideas to prevent crime. The board is concentrating in the first instance on retail crime, on youth and crime and on car crime.

The Opposition motion also referred to families and schools. There is strong evidence that children's experience of family life and their relationship with their parents play a significant role in whether they offend. Strong relationships between parents and children, with good communication, firm, affectionate and consistent discipline, an interest in the children's activities and schooling and effective supervision, can all increase the chance that children will grow up to respect other people and the law, and be able to withstand the temptations of crime.

Some parents need support in the vital task of bringing up their children to respect the law and the Government welcome and encourage that kind of support. We are also anxious to ensure that schools provide a clear moral framework in which pupils can be prepared for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life. Many schools run programmes which help to provide that sort of preparation.

The Department of Education's grant for the education support and training programme is supporting expenditure of about £10 million on schemes to reduce truancy, and of £4 million on the youth action scheme which involves youth work with youngsters who are at risk in 29 local education authority areas. The Department of the Environment's urban programme supports many projects in its 57 inner city target areas which are aimed at diverting known offenders and young people who are at risk of offending. I shall allude once again to the Home Office safer cities projects. Among many of those projects we are funding schemes associated with truancy and crime and with providing summer activities for young people to keep them off the streets and out of trouble.

Crime and drugs, as the House is aware, are often related. There is a great deal of public concern about drug misuse. Parents and young people are worried about the risks to people who take drugs. The Government put a high priority on action to tackle drugs misuse. There is an extensive programme of action against drugs. Our laws against drug traffickers are among the toughest in the world and they are made still tougher by the Criminal Justice Act. There are policies designed to give effective treatment to those who take drugs and a wide range of action is in hand to stop others at risk—especially young people—from becoming involved with drugs in the first place. The Home Office drugs prevention initiative is working with several local communities to mobilise activity to prevent drugs misuse. The police service is often involved, not only to enforce the laws against supply and possession of drugs or to deal with the network of dealers, but to increase awareness of the dangers of drugs.

In conclusion, I hope that the House will now appreciate the nonsense of the suggestion that less than £20 million is spent on crime prevention. I hope that the House will appreciate the comprehensive extent of the Government's contribution to crime prevention and their fight against crime. The Government are determined to crack down on crime and criminals, but we are equally determined to do all that we can to prevent crime in the first place. The Opposition motion failed to acknowledge the large amount of work that is being done, with full Government support, throughout the country.

5.43 pm

Mr. Alun Michael (Cardiff, South and Penarth): I am delighted to speak in a debate about crime and crime prevention. It is interesting to notice the way in which the words of my hon. Friend the Member Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) caught the mood of the country in the past year. When he called for the Government to be tough on crime and on the causes of crime, he went to the heart of the subject that we are debating. I only wish that the Government would catch up and start to take responsibility for their mistakes and failures.

Mr. Nicholls *rose*——

Mr. Michael: Will the hon. Gentleman be patient for a moment and allow me to reach the first comma in my first sentence before I give way?

I only wish that the Government would start to take responsibility for their failure to tackle and prevent crime during the past 14 years.

Mr. Nicholls: If the hon. Member for Sedgefield has caught the mood of the country, why has not he caught the mood of his own parliamentary party? While the hon. Gentleman is savouring what I might be alluding to, would he care to look behind him?

Mr. Michael: The hon. Gentleman should be well aware of the interest that my hon. Friend has taken. He is responding to many aspects of the Sheehy report. Today's debate is a minor debate initiated by a minority party. My hon. Friends have been working in their communities, with their local police, with the people who are affected by crime and with their local authorities. I only wish that the same could be said of Conservative Members, because we have been confronting the problem of crime while the Minister has only offered us what the Home Secretary does: rhetoric.

To hear the Minister's complacency today, one would think that a party other than the Conservative party had been running the country for the past 14 years. If the Minister has been so successful, why do the facts demonstrate 14 years of failure? He talks about protecting the public; it is at the top of his agenda. It is far too low on his list of priorities.

I was especially surprised that the Minister was so dismissive of the problem of violent crime. He said that violent crime had stayed at only 5 per cent. of total crime. As it was 5 per cent. of a bigger bulk of crime, violent crime increased by 126 per cent. since 1979, when the Conservatives came to office. The Minister should not dismiss that so lightly.

The bulk of crimes that are recorded by the police in England and Wales has increased by more than 12½ per

cent. since 1979. That is bad enough. Burglary of homes has increased by more than 180 per cent. Theft from vehicles has increased by 243 per cent.

Only one crime in 50 now leads to a punishment in court. Is the Minister proud of that record?

Mr. Stephen: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that the main cause of crime today is the breakdown of people's respect for each other, which took root in the 1960s, and that our failure to combat crime has been a result of our failure to resist libertarian attitudes towards crime? Does he agree that if either of the two socialist parties had been in power for the past 14 years, the resistance to those attitudes would have been even weaker?

Mr. Michael: If the hon. Gentleman had listened to the words of the Home Secretary before last, the right hon. Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker), he would have heard him confess:

"We have created a me society."

Yes; it is selfishness, but under the Conservative Government that selfishness has not only flourished but been encouraged. If the Home Secretary before last could confess that, I wish that the hon. Gentleman and the Minister would be equally generous. I wish that they would consider the terrible consequences of their mismanagement of the country and consider what is happening in the criminal justice system.

The Minister said that one of the most important crime prevention measures was the capture and punishment of the offender. The number of cases that came to the magistrates court decreased from 1·57 million in 1988-89 to 1·53 million last year, despite a 50 per cent. increase in crime; is that a sign of success? The number of cases that are withdrawn or dismissed at magistrates courts has increased by 50 per cent. since 1987; is that a cause for celebration? The number of cases that come to trial at the Crown court has decreased by 8,000 since 1986, in a period of rising crime. The number of cases that were discontinued by the Crown Prosecution Service before they came to court has increased by 78 per cent. since 1987-88. Those are the facts—on the very ground that the Minister chooses—which show that the Government have failed to tackle crime.

Despite the promise that some of us wrung out of the Home Secretary in February 1991, of secure places to end the scandal of youngsters being held in adult prison accommodation, not one additional secure place for juvenile offenders has been provided during that time. Not only that, the statistics from the National Bed Bureau in Leeds, which co-ordinates requests from local authorities for secure places to house young offenders, show that during the past year more than 400 requests for such places had to be turned down. That does not count the requests which were not made because people knew what the answer would be. That is the extent of the Government's failure on the grounds that the Minister chooses to count as important.

The Labour party's approach is to be tough on crime and tough on its causes. When people persist in crime, they must be punished. Projects based on partnership, where the police, local authorities and the public work together to fight crime, have been shown to work. I see that the Minister agrees with me about that.

From the Government, we need the leadership to put practical measures into effect throughout the country. Labour has offered that leadership, yet the Home Secretary failed to implement the Home Office's report on crime prevention—the Morgan report—which offered a blueprint for putting partnership into operation nationwide.

The Minister may come to the House and talk of partnership, but the Home Secretary and the Government have consistently thrown sensible plans into the waste paper basket.

Mr. Nigel Evans: On the issue of the punishment fitting the crime, what is the hon. Gentleman's view of young offenders being taken abroad to France or Portugal, using charge payers' money, and re-offending when they come back into the community?

Mr. Michael: Programmes for young offenders should be tough, should confront their behaviour and should construct the opportunity for youngsters to come back into the community less likely to re-offend because they have been offered an element of constructive hope and discipline during their time in either secure or local authority accommodation.

Before the hon. Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Evans) asked such a facile question he should have found out more about the details of schemes supported by the Government and the Home Office. The Labour party has made constructive proposals, which have been voted down by the Government—*[Interruption.]* Conservative Members should listen if they are interested in such issues—I believe that they are not. They voted down our proposals to cut offending while on bail, through bail enforcement and support schemes. They voted down the expansion of witness and victim support schemes. They voted down making the Crown Prosecution Service consult victims before dropping or reducing charges. They voted down faster action when youngsters start to get into trouble—with the cautioning plus schemes among others. They voted down speeding up the criminal justice system, to get quicker court decisions on persistent young offenders. And they voted down placing a statutory responsibility on local authorities to work with the police and local communities to fight crime. That is the Government's record—failure on the grounds that the Minister selected, and voting down the Opposition's positive proposals.

Recently, the Home Secretary said that thousands of people live in fear of the burglar coming back and that too many people are imprisoned in their own homes, afraid to go out in case they are attacked or burgled. That is the legacy of 14 years of Tory rule.—*[Interruption.]* I know that Conservative Members want to gossip among themselves because they do not take these issues seriously. There has been a 120 per cent. increase in recorded crime, but all that they can do is gossip and laugh during this debate.

Mrs. Angela Browning (Tiverton): I agree with the hon. Gentleman that people are afraid to go out, especially in urban areas. In the city of Exeter, which is adjacent to my constituency, people are afraid to go into the shopping areas in the city centre. For seven years the crime prevention panel in Exeter has been trying to persuade Labour members of Exeter city council to agree to closed circuit television cameras, but in the interests of individual and civil liberties they have opposed them.

Mr. Michael: The hon. Lady should check her facts. She should also consider that Labour councillors often take the initiative, but that the finance is voted down by the

[Mr. Michael]

Conservatives. I have found that out from my visits to Labour authorities throughout the country. The hon. Lady should be impressed by the initiatives that Labour councillors and Labour Members of Parliament have taken to tackle the problems of crime. If she is so interested in the subject, why did she join her colleagues in the Lobby to vote down the sensible proposals to which I referred?

The Minister also referred to racially motivated violence and domestic violence. It made a sorry scene when Conservative Members laughed and mocked the references that have been made to those serious problems. Parliament has a duty to send out the sort of clear message that my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield has provided.

Mr. Oliver Heald (Hertfordshire, North): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Michael: If the hon. Gentleman will listen to at least a sentence he might understand some of my arguments. I realise that Conservative Members have been pushed into the Chamber to try to disrupt this debate. I am sure that that is a matter of regret to the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan), who opened it. I understand their embarrassment—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. It is about time that the House settled down.

Mr. Michael: Hon. Members will be aware that we have a limited amount of time for this debate. I am trying to offer a serious solution to the problem of racially motivated violence. Parliament has a duty to send out the sort of clear message that was provided by my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield and Conservative Members should realise that. I ask the Minister to take back this message and to accept the plea for legislation to bear down on racially motivated attacks.

If the Minister is so proud of partnership measures, such as the safer cities programme, why did his Department send out a letter on 28 May to instruct co-ordinators of those projects not to provide information to a Member of Parliament who was trying to find out about their success and their future funding—open government, my foot! The Minister should be ashamed about that. Despite that instruction, we were able to study the progress of the safer cities programme, which confirmed something that the Labour party has been saying for years: if we put in a little extra money to enable a partnership to develop in inner cities, we will be able to reduce crime.

So the project proved a point that we have been making to the Minister and his predecessors for some years. What has happened, however? The Minister boasted that he has doubled the number of safer city programmes. He knows full well that the original 16 projects are running out of cash this financial year and that finance is not available locally to pick up the burden. He knows that the new projects will not have sufficient finances. They are talking about an amount that is only 30 per cent. of the money provided to the original projects, which will also have fewer staff and have not been given a time scale. That is not doubling the programme, but cutting it. It is a cut masquerading as an increase.

Should the Minister or the Home Secretary have wished to do so, they had the opportunity to answer parliamentary questions this week to show their commitment to the development of the safer cities programmes. They failed.

Mr. Heald: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way. If we are to have a partnership against crime, is it not time that the Labour party stopped making party political points and joined the Government in their fight against crime? Is it not time that they stopped voting against every measure that the Government introduce, supported us on the prevention of terrorism and said in strong words that the ringleaders of crime must be punished, and punished hard?

Mr. Michael: Earlier in this debate the hon. Gentleman was giggling and gossiping with his colleagues when I listed the measures that he, his hon. Friends and Ministers voted down. They voted down a series of measures such as those intended to be tough on bail bandits.

Mr. Heald *rose*——

Mr. Michael: The hon. Gentleman is not serious. If he were he would have joined us in the Lobby on that occasion—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Heald: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That vote was before I came to the House. I was certainly not involved in it. However, I served on the Committee of the Criminal Justice Bill with the hon. Gentleman and heard the Labour party's namby-pamby posturing. It is time that Labour joined the Government and got tough on crime.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That is not a point of order for the Chair and the hon. Gentleman should know that.

Mr. Michael: Not only is it not a point of order, but it is not true. The hon. Gentleman was a Member in June and July this year and I believe that he was in attendance. I am sure that he will correct me if I am wrong, but the voting record in *Hansard* shows that he voted down the measures that we proposed and showed his lack of commitment to tough action on bail bandits. The Labour party has done precisely what he asked—consistently put forward constructive proposals to deal with crime and the causes of crime week in and week out in this Chamber and outside, and Ministers have not accepted our advice or suggestions.

The Minister also suggested that drugs are a high priority. He should explain how the Government's irresponsible actions have helped the fight against drugs and drug-related crime. The Government have cut drugs education, voted down the use of money from drug trafficking to cut drug use, and cut cash and facilities for the rehabilitation of drug offenders.

Victims should be at the heart of the criminal justice system. Earlier this year we pointed out that money was needed if victim support schemes were to be developed around the country. The reply that I received from the Minister yesterday dealt a blow to any hope that he would act on his fine words by supporting victim support schemes. At this stage in the financial year just £200,000 would allow the expansion of those schemes to continue, but he has not come up with the money. Three vital services could be complete throughout England and Wales in two years if the Home Secretary came up with the extra £2·3 million for the next financial year. Those are: the

basic service of victim support; upgrading services across the country so that they can deal with victims and those affected by serious crimes like rape and murder; and providing witness support schemes in each Crown court, because the system now only covers 50 per cent. of courts.

So many prosecutions fail because of the lack of witnesses or because witnesses are afraid to come forward and give evidence. Our criminal justice system must make it easier for witnesses to come forward and help to bring criminals to justice. That is not a soft option, but an essential part of being tough on crime.

In June the Home Secretary failed to respond to our plea. This week he gave the answer again: no change in the planning figure; no extra money. So the Minister must not just talk nicely about helping victims but must come up with the goods if he *really* believes what he says. I regret that we have had too many strong words and not enough action by the Minister and the Government to deal with those problems.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): What is my hon. Friend's response to the demands voiced in a number of English tabloids that anonymity should be removed from complainants in rape and sexual assault cases? Does he agree that, were the protection of anonymity removed from women in such cases, fewer women would be willing to report such dreadful crimes?

Mr. Michael: I wholeheartedly agree with my hon. Friend. There are grave dangers that one case may lead to ill-thought-out changes in the law. The present law is correcting a problem that has existed for many years—the discouragement of many women from reporting rape cases. I hope that the Minister agrees that that approach should be maintained. It is another matter that illustrates the fact that we need to get the law right to encourage people to be confident that the criminal justice system will help them in their difficulties.

The criminal justice system deals with only 2 per cent. of offences. The whole of our society should be geared to preventing and reducing crime. The Government have not realised or accepted the extent to which they have encouraged the general problem in recent years. They have encouraged the failure of family life, selfishness and a great deal of lawlessness in our society. Ministers should face up to that.

May I summarise briefly our approach because I have taken many interventions, which inevitably takes time. As my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield said, we are determined to be tough on crime and the causes of crime. Unlike the Conservative party, we are determined not to be trapped into the nonsensical polarisation in which it is suggested that one party believes in punishment and the other in prevention. We believe in both and that a balance must be struck, but we also believe that it makes no sense for society to fail to prevent youngsters and adults from reaching the point where they must be locked up. As the Minister acknowledges, although not in legislation, a great deal can be done, but only if the causes are understood. Those include the direct causes that may be rooted in family or damaging experiences for the individual and the indirect causes, such as the environment—the street or estate—which appear to reward delinquency.

In getting those things right the criminal justice system, in its wider sense, must give the right message to those who offend, especially youngsters when they first get involved in crime. If our own youngsters commit an offence or do something wrong we correct them and, if necessary, punish them. But we do it today, not tomorrow, next week, or in six or nine months' time, as so often happens within our criminal justice system. The quicker the intervention, the more logical it is, the more it relates directly to the event, and the less the need to rant, rave or punish. Moreover, it has a better effect on future behaviour.

That is why it is so important that, in those aspects of dealing with young people and those who start to be involved in offending, and in the health of our communities, which has an influence on crime, the Government should take more action and recognise the interrelationship between education and crime. For instance, 50 per cent. of truants but only 16 per cent. of non-truants offend. The fragmentation of the education system is the Government's responsibility and Ministers should face up to that.

I therefore call on the Minister, in responding to this debate, to recognise the Government's failings and the need for the criminal justice system, in its wider sense, in the courts and outside, to be fast, firm, fair and effective. The tough words are no use unless we have those positive actions. We need prevention as well as action after crime has been committed.

6.6 pm

Sir Ivan Lawrence (Burton): The hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) said that the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) had caught the mood of the nation. He certainly has not caught the mood of his side of the House because there is no one here. Normally, when such a remark is made, as it was by one of my hon. Friends, a Labour Member goes out of the Chamber and brings hon. Members in from the Tea Room. Clearly, that could not be done because hon. Members are not even in the Tea Room.

Mr. Michael: The hon. and learned Gentleman is well aware of the announcement that we heard today and the degree to which my hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield must respond to it. I presume that that is why the hon. and learned Gentleman was absent from the Chamber for a considerable part of the earlier debate.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: I was not absent for more than five minutes, but that is not the point. The hon. Member for Sedgefield has not even inspired his party with the mood of the need for law and order.

We have just heard a brave but impertinent speech from the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth, bearing in mind his party's history on law and order.

This is the first time that I have ever seen the Liberal Democrats present in a law and order debate, except for the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan). When they say that they are the party of law and order, it is interesting to note that they supported Labour against the Conservative Government in the Public Order Act 1986, when we sought to deal with street disorder; in the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, when we sought to strengthen police powers on stop and search; and in the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act 1993, when we tried to introduce tough measures to stop the abuse of illegal immigrants.

Goodness knows what they got up to in Tower Hamlets, but I am sure that their racial activity in that area did not

[Sir Ivan Lawrence]

calm law and order. The idea that the Liberal Democrat party is the party of law and order is as laughable as the suggestion by the hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth that the hon. Member for Sedgefield captured the mood of the nation. The mood of the nation shows concern about the high level of crime, but there are misconceptions about the issue and the debate is an opportunity to explain some of them.

The level of crime is high in this country, but it is probably higher in most other countries in Europe and the civilised west. Britain is still one of the safest nations in which to walk the streets. Per head of population, we have half the number of murders in France. People are half as likely to be violently or sexually assaulted in this country as they are in Norway or Australia.

Recently, a delegation from the Home Affairs Select Committee went to the United States—one of its distinguished members, the hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson), is present—for advice on how best to deal with our hardcore of 300 to 400 persistent juvenile offenders. The Americans asked, "In which town or city are the 300 or 400 to be found?" The delegation replied that the figure referred to persistent juvenile offenders in the whole country. "You must be joking," the Americans replied, "we have that number in every town and city in the United States."

I do not for one moment suggest that we should not be working with all our might to reduce the high level of crime in this country. However, we should bear in mind not only, as my hon. Friend the Minister said, that only 5 per cent. of all our crime is violent but that the incidence of crime here is not as high as in other countries. We should also consider the fact that everybody now has telephones; there are 30,000 more policemen on the beat; there are 115,000 neighbourhood watch schemes, in which people look out for criminal offences; one cannot make an insurance claim unless the crime is first reported to the police. In addition, women now find it more acceptable to complain about sexual harassment and assault to the police, who are friendlier—as are the courts, and the judicial and criminal justice system. Those factors mean that a significant part of the apparent increase in crime is due to increased reporting.

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): The hon. and learned Gentleman is experienced in the subject and has introduced an interesting note into the debate. Did he contemplate making a speech on similar terms to the Conservative party conference?

Sir Ivan Lawrence: The speeches that were made at the Conservative party conference were much better than anything that I could make and attracted the massive support of the British people. If the Liberal party's debates on prostitution had received the same support from the public as those at the Conservative party conference, the Liberals would be overjoyed.

I do not want to waste time on the absurd suggestion that the Government have been doing nothing about lawlessness as I know other hon. Members wish to speak. My hon. Friend the Minister set out a long list, not only of actions that have been taken by the Government, but of the achievements that have resulted. I shall give two examples of those achievements. There was a time when there was a massive incidence of crime on London transport. When one used the underground, one could not be sure that one would not be mugged. We debated the subject in the Chamber. That crime has practically been stopped as a result of Conservative Government measures.

There was a time when we always complained about telephone kiosks being vandalised and the fact that we could never make a telephone call because telephone boxes were always full up, filthy or unusable. Now we can happily make telephone calls from public kiosks, which brings a great deal of credit not only to the Government but to the industries that have proliferated under a Conservative regime. There have been decisive improvements, apart from the statistical improvements listed by my hon. Friend the Minister.

Other hon. Members have mentioned my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary's 27 excellent pledges for action to tighten further the various existing measures to get to grips with the high crime rate. In the dying moments of my speech, I should like to draw attention to issues that will still require action. My right hon. and learned Friend must consider the necessary action in more depth.

Identity cards would undoubtedly help to reduce crime. That instrument has been staring us in the face for years and we have ignored it. Now that it is possible to see the great savings that could be made through the reduction of social security fraud and people realise that nearly everybody already has some sort of identity card, it might be possible to persuade the public to accept identity cards. That would substantially reduce not only social security fraud but all types of crime, particularly terrorism.

Two days ago, members of the Select Committee on Home Affairs were in Manchester. The Select Committee is conducting an inquiry into computer pornography. Appalling possibilities arise from our young children being confined to their rooms and watching computer video display units. They do not even have to have satellite television or video films, but can receive the most appalling and repulsive filth down the telephone line. I think that all members of the Select Committee, whatever their party, were appalled at the prospect. Something must be done about that problem. We must also do something about pornography generally, which is beginning to envelop our children. It is one thing for adults to have the freedom to get up to what they like in private; however, we are talking about children, young people, the next generation—the future of this country—who must be protected.

Television violence is linked to the problem. We keep saying that something must be done about it, but actually do nothing. The Select Committee on Home Affairs went to the United States earlier this year during its inquiry into domestic violence. One of our interlocutors said that, in her assessment, the American child attending school for the first time had already seen more than 2,000 murders on his television at home. Such viewing brainwashes a child to accept the most repulsive violence.

It is not enough to ask television companies not to broadcast violence until after 9 pm or even 10 pm. In today's society children stay up late and, if they know that there is to be a programme that they want to see, they will stay up late to watch it—heaven help the parent who tries to stop that happening. Postive action must be taken. If we have to legislate against the television companies to stop

them showing such violence when children can watch television, the Government must seriously consider that alternative.

Mr. Stephen: Is my hon. and learned Friend aware that when I complained to the Broadcasting Standards Council on behalf of my constituents about a particularly vile programme that had been broadcast on the public television network, I was told that the content was justified by its context? I responded by saying that if the network made programmes about foulmouthed people, the content would always be justified by the context. Is my hon. and learned Friend satisfied with the job being done by the Broadcasting Standards Council?

Sir Ivan Lawrence: No, I am not. We must look at the problem and take action. I see that hon. Members on both sides of the House agree that it is a serious issue which must be addressed.

On the issue of drugs, in Manchester the Select Committee on Home Affairs looked at racial attacks—a serious and worrying problem. We must take action to stop it. It was interesting that we were told by the Manchester police that there were 300,000 criminal incidents last year, of which 400 involved racial attacks and half—150,000—were drug related. We are about to be overwhelmed—if we have not already been—by the problem of drugs; it has to be dealt with, and not by distinguished members of the judiciary suggesting legalising or licensing drugs, either. If we legalise cannabis, we will just whet the appetites of children for more and more hard drugs, and create more crime.

Mrs. Browning: It has already been mentioned that the Liberal Democrat party's Scottish conference voted to legalise the possession of cannabis—*[Interruption.]* Hon. Members may laugh, but it was made clear to me only a few months ago by the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Taylor) that any resolution passed by Liberal Democrat conferences is official policy, whereas what appears in consultation documents is not.

Is it not true that the young people who purchase cannabis in the street buy it from the very people who will also supply them with crack, cocaine and all the other hard drugs?

Sir Ivan Lawrence: I agree. I must remind the House that the police have been active in this matter, as have Customs and Excise officials. The number of seizures rose from 200 in 1987 to 1,005 last year, and it continues to rise. We must direct more of our law enforcement agencies to the detection and prevention of drug trafficking. The courts must impose more savage sentences, too.

Mr. Thomas Graham (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): I fully agree with the hon. and learned Gentleman about the courts. In my constituency, seven men were arrested for drug dealing, yet the courts let them off scot free. Thousands of man hours had been spent trying to catch those folk, and we managed to catch them—but the court sent them out again, and now they are back dealing in drugs.

Sir Ivan Lawrence: If we can achieve all-party support for strengthening the deterrents, this debate will have achieved a great deal.

Removing the right to silence will not in itself prevent a great deal more crime, but it will reassure everyone that the criminal justice system is working. It will also reassure the police who will know, when they arrest criminals, that there is a reasonable chance of conviction in a court of law. They will know that it is worth doing what our police forces ought to do to bring people to justice. That will help to restore their morale.

I deplore the intemperate, over-the-top statement made today by the president of the Law Society. He seems to be quite unaware of the fact that the overwhelming majority of judges are in favour of allowing the prosecution and the judges to comment on a failure to give an explanation when an explanation would be reasonably called for. The vast majority of the British people think likewise.

It is a pity when some of our leading judicial personages make remarks that sound like they are saying that prison does not work or deter, so let us not bother about prisons. No one who has anything to do with the criminal justice system can believe for a moment that prison is not a deterrent to a large number of people. The longer a sentence, the more a deterrent it is likely to be, quite apart from the obvious fact that removing from society a burglar who would otherwise commit 13 burglaries in a year—that can be multiplied by 10,000—represents a great decrease in the amount of crime that will take place.

More attention must be paid not to well-meaning judges, however distinguished, but to the whole judiciary and the whole legal profession, not to mention police officers and all who are concerned from day to day with crime. They all believe that one of the most effective ways of preventing crime is deterrence. Everyone knows that I am in favour of the restoration of capital punishment; it would do more than anything else to prevent violent crime. I accept that such restoration is unlikely, but for goodness sake let us build up a system of deterrents—in line with what the hon. Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mr. Graham) wants for drug traffickers—so that the message will go out from this place that we expect our judges to impose heavy deterrent sentences on the worst offenders.

By no stretch of the imagination could it seriously be said that the Government are doing nothing about crime. The public will be reassured by my hon. Friend the Minister's speech today, and they will be in no doubt that this party intends to continue to be what it always has been, the party of law and order.

6.24 pm

Mrs. Diana Maddock (Christchurch): Politics is about people. It is not an exact science; unpredictable events take place and they can bring about great changes. One such event was the sad death at a relatively early age of my predecessor, Robert Adley. For Parliament, that has meant the loss of one of its more colourful Members, respected and admired on both sides of the House. For his wife and sons, it has meant the loss of a loved husband and father.

Robert Adley was a Back Bencher, but I believe that he was better known than many of our junior Ministers. Once he took up a cause, he gave it his all. He opposed the Government on the poll tax and on the privatisation of his great love, the railways. When he died, he was the Chairman of the Transport Select Committee, and he worked tirelessly on a report that gained all-party support.

Robert Adley stood up for what he believed in. He was also a first-class constituency Member. He enjoyed overwhelming support ever since he was first elected as

[Mrs. Diana Maddock]

Member for Christchurch and Lymington in 1972. He continued to represent Christchurch after the 1982 boundary changes until his sad and untimely death.

Robert once said of himself:

"I don't take myself or life too seriously. I wouldn't mind appearing on 'Spitting Image' as long as I was portrayed wearing a train guard's hat and smoking my pipe."

Recent events have led to a great deal of publicity for Christchurch, and many people will have gained the impression that my constituency is all coastal, with beautiful beaches, a magnificent harbour, an ancient priory church and a marvellous bowling green reminiscent of a previous age—not to mention a population all over 60.

Some of those impressions are true, which is probably why tourism is one of the main industries in my constituency and why so many people have chosen to move to the area. Behind that image, however, the reality is a little different. The constituency stretches north away from the coast to include the communities of Ferndown, West Moors and Verwood. There are the villages of Burton and Hurn; there is part of the beautiful Avon valley; and there is also Bournemouth international airport. Twelve per cent. of the constituency is Forestry Commission land. Local people use the area for recreation, and they want to keep access to those forests.

There are also many young people in the constituency. There are many people with young families, attracted to the area in the boom years. Many of them work in high-tech, high-skilled defence and aviation-related industries. But there are problems—including problems with schools, homes, jobs and travel. The children of Dorset are not getting a fair deal. Hampshire children just a few miles up the road receive on average £88 per pupil per year more in Government grant than do the children of Dorset. I hope that the Chancellor will redress that difference in next year's financial settlement for Dorset. The local citizens advice bureaux are dealing with more and more mortgage repossessions, and other families cannot move because of their negative equity. Meanwhile, our housing waiting lists are longer than ever.

Unemployment in my constituency has trebled in the past two years. The biggest commercial letting in Christchurch this year was to the Government, doubling the size of the jobcentre. Many of the jobs that we have lost are in the defence and defence-related industries.

There are many carers in my constituency, and many of them are elderly women who need support as they try to look after their elderly partners, many of whom have been dismissed from hospital far too early to make room for others. Here, too, I hope that we shall get a better settlement for Dorset from the Chancellor next year.

Rail services are now non-existent in the northern part of my constituency and buses are also rare. Recently, the train service to Christchurch was cut. Many of my constituents rely on such services to get to hospitals in Southampton, Poole and Portsmouth, and many more travel to schools and colleges by train.

Those are just some of the problems that I highlighted in my by-election campaign, and I intend to continue to highlight them and to fight for a fair deal for the people of Christchurch and east Dorset—the people who have given me support not only at my election but since that time whenever I have met them.

I am fairly sure that the Government did not intend the timing of the by-election to be helpful to me, but in the almost three months before I signed the book in the House, I had a chance to meet many of my constituents. Therefore, I am in no doubt that the two main concerns in people's minds in Christchurch are the proposed imposition of VAT on domestic fuel and the fear of crime. There is absolutely no doubt that many elderly people and others on low incomes—often the people who most need heat—will be badly hit if the Government go ahead with their VAT plans. My constituents are angry, and they will be greatly disappointed if the Government fail to listen to the view that they expressed at the ballot box.

In addition, for more and more people, the real fear of crime is destroying their quality of life. There must be action to prevent crime, and people must be able to feel safe in their homes and on their streets. Business men and women must feel that they can earn a living without their premises being burgled almost weekly, for that is the reality for some in my constituency.

I am particularly pleased to have been given the opportunity to make my maiden speech in this Liberal Democrat-proposed debate on crime prevention. Much is being done in my constituency to cut crime through local crime prevention schemes. In Highcliffe, the local home beat officer has worked with local people to set up home watch schemes. He has worked with shopkeepers in the village to set up the Highcliffe traders shop watch scheme, which has been established to help local shop workers work together in an effort to deter the criminal element and prevent crimes such as shoplifting, fraud and theft.

A similar scheme has been instigated in Christchurch. I was in my constituency yesterday and I understand that good progress is being made on that. People in the north of my constituency in Verwood have also been active in crime prevention and have won awards. The East Dorset district crime prevention panel has been most effective in cutting car park crime. If such schemes are to continue to prosper, and if the police and the community are to come together, to get other schemes off the ground, they will need Government support and recognition. Above all, they will need the tools to do the job.

Last year in my county of Dorset, the chief constable was given no extra officers when he requested them from the Home Secretary. This year, he estimates that he will need 97 more officers to do the job properly, but so far all that he has had is the Sheehy report which he estimates would, in its original form, have cut his estimates by 48. I look forward to hearing in some detail from the Home Secretary exactly where the 3,000 extra officers that he spoke about will come from.

That has not been all, because the Home Secretary's White Paper proposes to remove many of the elected members on our police authorities—500 throughout Britain. How can our police be responsive to local needs when their hands are tied at every turn? I hope that the Home Secretary will listen to the police and will support them. I hope that he will listen to the thousands of my constituents who want more police on their streets to deter the criminals and make people feel safer. I trust that he will give the chief constable of Dorset the extra policemen we need and for which the chief constable has asked. I hope that the Home Secretary will support the local councils and community groups that are coming together with the police to put into effect practical measures that cut crime. I hope

that the Home Secretary will put crime prevention as high on his agenda as we put it on ours, and as high as my constituents put it.

In the definition of the police constable's duty from Robert Peel's time to the present day, prevention has always come before detection. We can prevent crime if we all work together—the community, the police, local councils and central Government. The people of Christchurch and east Dorset elected me because I listened and spoke up about those concerns and real problems. I intend to go on doing that. I have brought their message here and I hope that the Government will listen and will act accordingly.

6.36 pm

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay): I welcome the hon. Member for Christchurch (Mrs. Maddock) to the House. She succeeds a doughty campaigner and a greatly respected parliamentarian. Robert Adley was Chairman of the Select Committee and had an encyclopedic knowledge of the railways. He made consistently marvellous and independent contributions to our debates. I commend the hon. Lady on her eloquence and look forward to her future contributions. I hope that she will continue her predecessor's proud tradition of independence which ensured that the people of Dorset, and Christchurch in particular, were well represented in the House.

I draw the House's attention to early-day motion 2448 which was tabled by the Liberal Democrats. It was received with some astonishment in my constituency, and especially by the police, because it states:

"That this House . . . notes in particular the reduction in the incidence of common crimes such as burglary and car theft of up to 80 per cent. at relatively little cost, such as those schemes operated by the Liberal Democrat-led authorities in Torbay, . . ."

and it goes on to mention other places.

I have come across several examples of political opportunism, but that early-day motion takes the cake. Quite apart from the fact that it is sheer nonsense because crime in my constituency has not been reduced by 80 per cent.—I wish that it had been—the idea that it was reduced as a result of a Liberal Democrat initiative is absolute hogwash. There has been a considerable reduction in vandalism on council property in Torbay, but that is no thanks to the Liberal Democrats.

On the contrary, the one initiative in my constituency to prevent crime was the introduction of closed-circuit television. That was suggested by me in 1991, and at an emergency meeting of the council in June 1992 it was proposed that closed-circuit television should be introduced in car parks and other public areas in my constituency.

I took that initiative because of an incident of crowd disorder outside a nightclub. Because a video camera was situated outside the entrance to the nightclub, the police were able to identify the person responsible for starting the fight and arrest him. Using the video tape, they managed to get a conviction. I was impressed by that. The emergency meeting of Torbay borough council was initiated by the Conservative group, and it introduced the widespread use of surveillance cameras. Remarkably, that measure was opposed by the Liberal Democrats. Not only was it opposed by the Liberal Democrats, but, because they had control of the council, they actually defeated the motion and they are now taking the credit for introducing it.

I have come across a great deal of humbug in my time, but the proposition that 80 per cent. of common crime such as burglary and car theft has been eliminated caused derision in Paignton police station when I reported the text. It is certainly political opportunism.

Mr. Maclennan: I am extremely grateful to the hon. Gentleman and I am delighted to know of his interest in crime prevention. Will he give Torbay borough council credit for introducing the vandal report phone line and the security controls which have had a striking effect in reducing vandalism, as has been recognised in the community?

Mr. Allason: First, let me remind the hon. Gentleman that I have had a long involvement in crime prevention, including spending seven years as a Metropolitan police special constable, so I have a long interest in the subject. Secondly, in relation to the initiative taken by the police in my constituency in conjunction with Torbay borough council, it is quite true that damage caused to council property has been reduced from expenditure of around £180,000 to £70,000 or £80,000 last year. I welcome that. I am very much in favour of the prevention of crime, but I am not in favour of the political opportunism which stands in the hon. Gentleman's name.

Let me draw the House's attention to the safe resort scheme of which that security initiative was part. We hope and intend to show visitors to and residents of resorts around the country that the English seaside resort is a place to which people can bring their children, which tourists can visit in safety and where local residents do not have to be afraid when they leave their homes.

In my discussions with magistrates, the police and the probation service, one particular problem has been consistently highlighted. The greatest cause for concern is youth crime and young offenders. In Devon, there are only about 22 or 24 persistent young offenders who cause a large proportion of the crime, but the problem is greater in my constituency because some owners of residential homes have been importing problem children.

One of the difficulties that I would like the Minister to address when he replies to the debate is the problem of young offenders, which is exacerbated by the fact that, provided that children's homes have fewer than four residents, they do not need to be registered with the local authority.

A great deal of crime is committed in my constituency by very young offenders who take advantage of the current legislation which prevents them from being restrained if they are under 15. That means that on some occasions a youngster who has stolen a car and been arrested in pursuit by the police has been taken to the police station, released into the custody of the children's home, and then, within the same shift, has been caught for a second time later that evening committing another crime on the streets.

It is not unusual for some young offenders under the age of 15 to be responsible for up to 200 burglaries. Near one establishment, a local resident has had his car broken into 20 times and has now given up reporting the break-ins to the police.

Under current legislation, it is impossible for the owner of the home to restrain the children as standing in front of a child or in any way physically restraining a child could lead to a charge of assault. I hope that, when the Government take the initiative and introduce the new

[Mr. Allason]

secure high supervision accommodation that is so desperately needed to deal with young offenders, they will ensure that the new establishments are up and running by June.

Although the staff of the establishments are extremely dedicated and determined to solve the problems of the young people, they create a tremendous difficulty for local residents. I would like to manifest the anxiety that has been expressed by residents who live nearby.

All too often there has been a tendency to criticise local authorities and people who are responsible for young offenders. Let me give the House an example. I am aware of the case of a 10-year-old girl who was brought to my constituency for respite and emergency care in a children's home. The problem at the heart of her offences was that she was having problems with her pimp.

Another example involves a 14-year-old boy. I spent some time trying to sort out his problems. He has been shunted around the country by Avon social services who are only too pleased to get rid of him and park him on another authority. When I spoke to the youngster, I discovered that he had not seen a teacher or received any education for 10 months; he had been through half a dozen different children's homes and it was clear that Avon social services were not prepared to take responsibility for him. As a result of that, he was caught five times in one week driving up the motorway to Bristol in stolen cars.

Some of the youngsters have very severe problems. It is too glib and superficial to say that the fact that somebody is willing to take such a youngster sailing on the North sea for two or three weeks while he is on remand is an expensive solution that provides the youngster with a holiday. The residents who live next door to residential establishments are pleased that some young offenders are in the North sea and not in the locality.

There are no easy solutions, but the Government must establish facilities where young offenders can be supervised and those establishments must be running by June. There are few deterrents that work, but I believe that high supervision, high discipline and a high training regime will deter. It will also give youngsters who have had appalling lives and home backgrounds where nobody gives a damn about them some security and discipline.

In reality, the greatest deterrent is the certainty of being caught. That means involving the whole community. The fact that somebody driving off the M25 can see a woman being attacked and drive past and ignore her shows what is happening to our community. We need a greater willingness by all members of the community to get involved and to prevent crime instead of looking the other way.

Based on my own experience in the Metropolitan police special constabulary, let me say that it is a two-way street. The specials do a tremendous job; they also have a tremendous influence on the regulars. I welcome the Government's commitment to the special constabulary. It is not a cheap option, but the specials have a real contribution to make and in their local communities they can not only catch the criminals, but, more importantly, can prevent crime.

I am grateful for having had the opportunity to catch your eye this evening, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I hope that the Minister will take on board the central worry that, to reduce crime, we have to tackle the problem of youth offenders, and to do that we must lock them up. We also have to ensure that the people who are responsible for those youngsters have the power to restrain them, instead of being in the ludicrous position that they could find themselves on assault charges simply by standing in their way as they leave home to commit a crime.

6.49 pm

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): I will not intrude into the battle of Torbay, as to whether the Liberal Democrats or the Government are responsible for various welcome improvements. However, I will join the hon. Member for Torbay (Mr. Allason) in paying a well justified tribute to the maiden speech by the hon. Member for Christchurch (Mrs. Maddock), which was felicitously drafted and delivered, and which paid a well-deserved and glowing tribute to her predecessor—a well-loved, well-respected hon. Member who is sorely missed. I only hope that the hon. Lady follows proudly and independently in the path that her predecessor trod and builds up the same reputation that he enjoyed.

Law and order and crime prevention are high on the agenda of our constituents, and Members of Parliament ignore that at their peril. Our constituents will not be impressed with the international comparisons drawn by the hon. and learned Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence). They look at the situation in their own areas and see it worsening. I remind the hon. and learned Member that, in his own county of Staffordshire, since 1979 robberies have increased by 452 per cent., home burglaries by 356 per cent. and all offences by 164 per cent. Constituents will not be mollified or satisfied by comparisons or suggestions that matters are not as bad as they appear.

The reality for our constituents is that they are less secure in their person and in their homes. I do not pretend to claim that is due to any particular party or policy over the years. In 1979, the then respected Home Secretary claimed that the answer to crime, which would deliver the goods, was the short, sharp shock. Recently, the Home Affairs Select Committee received evidence from the Home Office showing in clear terms that the reconviction rate of offenders who went through that process, which was promised to deliver so much, was no different from that of offenders who underwent other forms of treatment. We should have a little humility and a greater willingness to consider the facts and learn wherever we can about good practice elsewhere.

Crime prevention can be viewed at various levels. Yesterday, the Lord Chief Justice said in another place that the greatest measure of crime prevention is detection and the greatest deterrent the prospect of detection. That should lead us to review police staffing, the tools available to the police, and the cries of chief constables throughout the country—as in Dorset—that they are not getting the officers that they seek.

Only yesterday, the chief constable of South Wales pointed out that there will have to be a reduction in the civilian force and the transfer from operational duties of uniformed officers to compensate. That police authority has a deficit of £5 million, which suggests that the force is not being given the tools for the job. Later, I can show the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department a report

in my local newspaper revealing that South Wales' high-tech police forensic department is housed in a garden shed because of lack of resources.

I accept that demands are infinite and that we can seek only to meet an ever-growing menace to our society. Another change worth making is to the architecture and lighting of housing estates, as well as making cars more burglar-proof.

Members of the Home Affairs Select Committee were shocked at revelations made on their recent visit to Manchester of the increasing relationship between drugs and crime levels. What can be done to deal with that on both the supply and demand side? I checked some of the statistics given by Greater Manchester police with those provided by my local police force in South Wales. Although there is clearly much less of a menace from heroin in South Wales, some of the facts are just as relevant.

Greater Manchester police produced a document charting the period from 1981-91 in relation to the use of heroin and the increase in crime, which purports to show how the average daily intake of heroin by addicts is necessarily linked to the inexorable rise in crime. All of us should examine those figures and learn the necessary lessons from them.

The average addict uses 1 g of heroin per day at a cost of £80. The figure for South Wales is slightly more at about £90. Greater Manchester police calculated the cost to the public of passing on stolen goods, which is one of the main ways that addicts obtain the cash to feed their addiction. The average annual cost of heroin per addict is £29,200. Given that few people can obtain that sum legitimately, much of that money must come from crime.

Stolen goods are often sold on for as little as one tenth their real value. Greater Manchester police modestly suggest a crime potential factor of three to one. Therefore, the amount necessary to feed the individual's addiction is £87,600 per annum. The police multiplied that figure by the number of addicts in the Manchester area.

I accept that those calculations are somewhat crude, but they still produce the alarming result that the heroin-based crime potential for Greater Manchester alone amounts to more than £126 million per year. If one applies the same calculation to the country's other major drugs areas, one gains some idea of the linkage between crime and drugs. A chart supplied by Greater Manchester police shows a much closer correlation over the past decade between the rise in heroin addiction and that of crime.

Mr. Matthew Banks (Southport): The hon. Gentleman is entirely right to point to the dreadful nature of drug trafficking but does he agree that, contrary to his earlier remarks, the important factor is not detection but deterrence—action to deter drug trafficking or any other crime? Deterrence is far more important in preventing drug trafficking than detection.

Mr. Anderson: An attempt must be made to deal with the problem across the board. It must be dealt with on the supply side, through international co-operation on the part of all the relevant agencies; it must also be dealt with on the demand side, through proper education. Young people at school must be informed, and the police must be trained to handle the problem. Under the caution referral scheme operating in our own South Wales force, for instance, when a young person holding a small amount of drugs for personal use is caught for the first time, he is normally referred to a relevant agency.

The Minister described a panoply of crime prevention measures introduced by the Government. Distressingly, when trying to demonstrate the amount that had been spent, he failed to take account of the substantial cut in the sum that local authorities can devote to youth work and to other projects that can have a huge impact on the fight against drugs.

I am president of a youth group in Wales. We have recently been hit by cuts in county expenditure, and that pattern is replicated in many other youth clubs and the like. This, too, is a crime prevention measure. I hope that the Government will not compartmentalise crime prevention, but will look at it in the round. I hope that they will think in terms of information in schools, educating and assisting the police and considering the problem of drunk driving —and, indeed, driving under the influence of drugs: it is possible for drugs to remain in the blood for up to a month.

The Government should accept that the problem is a major scourge of our community, which is corrupting our youth and is clearly behind much organised and individual crime. Unless and until we recognise and deal with the close correlation between drugs and crime, we shall not hit the right target.

7.12 pm

Mrs. Angela Browning (Tiverton): I shall be brief, because I have been fortunate enough to make two interventions this afternoon.

My right hon. Friend the Minister referred to the strength of the partnership approach. As one who represents a rural constituency in Devon, I feel that, although crime problems in rural areas may be more dissipated, they are nevertheless important. Attention is focused very much on set-piece schemes for the prevention of crime in urban areas, but nowadays rural areas—Devon in particular—are visited by people on one-day sorties from the cities, who travel down the motorways to commit crimes, especially crimes against property. The partnership approach initiated by my hon. Friend has been welcomed by all those involved, particularly crime prevention panels.

The hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) implied that the absence of Labour Members was due to the fact that they were all busy fighting crime in their constituencies. He demanded to know what Conservative Members had been doing on that front. I can inform him —I am sorry that he is not present to hear my reply—that my constituency contains a special school for boys with problems similar to those identified by my hon. Friend the Member for Torbay (Mr. Allason): children with severe emotional disturbances, who cannot be educated in normal schools.

My constituency had a serious crime problem. When all the interested parties joined forces—the schools, the police, local authorities, the probation service, the victim support schemes and myself—we managed to solve many of the problems that those difficult children caused. There has been a remarkable drop in the number of juvenile offences dealt with by the local magistrates court. It is not just a question of talking about certain measures; when the will exists to implement them they work very well, as we have seen in Devon.

[Mrs. Angela Browning]

I have been particularly pleased to be associated with the Exeter crime prevention panel, of which my hon. Friend the Member for Exeter (Sir J. Hannam) is a member, and to see such schemes put into practice in the rural areas and the surrounding towns and cities.

Much has been said about drug-related crime. I have already put on record my concern that the Liberal Democrats should take such a relaxed view of the legalisation of cannabis. I use the word "relaxed" deliberately: I understand that, when asked to support the Scottish Liberal Democrat conference decision, the right hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) said that—although he did not support the move personally—he was "relaxed" about the idea. Let me make it clear that there is nothing relaxed about anyone who has ever come into contact with the victims of drug-related crime—or, for that matter, the young people to whom this wicked material is peddled by those who seek to make money and take advantage of it.

Crime is often glamourised. I wish my hon. Friend to pay particular attention—this, too, involves the Liberal Democrats—to those on the periphery of crime who benefit financially from it. Let me highlight the recently reported case of Miss Smith and Miss Cahill, who were released from a Thai gaol on compassionate grounds, having admitted their involvement in international drug running. On their return, it just so happened—supposedly—that they attempted to sell their story to the tabloid newspapers.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): For £100,000.

Mrs. Browning: My hon. Friend is right. A judge put a stop to that, but the girls' solicitor nevertheless sought to sell the film rights to Hollywood. Such glamourisation of crime is entirely abhorrent to those who appreciate its seriousness.

In the film, the two young ladies were portrayed as victims. I submit that the victims of international drug running are those who end up buying such materials on the street. I note with regret that Mr. Jakobi, the solicitor who acted for the two young ladies and sought to glamourise them, had stood as an official candidate for the Liberal Democrats on no fewer than seven occasions. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Paul Tyler (North Cornwall): The hon. Lady is clearly being dictated to by the hon. Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman).

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. Has the hon. Member for Tiverton (Mrs. Browning) given way?

Mrs. Browning: I have finished my speech.

7.6 pm

Mr. David Alton (Liverpool, Mossley Hill): The House will wish me to thank my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch (Mrs. Maddock) for her generous tribute to the late Robert Adley. He would have especially approved of her references to local public transport services, particularly the railways. In calling for more police, my hon. Friend drew us back to the substance of the motion. Her maiden speech demonstrated that she will be an articulate, competent and formidable Member of Parliament, and I know that we all wish to welcome her today.

I thank the Minister for indicating his willingness to keep his winding-up speech short to allow extra time for our own spokesman. He said that he felt that much of what the Opposition had said about law and order had been very negative. In his speech at Bournemouth—on virtually the same day as the Home Secretary's speech—my hon. Friend the Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) welcomed the burden of the Home Secretary's remarks. To follow up today's debate, we have already arranged a meeting with the right hon. and learned Gentleman at the Home Office in just 10 days' time. We shall then pursue a number of the points that we have raised, positively and constructively, in today's debate.

Towards the end of her speech, the hon. Member for Tiverton (Mrs. Browning) made a number of comments about drugs. Let me make it clear to her that—despite the canard that has been thrown around throughout the debate, suggesting that my party in some way supports a drugs policy, and although a motion to which I am totally opposed was passed by a group of people at a conference in Scotland—party policy within the United Kingdom is by no means in favour of drugs. In the past month, I personally published an article in our party newspaper setting out my opposition to the proposal. Let me also tell the hon. Lady —as a vice-chairman of the all-party drug abuse group —I do not take a relaxed view. I know from discussions with my right hon. Friend the leader of my party that he does not take a relaxed view about drugs. He said that he took a relaxed view about a motion on possession. Although I disagree with the thrust of that motion, let me make it clear that it does not commit the Liberal Democrats to support the availability of drugs. Anybody who misrepresents it in that way does a disservice to the cause of truth.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): In the extraordinary event that the leader of the Conservative party should say that he was relaxed about the legalisation of drugs, and then sought to avoid criticism by saying that that was said about a slightly different point, and anyway it occurred north of the border, is the hon. Gentleman saying that he would not raise the matter on the Floor of the House?

Mr. Alton: Considering some of the comments the Prime Minister has recently made about his own colleagues, I know that the word "relaxed" is not one that would be attributed to him. Certainly I can understand that the leader of the Conservative party would be extremely angry if his party were to support the proposition that drugs should be made widely available.

That is precisely the view of my right hon. Friend. Once again, the hon. Gentleman has deliberately misrepresented the position. What my right hon. Friend said was that he was relaxed about a motion on possession, but was strongly opposed to it. Let me make it clear that the motion does not represent the policy of our party.

The hon. and learned Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence) dealt with the question of drugs, along with the hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson), and touched on the issues of computer pornography and

television violence. Those are issues about which no one can be relaxed; they are at the heart of the cause of violence and the breakdown of law and order in the country today.

This timely debate has been held against a backdrop of some of the most violent events in living memory. The atrocities in Northern Ireland; the shooting dead of a community policeman in London; the subsequent murder, 24 hours later, of a man who was shot outside Shepherds Bush tube station, which was possibly related to drug offences; and the ramming of a woman's car on the M25 by armed highwaymen, who subsequently robbed her—all of those events graphically illustrate the violence of our times.

In Liverpool, preparations are in hand for the trial of those accused of murdering two-year-old James Bulger. The horror of that little boy's death caused us all to pause for a few moments to ask ourselves soul-searching questions about the health of our nation and the intensity of the culture of violence with which we now live.

Tragically, James Bulger's death was not unique. In every year since 1982, between 31 and 73 children under the age of five have been murdered. One in three people born in the 1950s has a criminal conviction by the age of 31 and one in 14 of those convictions is for a violent crime. In a letter dated 26 October, Mr. A. J. Butler, the director of personnel and services, in Her Majesty's prison service, said:

"Excluding those committed in default of payment of a fine some 49 per cent. of the total sentenced male and female prison population, for whom an offence was recorded, were serving sentences for violence against the person, robbery or for a sexual offence on 30 June 1993."

The phenomenon of violence is not confined to any particular region of the country. Every day, regional or national newspapers reveal the same disturbing picture, with story after story about criminal or violent acts.

While the incidence of crime has been rising inexorably, the number of cases brought to court has fallen. In 1992, only 28 per cent. of all reported crimes were cleared up, with just 16 per cent. resulting in a charge or a caution. Even fewer cases were successfully prosecuted. That is a wholly unacceptable level of attrition in any criminal justice system. As my hon. Friend the Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) said, that raises disturbing questions about the value we receive for the money we spend on a criminal justice system that will cost £9 billion to administer this year.

In addition to the cost of administering the system, crime incurs other costs. The Home Office has estimated that propery worth £3 billion was stolen last year alone, and anyone who has had their homes burgled or ransacked, cars broken into or stolen, or been on the receiving end of violent crime, will know that as well as the financial calculations there are the unquantifiable emotional costs —the climate of fear and insecurity—and the fortress mentality that has led us to spend £1·6 billion a year on security measures to defend ourselves in our homes and businesses.

The political response is divided between knee-jerk reactions—which often reach a crescendo at well known seaside resorts during the party conference season—and hand-wringing defeatism that there is nothing we can do. Since 1979, Parliament has passed 64 measures to tackle crime, but during that time crime has doubled. The Minister paraded some of those measures before us today and claimed that we did not support all of them, and yet the Government are now bringing forward Bills to repeal many of the provisions of the laws that they have previously enacted.

Surely the experience of the past 14 years shows that feeble posturing and partisan rivalry must be replaced by a coherent strategy that will restore public confidence in our system of law and order. As we divide into a society of predators and victims, we must, as my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch said in her maiden speech, be prepared to listen to victims of crime, to people who live in fear of crime, to those responsible for young people, to those who fight crime and to those who deal with offenders.

Despite all-party attempts to establish a royal commission, along the lines suggested by the Chief Rabbi and the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster, to look at the causes of violence in society, and despite the fact that more than 100 Members of Parliament, most of them Conservative Members, signed the all-party motion in support of that, the Government, sadly, rejected it. The Government should think again and respond to the public mood. They should look more deeply at the causes, especially given the terrible atrocities that are happening in the country day after day.

Mr. Nicholls: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Alton: No, I have given way to the hon. Gentleman once.

Every citizen has a responsibility in the fight against crime. We need a much richer language than the language of rights, a language which also emphasises responsibility and duty. Ours is a nation where far too often selfishness is rewarded and responsibility is evaded. Crime breeds on a breakdown of personal responsibility and it is nurtured by our culture of violence.

The hon. and learned Member for Burton quite rightly said that television brings images of violence into our living rooms. When murder and mugging is dressed up as entertainment, is it any wonder that people cannot distinguish between right and wrong? Earlier this year we were invited by the makers of the BBC's tale of everyday life in a hospital, "Casualty", to relish the prospect of thugs overrunning the hospital to destroy it by arson. Just a week ago, Channel 4 rejected the regulator's criticism of an episode of "Brookside", which was shown on a Saturday afternoon, well before the so-called watershed, which featured an attacker brandishing a kitchen knife as he attacked his victim. The former chairman of the Broadcasting Standards Council, Lord Rees Mogg, said:

"For the past 10 to 15 years film makers have been producing films which are ultra violent, exploiting violence of an extreme kind. The cumulative effect is antisocial."

Too often, the Home Office and television programme makers have argued that those links cannot be proven and that the power of television is in some way underestimated. Details from the Independent Television Authority show that £1·7 billion was spent in the past year on television advertising by people trying to sell their wares through the power and pressure of television. If people think it is worth their while spending money in that way because of the influence of television, surely we should not underestimate the effect that it can have in our home. The public are not in any doubt. The *TV Times* published a survey in April that showed that 59 per cent. of those interviewed felt that there were undoubted links between television and real-life violence. Eighty-five per cent. said that the

[Mr. Alton]

television companies are not careful enough in monitoring screen violence. In July, the new chairman of the BSC, Lady Elspeth Howe, confirmed that the number of complaints about violence from members of the public had trebled in the preceding 12 months.

Other disturbing aspects of the culture of violence include freer and easier access for young people to vicious video and computer material. I am especially glad that the hon. and learned Member for Burton said that the Home Affairs Select Committee is considering computer pornography and the submission made by Care about that issue. I hope that the Committee will take that subject seriously.

Added to the existing pornography that already portrays the violation, degradation and exploitation of women in such an unacceptable way, the increasing dependency on drugs of which we have heard so much in the debate, creates a climate of violence. Some neighbourhoods, as hon. Members who represent inner cities areas are all too aware, are awash with drugs, which are a powerful pressure for crime. People steal to pay the pusher and they steal from their own relatives and homes. As the hon. Member for Swansea, East said, drugs are one of the biggest reasons for increasing crime in many neighbourhoods and communities.

On Tuesday, Merseyside police seized a terrifying haul in an arms raid on a flat in Toxteth. Among the firearms seized were five semi-automatic machine guns and a revolver and a stash of ammunition was found. Some of the guns were fitted with silencers. Many attacks and robberies involve replica guns that are openly advertised and freely bought without a licence. A sub-postmaster or a cashier does not stop to ask if a gun is real or fake when it is pointed at them. Fake guns clearly need regulating. If it looks like a gun, it should be treated like one. Let us learn from the miserable experience of America where more than 1,000 murders, mostly involving guns, occurred in Los Angeles during the past year.

In Britain we need a common agenda to defeat lawlessness and to help us rediscover the intrinsic value of each person. The well-being of society should be judged more by the quality of human relationships than by material attainments; more by the richness of human lives than by the abundance of possessions. Our goal should be the realisation of human values and a strengthening of community life. We could pay for some of that by dedicating the £304 million paid in fines annually to the fight against crime. The money that is sequestrated from drug barons should be re-invested, especially to help the victims of drug abuse. Money should be used to establish crime prevention units in every locality and neighbourhood police stations should be re-opened. The removing of Dixon from the beat and the closure of Dock Green have been a calamity for many areas where people have lost the presence of local policemen who they knew so well. The money could be used to offer grants for burglar alarms and for security improvements for people who cannot afford to make their homes safe.

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): *rose——*

Mr. Alton: May I conclude because time is against me?

One in three people have a conviction for a crime by the age of 31 and one in 14 for violent crime, so we must especially target the young. Forms of community service may rekindle the positive aspects of citizenship that disappeared with the abolition of national service. The media, which have a powerful influence on the young, must give the young more positive images which they can live up to. Simply building more prisons when a 25 per cent. increase in gaolings would cut crime by one per cent. only and playing party-political games while we spend over £9 billion a year to run our criminal justice system fails to address the fundamental problems of crime, is defeatist and a betrayal of the public's trust.

As with so many of the problems besetting our nation, the political will to deal with them is lacking in the House. That is why my right hon. and hon. Friends have felt the need to table the motion and I am happy to commend it to the House.

7.17 pm

Mr. Charles Wardle: With the leave of the House, I should like to speak a second time.

The hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton) referred to the terrible murder in the past week of Police Constable Patrick Dunne in Clapham while on duty serving his community. I join him and, I am sure, all right hon. and hon. Members in paying tribute to PC Dunne and expressing condolences to his family.

I have undertaken to be brief and shall make three points. First, I congratulate the hon. Member for Christchurch (Mrs. Maddock) on her eloquent speech and the powerful points that she made on behalf of her constituents. I welcome her to the House, and I enjoyed her generous tribute to her predecessor, Robert Adley, my late hon. Friend. I wish her every enjoyment of the parliamentary routine while she retains her seat.

The hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Michael) referred to the Morgan report. The Government welcome the report's emphasis on the partnership approach, but do not accept the recommendation that local authorities need a statutory responsibility for crime prevention.

My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Sir I. Lawrence) referred in a typically powerful speech to identity cards. A scheme to introduce ID cards is kept under regular review. The key concern is whether a compulsory scheme would bring significant benefits to the police in tackling crime.

A number of my hon. Friends have spoken with realism about the many challenges we face in the fight against crime and have offered encouragement and support for my right hon. and learned Friend's proposals for police reform and improvements to the criminal justice system. Some Opposition Members have bungled the arithmetic of crime prevention expenditure and have been less than convincing in their attempts to claim credit for a variety of local and regional crime prevention initiatives, many of which have been prompted either by Government expenditure or as a result of determined efforts by Conservative members of local authorities. Opposition Members will have every opportunity in the forthcoming Session to demonstrate their new-found sense of responsibility in supporting new Government legislation.

Success in the fight against crime is being achieved by the police and the public working in partnership at local level. Many Government iniatives point the way. Neighbourhood watch, many other watch schemes, safer

cities, parish constables, the national boards, coalitions against crime, Crime Concern and the crime prevention centre are all evidence of the Government's progress in a fight that calls for tough resolve and determination to protect the public, to safeguard victims and to hit criminals where it hurts. It is only the Government who display that resolve.

I urge the House to reject the motion and support the amendment tabled by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister.

Question put, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 29, Noes 143.

Division No. 374] **[7.28 pm**

AYES

Alton, David
Barnes, Harry
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Connarty, Michael
Cryer, Bob
Davidson, Ian
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Harvey, Nick
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Lynne, Ms Liz
Maclennan, Robert
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Mahon, Alice
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Michie, Mrs Ray *(Argyll Bute)*
Rendel, David
Salmond, Alex
Skinner, Dennis
Spearing, Nigel
Taylor, Matthew *(Truro)*
Tyler, Paul
Welsh, Andrew

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Archy Kirkwood and
Mr. Simon Hughes.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Amess, David
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Bates, Michael
Beresford, Sir Paul
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Bright, Graham
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carttiss, Michael
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Clappison, James
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcliffe)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Patrick
Cran, James
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Dykes, Hugh
Elletson, Harold
Evans, David *(Welwyn Hatfield)*
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Forman, Nigel
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Hague, William
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Harris, David
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Hendry, Charles
Hill, James *(Southampton Test)*
Horam, John
Hughes Robert G. *(Harrow W)*
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jenkin, Bernard
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
MacKay, Andrew
Maginnis, Ken
Malone, Gerald
Martin, David *(Portsmouth S)*
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Patnick, Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Rathbone, Tim
Richards, Rod
Robathan, Andrew
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shaw, David *(Dover)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James *(W Dorset)*
Spink, Dr Robert
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles *(Bexhill)*
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Willetts, David
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and
Mr. James Arbuthnot.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments), and agreed to.*

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House commends the Government's determination to tackle crime through a broad range of measures aimed at preventing crime through a broad range of measures aimed at preventing crime, punishing offenders and helping the victims of crime; recognises that government support of crime prevention takes many forms, including support of the police and support through the programmes of several government departments, believes that the key to preventing crime lies in partnership between the police, other agencies and the public; and applauds the work being done by this Government to promote and support partnership at both local and national levels.

Cold Climate Allowance

7.39 pm

Mrs. Margaret Ewing (Moray): I beg to move,

That this House, recognising that widespread fuel poverty means many more people on low or fixed incomes have to choose between malnutrition or hypothermia and that excess deaths rise during the winter months, calls on Her Majesty's Government to institute forthwith a cold climate allowance payable to those on basic state benefits; believes this should be an automatic payment during 17 weeks from December to March in addition to severe weather payments and should also take account of prevailing climatic conditions throughout the United Kingdom; believes that energy efficiency is best created by a programme of house-building, house renovation and house improvement which would save lives, save energy and create employment; and rejects current proposed price mechanisms such as value-added tax on domestic fuel which will further penalise the most vulnerable and which are morally and politically unacceptable.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): I have to tell the House that Madam Speaker has selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister.

Mrs. Ewing: It is with a great sense of anger that yet again I rise in the House to talk about the issue of fuel poverty and the need for a cold climate allowance, and the implications of that for health, for welfare and, most important of all, for people themselves. In the motion, I am, above all, talking about people. This is not a pious or esoteric issue. It is not a philosophical debate; it is about the quality of life. It is a question of where legislators place their moral responsibility, and the value that we place on each individual human life.

My anger relates to the long neglect of the matter. When I was first elected to the House in 1974, when you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I were much younger—as were many other hon. Members—I was accused of scaremongering because I asked a series of parliamentary questions and made statements on the issue of cold-related deaths. Those accusations came from the then Labour Government and also from the official Opposition. Apparently it was not appropriate at that time to ask such questions.

Despite detailed questioning by myself and other hon. Members at that time, there was a refusal to recognise the extent of the problem about which we are still talking in 1993. For example, on 10 January 1978, the then Secretary of State for Social Services said:

"hypothermia was mentioned on fewer than 600 death certificates in England and Wales."—[*Official Report*, 10 January 1978; Vol. 941, c. 1422.]

Subsequently, in an article in *The Observer* of 16 December 1979, and in other newspapers, the former junior Minister at the Department of Health and Social Security, the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher), who has received notification of the fact that I will mention his name tonight, admitted to political pressures being exerted on him. Departmental officials ruled that it was important not to issue information in this politically sensitive area which might be misleading and which could certainly be used against the Government. The hon. Gentleman was advised that it was almost certain that any reply suggesting that large numbers of old people were suffering from hypothermia would be used to bring pressure on the Government to improve heating provisions for old people.

That was the attitude that prevailed at that time. It was much easier to say that hypothermia related to deaths caused only as a result of accidents in Scottish, Welsh or English mountains. However, the reality, as we all know, is that the deaths of many of our old, our sick and our vulnerable are related to the extent of cold from which they suffer.

In an amended reply, the hon. Member for Oldham, West said that he was unable to give an estimate, but evidence from death certificates in England and Wales revealed that only 17 people died from hypothermia in 1974. He admitted subsequently that many people die from hypothermia, but that they are written off on their death certificates as heart attack victims.

It is my sincere hope that matters have moved on since then, both in the House and in our community as a whole. There is widespread interest and concern. I have stacks of files in my office—the equivalent of a mountain, so I have not brought all of them to the House—from various concerned organisations that represent the elderly, the disabled, health services and the Royal College of Nursing. They agree with us, some 20 years on, that there is a need to recognise the significance of cold as it relates to the welfare of our people.

I should also point out that the current Prime Minister, who in the 1970s and early 1980s acted as a junior Minister at the Department of Health and Social Security, recognised that the cost of fuel was relevant to those on low incomes. He said:

"Fuel is clearly a basic necessity, especially for the elderly and the sick. I recognise the concern that is felt by many on low incomes when it comes to paying for fuel."—[*Official Report*, 16 December 1985; Vol. 89, c. 134.]

He went on to talk about the issue of excess deaths in our winter months. Later, he referred to

"the excess number of winter deaths that have perplexed successive Governments for years . . . The real problem, then as now . . . is not hypothermia, but the additional deaths from all causes, particularly heart disease, strokes and chest infections, which tend to occur in winter. It is a long-standing problem that our excess winter mortality rate is higher than that in other countries with severe winters, such as the United States of America and Sweden."—[*Official Report*, 2 December 1986; Vol. 106, c. 834-35.]

The reality is that those excess winter deaths are still occurring. Here we are, looking forward to the millennium, another century, yet still the House and society as a whole are talking about people who will die because they are unable to heat their homes effectively and look after the welfare of their families.

According to Strathclyde Elderly Forum, every year between 3,000 and 5,000 Scots die from cold-related illnesses. Not all those people are aged or infirm. Let us take the years 1976 to 1984 and look beyond the boundaries of my country of Scotland at what happened elsewhere. The number of deaths in January in West Germany was 4 per cent. above the monthly average; in Sweden and Norway it was 7 per cent. above the monthly average; but in Scotland it was 16 per cent. above the average monthly rate. That shows quite clearly that we have still not remedied either the causes or the effects of fuel poverty in our nation. I must say to the Government—with sincerity and a great deal of passion because I regard this as a moral issue that is based on fundamental principles about people and their right to life—that unless the issue of fuel poverty is addressed effectively, we shall continue to have a situation whereby we have a Westminster euthanasia system for the most vulnerable in our society.

This is not an issue that pertains solely to Scotland, although I understand the situation there. I care about

deaths and deprivation wherever they occur. This is a United Kingdom issue which affects every constituency represented in the House.

A recent survey from the university of Oxford points out that, according to figures collated by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, for every 1 deg. C the temperature is colder than average over the four months of December to March, there will be an additional 8,000 deaths. That was quoted in a book by Curwen and Devis in 1988, and confirmed subsequently in February 1991 when two weeks of severe weather resulted in an additional 4,000 deaths. That is not a record in which any Government or legislator can have any pride whatever. The problem has received increasing attention recently because of our concern about the likelihood that VAT will be imposed on domestic fuels. The imposition of VAT on domestic energy will have the same effect as a drop in external temperature because it will mean that it will cost more to run a warm healthy home.

I ask hon. Members to accept that we have a moral responsibility not only as constituency Members of Parliament but as sons and daughters. I speak as the daughter of a woman who will be 82 next month and who lives alone and on a state benefit. I know what the real situation is: my mother has a caring family, but I know that when I walk out of her house she automatically turns off the central heating system. My brother has had the same experience. People want to organise their lives independently, but we have a moral responsibility to ensure that none of them suffer.

Mr. Phil Gallie (Ayr): Will the hon. Lady concede that my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor has already pledged that he will protect those on state benefit? Does she agree that the people most likely to suffer from the impositions of VAT on domestic fuel will be those whose income is just above the level at which state benefit is payable—those who have provided for their future to a small extent and who therefore receive no additional help from the state? Will the hon. Lady comment on that?

Mrs. Ewing: I certainly do not disagree with the hon. Gentleman. Given that he has spoken with such vehemence, I hope that he will support us in the Lobby tonight and also vote against the likely Budget provisions, especially as the Chancellor said that he would prefer to move straight to 17·5 per cent., rather than the 8 per cent. that is to be imposed next year. People at the margins of state benefit—people who have saved for their old age, or people who have small occupational pensions, or widows receiving a small additional payment as a result of contributions made by their husband during his lifetime —are too vulnerable. At this stage, however, we have no idea what form of compensation the Government propose to introduce. We argue that we must have a clear automatic payment to ensure that the most vulnerable—those whom we can reach—are assisted in the coming winter months.

You will be aware, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that since 1984 Dr. Gordon Wilson and I have introduced no fewer than five cold climate allowance Bills, which have been objected to and disparaged in the House. They have met with no success because they have been opposed by those on the Government Benches. We are supposed to be a democracy. What sort of system is it that so readily rejects the basic principles of care and humanity? I condemn the House and I condemn successive Governments for their inhumanity to humanity.

The Government amendment refers to improvements in cold weather payments, but in 1986 the Prime Minister—in those days, a junior Minister at what was then the Department of Health and Social Security—admitted:

"Over the years the various systems for making payments has been contentious and unsuccessful. There is no dispute about that."

The then Minister went on:

"That is why we have tried to introduce a system which makes sense, judged by three criteria."

What were those three criteria? The then Minister said:

"First, there must be clear rules for help",

with

"an objective test of . . . coldness as the basic qualifying rule."

He said that the intention was to avoid a system

"which relies on local subjective judgments."

The severe weather payments scheme still relies on local subjective judgments. Look at what happened in the borders of Scotland last year. Temperatures taken at Eskdalemuir did not relate to other areas of the border because they were measured from Bulmer. Many people who were living in severe climatic conditions had no opportunity to claim severe weather payments.

The second criterion for which the right hon. Gentleman argued was "certainty and speed of response". He said:

"Claimants must know quickly when a period of exceptionally cold weather has been declared and for how much they will qualify."—[*Official Report*, 2 December 1986; Vol. 106, c. 837.]

It is obvious to my constituents when weather conditions are severe; they do not need to walk outside with a thermometer to find out, and they do not need to rely on readings taken somewhere else. I represent the highest village in the highlands of Scotland, Tomintoul—a name that people recognise from weather forecasts and weather reports. People know when they are living in severe climatic conditions, yet many many of them do not qualify for severe weather payments.

The right hon. Gentleman then said that we must concentrate help on the groups on whom most concern about risks has focused—the elderly, the sick, the disabled and the very young. No one can disagree with that philosophy. But if that is the Government's philosophy, why do hon. Members still constantly receive in their mailbags correspondence from voluntary organisations representing those groups of people that expresses deep concern about the failure of successive Governments to recognise their needs? The elderly, sick and disabled and those who care for the very young are still being deprived of the finance necessary to heat their homes.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): The hon. Lady has referred to her constituents, who live hundreds of feet above sea level. Is she satisfied with the location of the local weather station?

Mrs. Ewing: No, indeed. I live in Lossiemouth, which is on the Moray firth. Anyone who lives on the coast knows that the cliamte is substantially warmer there than in the uplands, yet the measurements are taken from the same point. That shows how ludicrous is the system of measurement used to trigger the severe weather payments.

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): On the subject of ludicrosity, if that is the correct word, can the hon. Lady imagine anything more ridiculous than asking

[Sir Nicholas Fairbairn]

old people to work out the temperature, then work out whether they are cold, then whether they have been cold for five hours, then whether, because they have been cold for five hours and 10 minutes, they qualify to go to a bureaucratic office and fill in a claim form in the hope that they will eventually be reimbursed? Can the hon. Lady imagine anything more contrary to human nature?

Mrs. Ewing: I welcome the fact that the hon. and learned Gentleman has supported the motion in his comments. He and I yesterday attended a meeting about VAT on domestic fuel at which he made a similar point. I will come later in my remarks to the mechanisms for claiming. The hon. and learned Gentleman has emphasised the very fundamental point that there must be automatic payments, which must be readily available and which must not be on the basis of a reclaim involving endless bureaucratic form filling.

Way back in the 1980s the Prime Minister referred to the need for certainty. My argument revolves around precisely that need. I do not argue for the reclaim system to which the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Sir N. Fairbairn) referred. We know that all people—in particular, people whose family includes a disabled member—look with dismay at the forms, which run to eight, 10 and sometimes 20 pages. They do not know how to fill them in. They do not always have family members who can help them to fill them in. They do not know when they are supposed to fill them in or to whom they are supposed to give them. Our social security system is so complex that many people do not claim that to which they are entitled.

We seek to ensure that there is certainty for everyone who needs assistance. We are proposing an automatic payment for 17 weeks from December to April, which are regarded as the months when climatic conditions are such that people need assistance with their heating. I do not believe that we must rely on the severe cold weather snaps which can exist anywhere within the United Kingdom. We must have an automatic payment system.

Any payment that is given should also take account of the prevailing climatic conditions within the United Kingdom. Since the Government began talking about the possible imposition of VAT on fuel, it has been interesting to see many of the reports which have emerged from organisations which are not politically involved, but which are concerned about the implications of the Budget for the people whom they serve.

In particular, I refer to the Gas Consumers Council which last week published substantial figures in *Scotland on Sunday* relating to the issue of VAT on domestic fuel. The council compared average heating costs and considered how VAT would affect them. It is perhaps right to look at gas for an example as the figures have come from the Gas Consumers Council. The effect of 17·5 per cent. on VAT in the south would increase average heating costs to £36·57. In Glasgow, average costs would increase to £43·75, while in Aberdeen the figure would increase to £47·42. In Lerwick in Shetland—the area from which the former Chancellor of the Exchequer comes—the figure would be as high as £81·77.

The figures are based on comparing large homes in different areas throughout the United Kingdom. That is why we believe that it is essential that any automatic payment must take account of the prevailing weather and climatic conditions. It is not just when the snow falls or when there is a sudden drop in temperatures, and we all wake up in the morning and have to chip ice off the windows of our homes and cars. I am talking about the prevailing weather conditions. We must take account of dampness, of wind and of what happens generally in each area.

Other people have come up with different statistics contrasting different areas in the United Kingdom. For example, analysis undertaken by the Department of Energy and by other organisations has suggested that it costs as much as 35 per cent. more to heat a house in Glasgow to the same level as an identical house in Bristol. In places such as Aberdeen, the figures are obviously higher. The statistics have not been denied. Even Professor Marcus, formerly of the department of building and architecture at Strathclyde university, who many years ago drew attention to those aspects, has never had his figures challenged.

It should be evident to all hon. Members that the further north one travels in the United Kingdom, the colder and more severe the weather generally becomes. We should remember that the distance from Shetland to Southampton is roughly the same as it is from Southampton to Madrid. Can anyone deny that Madrid is generally much warmer than Southampton?

I wish to make clear that I do not want the severe weather payments to be replaced; they must and should remain. I am talking about an additional automatic payment which takes account of prevailing weather conditions.

Mr. Alan Duncan (Rutland and Melton): Would the hon. Lady tell the House which areas of the United Kingdom should qualify for the automatic cold weather payment? Will she also say where the cut-off point would be and why?

Mrs. Ewing: The hon. Gentleman is fairly new to the House, but I do not mean that in a disparaging way. I would be happy to send him copies of the Bill, which clearly details each area of the United Kingdom and how those would be zoned. I will make a brief reference to that matter later in my speech.

I am not talking solely about my area, where of course I have concerns as the local representative. Those are concerns that all hon. Members share for the vulnerable in society throughout the United Kingdom. Other figures which support the contention for zoning in the United Kingdom come from the Meteorological Office. Those figures show that average temperatures in Scotland between November and December are consistently lower than in England and Wales. In November 1992, the average temperature was 6 deg C in Scotland compared with 7·9 deg C in England and Wales.

The official figures on deaths caused by hypothermia —the Prime Minister has admitted that they represent merely the tip of an iceberg—show that the levels are consistently higher in Scotland than in England and Wales. In 1991, 101 direct deaths from hypothermia were recorded in Scotland, compared with 534 in England and Wales, which means that one in six of the deaths from hypothermia were in Scotland. Strathclyde Elderly Forum recognises that between 3,000 and 5,000 cold-related

deaths occur in Scotland during the winter months. We must concentrate not just on hypothermia but on other cold-related diseases.

When the Minister responds, he will probably make great play of the fact that gas and electricity prices have apparently fallen. The Government choose to ignore the fact that consumption in Scotland is consistently higher because of our climate. For example, I visited Scottish Hydro-Electric last week and it points out that it has the lowest costs, but the highest consumption. It is also the most "green" of all the electricity companies, yet it is on our area that the blow of VAT will fall most heavily. The Government must look seriously at the matter. The northern Scotland electricity consumers committee pointed out in a recent report that

"in the north of Scotland area, due to a more severe climate the requirement for heating is higher than elsewhere in Great Britain. This higher demand leads to higher fuel consumption."

There is a knock-on effect. People in the north of Scotland receive the same state benefits, but they have an automatic built-in necessity to spend extra to keep their homes warm.

The report from Sutherland Associates—I am sure that the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) has also received a copy—compared heating costs for different parts of the United Kingdom and showed that levels of energy consumption were higher for Scotland than for the south-east of England. The report compared an average two-bedroom house in Scotland with an identical house in the south-east. In the south-east it took 9,500 kWh to ensure adequate heating levels, whereas in Scotland it took 11,100 kWh. That shows the additional requirements we have in Scotland, yet no concession whatever is made.

I could go on to give more statistics, but other hon. Members wish to speak in the debate. Our proposals for a cold climate allowance recognise that the elements are no respecters of national boundaries. It is not just people who live in Scotland who suffer the effects of cold weather.

The hon. Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Duncan) might listen at this point, as I outline our suggestions. We are proposing that there should be four zones within the United Kingdom, ranging from the north of Scotland to the south of England. Zone 1 would cover southern England, where there would be no additional cold climate allowance because of the prevailing conditions. That does not rule out severe weather payments, because I accept that Devon can have horrendous cold snaps with snow, ice and frost while the sun may be shining in Lossiemouth. We are not proposing that severe weather payments be replaced, but instead are proposing an automatic payment.

Zone 2 would cover central England and an extra cold climate allowance of £3·50 per week would be payable. Zone 3 would cover northern England, Northern Ireland, central and southern Scotland where an additional cold climate allowance of £7 per week would be payable. In zone 4, which covers northern Scotland, an additional cold climate allowance of £10·51 per week would be paid.

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): As an emigré Scot, I find the hon. Lady's speech interesting. She is known for being precise with her figures. Can she tell the House how much this would all cost?

Mrs. Ewing: As I sat down I said, "I bet he is going to ask me the cost." If the hon. Gentleman would care to listen, I am not afraid to argue on the statistics. It is not merely a matter of Government expenditure. It is about human lives. It is about people. We as legislators must decide our own priorities.

Mr. Duncan: How much?

Mrs. Ewing: I am coming to that. Just wait. There is such a thing as manners, I hope. This is something about which I feel passionately. I am happy to give the House the statistics, which have been assessed, checked and discussed in great detail with the organisations involved.

I believe that manners are important in debates, especially on serious matters such as this. This is not party-political knockabout stuff. It is about people. It is about elderly people frightened to put on their fires. It is about people with a handicapped child who know that they need additional heating but are uncertain whether they will receive any extra help. I ask for an element of manners from Conservative Members.

The allowance would be paid for 17 weeks between December and April. The estimate of the total cost is £625 million per annum for the whole of the United Kingdom and, for Scotland alone, £155 million per annum. Those are our figures from January this year. An element of increase may have to be allowed for as a result of a small increase in inflation, but the figures are serious estimates. I am happy to lay them before the House and to ask Conservative Members, "Is that a price worth paying?". There are many who would prefer to see Trident come to our shores. One estimate of the cost of servicing Trident is £380 million per annum. I should like to see that £380 million diverted into a scheme of cold climate allowances because that is where my political priorities happen to lie.

Other countries manage to run cold climate allowance schemes. Conservative Members are often happy to deride the small Republic of Ireland, but in Eire during the winter months, the Government readily and automatically pay cold climate allowances to a variety of people. The people who are eligible include those on old age pension, retirement pension, widow's pension, blind person's pension, invalidity pension, deserted wife's benefit allowance, lone parent's allowance, pre-retirement allowance, prisoner's wife allowance, social security pension, benefit from another country, long-term unemployment assistance, disabled person's allowance, infectious diseases maintenance allowance, basic supplementary welfare allowance and special department of defence allowance. All those people are entitled to a cold climate allowance in the small Republic of Ireland, but in the United Kingdom no one is entitled to such an automatic payment.

I hope that my hon. Friends will have time to develop other aspects of our motion such as energy efficiency in our homes. It was clear from discussions in Scottish Questions yesterday that the Government have not yet examined the housing conditions survey which was undertaken in Scotland by Scottish Homes. That survey showed that almost a third of our housing stock suffered from dampness, condensation or mould.

It is also important to tell the Government as they plan the Budget that VAT on domestic fuel is not the best way to conserve energy. The best way to conserve energy is to increase the energy efficiency of our housing stock. That

[Mrs. Ewing]

would save lives, save energy and create jobs. If we create jobs, we build up the tax base for the country so that we can assist those who so desperately need our assistance.

I conclude by repeating that I regard this as an issue of morality and principle. I was not elected to the House merely to go along with what was happening. I have argued the case with a great deal of feeling not only for the many hundreds of people in my constituency who have written to me, but for the people whom I know as family members and as friends who suffer great difficulties during our winter months.

When we talk about some form of compensation, we all have a responsibility placed on our shoulders to analyse effectively and caringly what compensation we shall give to our people. I say simply, "What cost is a human life?"

8.15 pm

The Minister for Social Security and Disabled People (Mr. Nicholas Scott): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

'commends Her Majesty's Government on its range of policies designed to protect the most vulnerable from the effects of cold weather and to stimulate energy conservation measures in the United Kingdom; and in particular welcomes the improvements in the Cold Weather Payments Scheme, the increased resources devoted to improving insulation for homes, and the extra help amounting to more than £1 billion given to poorer pensioners.'.

I listened with keen interest to the points made by the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing). She knows the personal respect that I have for her. She argued with her usual clarity and passion a case which I do not believe to be particularly defensible. I hope that I can convince the House that the proposal that she has put before us this evening is likely to be ill targeted, extremely expensive and probably would not achieve the aim that she has set out.

The hon. Lady used words such as "anger" and "neglect" in her speech. In the past two decades, both parties of government have considered the matter. Both turned down the approach which the hon. Lady has again advocated this evening. The Conservative Government have consistently improved the shape and pattern of the exceptional cold weather payments scheme, and I shall return to that point in a moment. We have sought to ensure that those who need help with the cost of fuel during cold weather in their area are properly compensated and protected.

I must make it clear that I do not accept the case that the hon. Member for Moray made for a cold climate allowance. Any help that we give for extra fuel costs resulting from cold weather should be based on precisely that—actual cold weather at the time and in that location. That is precisely what our cold weather payments system does, and does well. It is well-targeted help for the people most likely to need it in those places where the weather is very cold.

Although the hon. Lady made it clear that she was not speaking exclusively for Scotland, understandably she made particular mention of Scotland. The pattern of expenditure on fuel across the United Kingdom as a whole shows that there is little difference between the amount of money spent, particularly by poorer people but also in general, in Scotland and the amount of money spent in the rest of the United Kingdom. The south-east of England obviously has a pattern of temperatures which is distinct from that in the northern parts of England and Wales, but the overall pattern is not very different in Scotland from that in the rest of the United Kingdom.

In essence, we need to examine the case that the hon. Lady made not on the basis of the position in Scotland but by considering the argument that the allowance should be introduced throughout the United Kingdom. I believe that that would be a move against the whole flow of social security policy in this country and against seeking to ensure that social protection policies are affordable by the taxpayer who, at the end of the day, must pay the bill. Throughout the developed world, we are all having to consider our social protection policies to ensure that they are affordable and that we are not placing burdens on this and future generations which they may find unacceptable.

The kind of policy that the hon. Member for Moray has advocated this evening would be ill targeted in the extreme. It would be a scatter-gun approach to the delivery of help. I believe that the Government's present policy of cold weather payments is well targeted and affordable within the context of our overall social security policy.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): The Minister made a very spurious point when he argued that weekly expenditure in the cold areas is not much different from that in other areas. Similarly, he could argue that poor people spend less each week than rich people on their heating bills. The key figures relate to the percentage of weekly expenditure. On that basis, the poor and people in colder areas spend dramatically more than the rich and those in warmer areas as a percentage of their household expenditure. The reason why the absolute figures are different is quite simple: people cannot afford to buy the heating that they need. The Minister is talking about under heating. I hope that he will move on from his totally spurious point.

Mr. Scott: I do not accept the hon. Gentleman's argument on a regional basis, as I have explained. The statistics are clear. If the hon. Gentleman would like to ask me specific questions, I will answer them.

With regard to people who receive benefits, the difference between the amount of money spent on fuel in Scotland hardly differs from that in the rest of the United Kingdom. That is the figure upon which we must work. I do not accept the hon. Gentleman's point that that means that people cannot afford those payments. If the weather is cold in Scotland or elsewhere in the United Kingdom during a particular period, people are given extra help with those costs. The idea that we should select a number of months and, whatever the temperature may be in a particular part of the United Kingdom, simply pay an extra benefit is the reverse of what we have been trying to achieve in social security as a whole, which is to ensure that the available resources are targeted on those who really need them at a specific time.

Mr. Thomas Graham (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): I hope to speak in the debate later, so I will not take up much of the Minister's time now, but does he realise that the housing stock in Scotland is disastrous? More than 250,000 houses suffer from damp and condensation. In the winter months, people cannot afford to heat their houses, so they retreat into one room and try to live there. They pay for that. I will refer to that later in the debate and refer to my personal experiences.

Mr. Scott: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his intervention. However, I have examined with great care the issue in relation to the different parts of Great Britain and to the United Kingdom as a whole. There is no significant regional difference in the expenditure on fuel costs in the different parts of the United Kingdom.

Mr. John Marshall: Has my right hon. Friend noted regional differences in electricity tariffs? Is he aware that, due to the nature of hydro-electricity which is the dominant system in the north of Scotland, Scottish electricity tariffs are 10 per cent. lower than in the rest of the country?

Mr. Scott: I accept my hon. Friend's point. That difference is manifestly an incontrovertible fact.

I want to return to the main theme of the hon. Member for Moray, which was whether there should be a special allowance, paid irrespective of the temperature in any part of the United Kingdom, simply because we are moving into a certain calendar period. I do not believe that that would be right. It would be ill targeted and random.

The hon. Lady referred to a cost of about £0·5 billion a year to introduce her scheme. However, the scheme that she advanced in previous years also included about £1·5 billion of capital costs up front. The hon. Lady may have removed herself from her previous argument. The cost of £0·5 billion would be very significant and we would have to take that into account.

Mrs. Ewing: Will the Minister define capital costs?

Mr. Scott: Having read what the hon. Lady said before and what those who have campaigned for the cold climate scheme have said, I understood that the capital costs of the first part related to the energy efficiency programme. That involved insulating large numbers of houses in the United Kingdom. The costs of that were established very clearly two or three years ago at about £1·5 billion in capital expenditure up front before the £0·5 billion a year in running costs for the scheme which the hon. Lady has advocated today.

Mrs. Ewing: I am interested in what the Minister is saying, but I believe that he has confused different messages. If there was substantial expenditure on energy efficiency which, as I have said, would save lives, save energy and create jobs and thereby increase the tax base, does the right hon. Gentleman accept that ultimately the arguments for a cold climate allowance would probably disappear? If the housing stock was brought up to the necessary level, we would not need to consider this point. However, the insulation standards of the housing stock in Scotland is currently equivalent to the position in Sweden in the 1940s.

Mr. Scott: I will return to the question of energy efficiency later. However, the case as presented in earlier years ran the two schemes together and involved the cost of up-front expenditure of £1·5 billion and running expenses of about £0·5 billion.

To return to the theme that I want to present to the House tonight, the factors that influence a person's need for help with heating are many and varied. The weather is certainly a factor which we must obviously take into account and that is reflected in our cold weather payments scheme. However, much also depends on the size of the home, the type of heating system and the standards of insulation.

The picture is complex and I do not believe that it is susceptible to the rather simplistic approach that the hon. Member for Moray has adopted this evening. Over the years, the Government have developed a range of targeted policies designed to address the different factors about which we are concerned when we talk about the undoubted problems that cold weather causes for a significant number of families in the United Kingdom. I recognise those problems and the Government's responsibility to adopt sensible policies to deal with them.

We already provide considerable help with energy efficiency measures for low-income households. As the House will be aware, we continue to put extra resources into the home energy efficiency scheme for which the budget has increased by more than 50 per cent. since 1991. That scheme operates throughout Great Britain and provides grants towards the cost of loft, tank and pipe insulation. It also provides for draught proofing and energy advice for low-income households who receive income-related benefits. It aims to provide for improvements for some 240,000 homes this year, and nearly £38 million will be available for grants in that area.

Private sector households which receive the same benefits are also eligible for minor works assistance. Those grants, which are part of the house renovation system administered by local authorities, frequently cover the provision or improvement of thermal insulation. Further assistance is also available through local authorities' mainstream council housing repair and improvement programmes as well as through programmes such as Estate Action and Green House programmes.

The Government have made the drive to improve——

Mr. Andrew Welsh (Angus, East): Will the Minister give way?

Mrs. Ewing *rose*——

Mr. Scott: One at a time, please. I will give way when I have finished my sentence.

The Government, by their provision of resources for those programmes, have recognised that standards of insulation are below what is necessary, but they are providing resources steadily to improve the standard that is achieved.

Mr. Welsh: Under the Minister's programme, when will the one in eight households in Scotland cease to live in dampness?

Mr. Scott: A great deal will depend on the efficiency of local authorities in Scotland in tackling problems with their housing stock. In Scotland, it is generally local authority housing which suffers most from that problem. It will depend on local authorities' willingness and determination, within the resources that they are allowed, to tackle the problem.

Energy efficiency and energy saving are particularly important. The Energy Saving Trust, which was set up in November to propose, develop and manage programmes and to promote the efficient use of electricity in the domestic and small business sector, is developing schemes particularly directed at the needs of low-income families to ensure that affordable warmth can be achieved through the better insulation of their homes.

The Government have been particularly active in running the "Keep warm, keep well" scheme in recent years. I understand the hon. Lady's point about the

[Mr. Scott]

vulnerability of many people, in particular the elderly and people living alone, during periods of cold weather. Although the "Keep well, keep warm" campaign in England and Wales and the "Keep warm this winter" equivalent north of the border are concerned with a range of services, one of the points that I have always emphasised as I have played my part in promoting our campaign has been good neighbourliness. If only people who live close to individuals who might be particularly vulnerable to the impact of cold weather would keep an eye on their neighbours and give them advice, help and support and look out for signs that others might be under some threat, we could do much to counter the impact of cold weather, particularly on elderly people who live alone.

The "Keep well, keep warm" scheme, which is run in conjunction with Age Concern, Help the Aged and Neighbourhood Energy Action, has had a significant effect north and south of the border on our approach to coping with the problems of cold weather and how to minimise its effects and provide advice to those who need it.

Mr. Eric Martlew (Carlisle): The Minister mentioned Age Concern. What representations have the Government received from Age Concern about VAT on fuel?

Mr. Scott: The House will no doubt have opportunities in future to discuss VAT on fuel. My right hon. Friends will announce in due course the precise details of the scheme to compensate the most vulnerable people for the impact of VAT on fuel. My right hon. Friends the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Social Security and others have made that clear. I am not in a position today to say what the details of that scheme will be, but it will be an effective scheme and it will be well targeted at people who need help.

Mrs. Ewing: Obviously, we do not expect the Minister to give notice, but we assume that the Government are talking about an increase of only £1 in the basic state pension. Does he believe that that will be enough to cope with the imposition of VAT on domestic fuel? According to *Hansard*, in 1991, he promised to review the system of assistance to the most vulnerable and to examine the operation of the current system. Surely he is building in poverty in such a way that it will be absolutely impossible to eradicate it.

Mr. Scott: The hon. Lady is seeking to lure me down a path that I have no intention of treading. Indeed, I am not in a position to do that. More senior colleagues will announce in due course what the package will be. The £1 increase which the hon. Lady mentioned and which has been mentioned in the public prints is simply taking forward the RPI for——

Mrs. Ewing *rose*——

Mr. Scott: Perhaps the hon. Lady will let me finish the sentence—the increase in the retirement pension that would flow from taking the 1·8 per cent. figure in September through to the uprating in the new year, totally outwith and ignoring any compensation that we might introduce for the impact of VAT upon fuel costs for those people.

Mrs. Ewing: Does the Minister accept that built into state benefits is an element for heating? As account has been taken of the RPI, there has been a reduced heating element in the state premiums paid to people on invalidity benefit and pensions, for example, in proportion to their income and expenditure.

Mr. Scott: That is a different point. The compensation for people responding to the impact of VAT on fuel will be totally distinct from and additional to the ordinary uprating that the Government will be making to the retirement pension and other benefits next April. That is the essence of the argument. I have to ask the hon. Lady and others who are rightly concerned about the matter to await the announcement in due course by my right hon. Friend.

Dr. Godman: With regard to the eligibility criteria for the system of financial support, is the Minister satisfied that local Benefits Agency officers are able to help vulnerable individuals who come into the community from long-term institutional care? What guidelines are given to those local officers of his Department in respect of the heating needs and, indeed, other needs of that vulnerable element in the community?

Mr. Scott: I acknowledge that the problem that the hon. Gentleman has raised about people leaving institutional care means that it is incumbent upon our local offices to identify those cases and make sure that they are included in the system, but, in general, the automatic system of identifying customers who are eligible for cold weather payments has worked remarkably successfully and accurately since it was introduced. It is now automatic. It is now available to people, not just in retrospect for a period of cold weather but when a cold weather period of seven days is forecast.

Without the need to apply, people can receive cold weather payments simply, automatically and fairly. Those are almost the words that the hon. Member for Moray used when she advocated her scheme. The cold weather scheme might not be exactly what she would like, but simple, automatic and fair are certainly three of the qualities of the cold weather payment scheme as it exists today.

Dr. Godman: People coming into the community from long-term care are an important issue. Recently, I had the case of a woman living in the most appalling conditions —no heating at all. Is the Minister satisfied with the development of the relationship vis a vis care in the community between Benefits Agency officials and local social workers? In just about all cases now, those individuals are, in a very real sense, protected by social workers. Is the Minister satisfied with the arrangements that have been established between Benefits Agency officers and social work and, south of the border, social services departments?

Mr. Scott: Knowing the hon. Gentleman as I do, I know that he would not raise that as a trivial point; it is a matter that he takes seriously. I have no evidence that the system is not working properly, but I will certainly make inquiries to ensure that the aspect that he raised is examined very carefully. It is obviously a matter between Departments —the Department of Health concerned with social services provision and ourselves who are concerned with benefits payments. I take the hon. Gentleman's point very seriously. As I have said, we have made several important improvements to the scheme and obviously we monitor its effects. A point was made about weather stations, especially Eskdalemuir. We monitor the system year by

year. I do not know whether the hon. Member for Moray has seen Statutory Instrument No. 2450, which includes a number of changes made to the areas covered by the Eskdalemuir weather station.

Every year, I receive a number of representations from hon. Members to the effect that their areas need a more finely tuned system to meet the needs of their constituents. Despite my meteorological training in the Royal Air Force many years ago, I am not able to make such judgments; I rely heavily on the Meteorological Office, which is helpful and considerate. If hon. Members look at the schedule to the order, they will see that we have altered the boundaries of many areas covered by specific meteorological stations to make them more sensitive to the needs of people living in those areas.

Mrs. Ewing: Has the Minister increased the number of stations?

Mr. Scott: No. We still have about 60 meteorological stations throughout Great Britain to cover those areas. I think that that is right. I rely on the professional advice of the Meteorological Office in these matters. As long as we listen to any local complaints and local experiences, we are doing well.

The Government's record in this respect is a good one. We have improved the cold weather payments scheme. We have ensured that income support, through its premium structure, enables us to give extra help to groups that are recognised as having special needs, such as families, disabled people and the elderly. The total extra help above the normal upratings that we have made available to pensioners on income-related benefits since 1989 is now worth about £1 billion a year. The same is broadly true of families on income-related benefits.

The scheme advanced by the hon. Lady, with her persuasive arguments, would be expensive to introduce and administer, and would not focus help accurately on those who need it most. It is vital that our huge social security budget is used to the best effect. Total social security expenditure in the current year is expected to be in the order of £80 billion. We owe a duty to the taxpayer and to the public at large to ensure that that money is properly targeted and sensibly used. I do not believe that the introduction of the scheme proposed by the hon. Lady would fit that pattern.

8.42 pm

Mr. Henry McLeish (Fife, Central): This is an important debate dealing with an issue of genuine and growing importance not only in Scotland but throughout the United Kingdom. The debate must be seen against the background of an alarming growth in fuel poverty in Scotland and elsewhere in the United Kingdom and the threats now being posed to low-income families as the Government seek to extract themselves from the £50 billion deficit that they created. Sadly, that seems to be based on attacking some of the poorest families, whether they are in Scotland or throughout the United Kingdom.

The key issues that lie at the heart of the debate are certainly the cold weather payments and the motion relating to the cold weather allowance. But we must go much deeper than that and consider some other issues: first, the growing income inequality in British society, manifested especially in Scotland—I shall give some figures on that later—and, secondly, the question of housing conditions and how they impact on the issue of fuel poverty. Some of my hon. Friends have already raised this matter. It is important that it should not be missed in any series of strategies to tackle the issue.

I shall stress the crazy, corrupt and cynical proposal to impose VAT on fuel because, in any debate about fuel poverty and cold weather allowances, it is vital to consider the wider canvas. Clearly, any Government who impose VAT on fuel on the majority of families in this country have little regard for the genuine issues.

Earlier, I said that the cold weather payments scheme certainly has weaknesses—the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) pointed them out to the House. When one considers that something like £50 million was spent in 2·5 million cases in Great Britain in the last year for which figures are available, it is clear that that is an insignificant amount, relative to the whole social security budget and the whole area of need.

The crucial issue is not to dwell on the payment for exceptional or severe weather but to consider the wider background of fuel poverty generally. Most people agree that in the society in which we live, it is an obscenity that, in 1993, people must make agonising choices every day about whether they eat or heat. That is a trite way—some would say that it is an exaggerated way—of raising the issue. However, it is a reality for my constituents and those of my hon. Friends who feel that people should not have to make such choices.

Another issue is the growing inability of people simply to face their fuel bills. What a situation! To think that families which may have sick people, disabled people and large families must think about the level at which the heating in their homes operates. We have economic problems in Britain, but surely we cannot argue that millions of our fellow citizens must make such decisions day in and day out. Sadly, it can be a life or death situation for some elderly people. When I visit some of my constituents their houses are absolutely frozen. They spend half their days in bed—they simply do not have enough income to spend on fuel. This issue is a political one—it is about the resources of the nation—but it is also a human issue and it underlines the whole question of fuel poverty.

Earlier, I referred to income inequality. By any standard, Scotland produces figures that are absolutely frightening. One of the key hallmarks of the Government is the reinforcement of the dependency culture in Scotland. One quarter of a million Scots are out of work. Two thirds of them are on income support and one third are on benefits. What income do they have to make choices about heating? The Department's figures show that 900,000 Scots—that is one out of every six—live in families where income support is the only source of income. I think that the Government will agree that income support is not a generous allowance—it is a basic allowance. I am sure that the figures are similar in other regions of the United Kingdom.

A much more debatable point is the fact that nearly 600,000 Scots work for less than £4 per hour, which is not a large sum. However, they must make decisions about what they spend and what they do not spend, and that is atrocious.

The Government should recognise that before we talk about cold weather payments and VAT on fuel, we should look at fuel debt as part of income support. The Department's figures show that in Scotland in May 1991, £2 million a month was deducted from income support

[Mr. Henry McLeish]

payments to pay off fuel debt. So at present we have figures from the Department of Social Security which confirm that people do not have enough money to pay and amounts are being deducted from their income support. That reinforces our case that income support and part of the income inequality issue is crucial to any reasonable understanding of where we are in terms of fuel poverty.

If that is not bad enough, what is startling is that we top the European cold winter deaths league. In a modern society that looks over the developed world and into Europe, we have more old people dying in the winter period in Britain. Many factors may be at work. It would not be wise to single out one cause, but the problem deserves an investigation. It worries Opposition Members and I am sure that it worries the Government.

The key, however, when discussing the Government's fiscal policy, is always to remember that those groups at the bottom of the income ladder are spending roughly four times as much on fuel as a proportion of their income as are those at the top. The point was well made earlier, that that is a crucial ingredient when we consider VAT, as I shall in a minute. Surely the Government are aware of the figures. Why cannot they accept that those people in Scotland on income support, in unemployment or on low pay, have no choice; they have to heat their houses? It is not a luxury item. When we consider how much those people spend on fuel as a proportion of their household income, it should impress upon us that we should be cautious in what we do, especially when raising taxes. Taxes may reduce the deficit, but they may have punitive effects on the people on whom they are imposed.

One would expect the Government to be energetic about energy conservation, and the Minister has highlighted some of the developments that have been made, but they are simply not enough.

Let us consider the Scottish housing condition survey—which has just been published—in terms of energy conservation and modernisation. The survey shows that 28·7 per cent. of the occupied stock in Scotland—584,000 houses—show some evidence of dampness, condensation or mould. One in eight Scottish households live in damp housing and one in five households live in dwellings affected by condensation. Tragically, 70,000 households that are occupied by pensioners are in those categories.

That knowledge must be a substantial contribution to any issue relating to fuel poverty, but it is simply not being tackled on the scale that is required. Any degree of insensitivity in tackling that problem will only mean that five or 10 years down the road the problems will be much worse and will acquire a degree of investment. I challenge the Under-Secretary of State to mention that problem when he sums up. I appreciate that it is not part of his wider remit because it is a housing problem, but I hope that, with his hon. Friends, he will be able to tackle that concern.

Following the privatisation of electricity and gas, there are people in the marketplace who want to provide more and more fuel. The major generators should be concerned about conservation and should be considering energy supplies. Why cannot they be more involved in ensuring proper insulation and helping the Government to tackle, in particular, the public sector housing problem?

Any energetic Government would be considering farsighted policies to tackle those problems, but that is not the case here. Instead there is the draconian proposal to impose a tax on fuel. We have listed the worries of people who are unable to pay their bills at the existing levels. What on earth can the application of a tax of, on average, £2·40 per week do for those people who are already struggling at the bottom of the income ladder? The tax will reinforce the crisis that confronts poorer families in Scotland. It will simply help to kill more elderly people in the winters after the tax has been imposed at the full 17·5 per cent.

The tax is apparently being imposed regardless of its practical consequences. The Treasury may think that the problem is a fiscal one and that the tax will reduce the deficit—my God, the deficit has to be reduced, but at whose expense? Is there no serious solution that the Government could conjure up without causing more problems for those who are already in difficulties?

The issue of VAT is quite remarkable. We know that poorer families spend a disproportionate amount of their income on heating and fuel. The household expenditure of such families will increase proportionately much more dramatically than those earning a great deal more at the top of the income scale. What should be done about that?

The Government say that they will help out the people who have problems, but will they help out the quarter of a million Scots who are on the dole? Will they help out the 900,000 people who are living in families with income support? Will they help out those who are on low pay, earning less than £3 or £4 per hour? Will they help the 1·1 million pensioners in Scotland, some of whom are on income support and some of whom get by on an occupational pension which merely takes them above levels at which benefits are paid? Of course they will not. It would be crazy for the people in the Treasury to conjure up a punitive tax and then have to spend huge sums of money to compensate people for what the Government inflict upon them. I believe that that is morally and politically offensive in relation to the people whom I have described. It is a punishment for most people because everyone will pay that ludicrous tax, but we have to have concern for those who are in greatest need.

The Government should seriously consider all the matters that we have highlighted this evening, including the subject of cold weather payments, but it would not make one iota of difference in a real sense to tinker with proposals against the massive income inequalities that are growing, and against the deplorable housing conditions that generate fuel poverty. Of course the Government would be better served, even at this stage, by abandoning the imposition of VAT on fuel. We think that we have a strong case. It is a moral and a political case. I sincerely hope that when the Minister winds up tonight he will tackle some of the deeper, more significant issues that I have raised in my contribution.

8.55 pm

Mr. George Kynoch (Kincardine and Deeside): It is a pleasure to speak in this important debate on cold weather. I speak as a Member for a constituency which contains perhaps one of the coldest villages in Britain, Braemar, but I shall mention that later.

Having heard the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) open this debate—I am sorry that she is no longer in her

seat to hear the rest of the debate—I have a lot of sympathy with many of the emotions that she expressed. There is no doubt about it; we are very anxious to protect the old, and especially those on low incomes, from the ravages of cold weather. Having listened to the hon. Lady, however, one would imagine that the Government had done nothing to help them. She is wrong. My right hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People has already listed significant improvements to the cold weather payments scheme which were introduced some years ago.

I must also correct the hon. Member for Moray because she will be aware that before I became a Member of the House I used to live in her constituency and I therefore know the area quite well. She will perhaps be aware of the monitoring points for the cold weather payments for her constituency. She spoke about there being one monitoring point for the entire constituency, from the highlands up to Aviemore—although I know that Aviemore is outwith her constituency—down to the coastal belt of the Moray firth. I understand that her constituency has a similar coverage to mine and that the coastal area is covered from a monitoring point at Aberdeen, on the coast, whereas the highlands are covered from Aviemore.

I shall return to that later. First, I must deal with her suggestion of a cold weather payment allowance. She mentioned four zones, with the fourth—northern Scotland—having the highest allowance. As I said, before the election I used to live in Moray and I know what the temperatures there are like. Moray consists of the Spey valley. I have now moved across a set of hills to the Dee valley. My goodness, the temperature there is significantly lower than the temperature in Moray. Yet, under the hon. Lady's proposed cold weather allowance, everyone would be paid the same. Is it right and proper that my constituents, who live in a much colder area, should be given the same as her constituents? I do not think that it is.

If we impose that sort of blanket coverage, there will be inequalities, and that does not apply only to Scotland. I am sure that some of the coldest areas of England can match the temperature in parts of Scotland, although they could not match the coldest area in my constituency. If we introduce blanket coverage, we will open up a hornet's nest. I stand by the Government's cold weather payments scheme, targeted at cold areas and those who need them most.

Mr. Salmond: If I were the hon. Gentleman I would start to worry about the political temperature in my constituency. Will he carry his concern about cold in his constituency into the Lobby against the Government when we vote on value added tax on domestic fuel, or will he vote against his constituency interest, as he did on fishing, oil workers and the regiments?

Mr. Kynoch: I hear what the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) says, but perhaps I am rather more sensible than him. As I have heard only half of the equation for VAT on fuel, I look forward with great interest to hearing the other half when my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer tells us the balancing factor—the benefits for those in need. To criticise the tax when one knows that we have to raise taxes is totally wrong and misleading, but it is typical of the Scottish National party. The nationalists are trying to stir up emotions and worry people. They are trying to tell people that they will not get something that has not even been announced yet.

On the details of the cold weather payments scheme, I had some sympathy for the hon. Member for Moray when she mentioned the monitoring points. I have referred to Braemar—a village in my constituency, which nestles in the Dee valley about 60 miles west of Aberdeen. Braemar is a particularly cold part of Scotland. I have here some temperatures for the past three years, which were recorded in Braemar by the local primary school, which is a climatic monitoring station for the Meteorological Office. It might interest my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Front Bench to know that the minimum daily temperature was less than freezing on 116 days in 1991—that is one third of the year. In 1992, the number of days below freezing dropped slightly to 102, and this year there had already been 38 days below 0 deg C by August. During the past three years the minimum average monthly temperature has risen to above 10 deg C—48 deg F for those of us who deal in older units—only once, in July 1991.

I am worried about the residents of Braemar because the cold weather payments scheme is geared to look after people like them. There are many retired people and people on low incomes in Braemar. It is important that we ensure that the cold weather payments scheme works and applies to those people. I am sure that the Government are concerned about that.

I then looked at the average mean temperature in Braemar during the past three years, to find out how many times the cold weather payments would have been triggered if the monitoring point had been there. I found out from a particularly helpful gentleman at the Meteorological Office this morning—a Mr. Davis—that the cold weather payment would have been triggered by a consecutive period of seven cold days on six occasions in 1991, if the temperature had been recorded at Braemar. In 1992 there would have been one payment and in 1993 there would have been three. As I said, the monitoring station is at Aviemore and the payments for my constituency were triggered less often. In 1991 they were triggered only twice; in 1991-92 there was no payment; and in 1992-93, when the winter must have been somewhat warmer or more uniform, the payment was triggered three times, which is what would have happened if Braemar had been the monitoring point.

I am greatly concerned. We have a scheme that deals with the problems caused by the effects of cold on people on low incomes and the elderly. We must make absolutely sure that it works.

I urge my hon. Friend the Minister to assure me that he will consider upgrading the monitoring station for the Braemar end of the Dee valley. When I picked up the phone this morning the same Mr. Davis said, "Ah, yes. Braemar would be the ideal spot for monitoring cold weather payments in that area but it puts in its record only monthly". It puts in its record monthly because a primary school is recording temperatures on a daily basis and is asked for the record only monthly. Any difficulty lies in who will pay the telephone calls to submit the daily figures to Bracknell. I may be wrong but, if that is so, I urge my hon. Friend to overcome that problem so that the current system, which I believe is good, works and protects those whom it is designed to protect.

I understand that a cold period lasting seven days, in which the mean temperature is below zero, is needed

[Mr. Kynoch]

before the cold weather payment is triggered. What happens if we have a period of, say, nine days when the mean temperature is below zero? Under the existing rules, I understand that seven days' payment is then made and a fresh period of seven days then begins in which one must requalify. In my constituency and the Dee valley, a significant number of cold days fall between trigger points —between seven and 14 days or between 14 and 21 days —and thus cannot become qualifying periods. We should pay for that intervening period.

The hon. Member for Moray referred to automatic payments. I understand that the payments are made automatically by computer if one is eligible for benefit and that one does not have to claim for them. They can also be paid on days on which the temperature is forecast below zero.

The hon. Lady unintentionally distorted some of the benefits of the cold weather payments scheme. There is a lot of good in the scheme. Although I believe that she is seriously concerned for her constituents and I share her concern, I do not share her solution because it would have to be paid for at the expense of those whom she is trying to protect.

I urge my hon. Friend the Minister to upgrade the Braemar primary school station to a met station capable of being the monitoring point for that area and to review the seven-day period so that, when a cold spell lasts longer than seven days, parts of that period can also be covered.

9.7 pm

Mr. Eric Martlew (Carlisle): It is important to put on record the fact that cold weather is not stopped by Hadrian's wall. I congratulate the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) on bringing this debate before the House.

On Monday morning, before I came down to Westminster, I went to Carlisle city centre where the excellent pensioners' rights organisation was organising a petition against VAT on fuel. I signed the petition and stayed to talk to some of the pensioners. It was a cold, bright day in Carlisle and a north wind was blowing from the Scottish mountains. But VAT on fuel was sending a shiver down the backs of the pensioners in my constituency. It should also send a shiver down the backs of Conservative Members.

Mrs. Ewing: I was not in Scotland over the weekend and did not deliberately send down a cold wind in the direction of the hon. Gentleman's constituency. I have a great deal of love and affection for Carlisle as many members of my family live in that area. I happened to be in Carmarthen in Wales, where people were chipping the ice off their car windows on that morning. We recognise the fact that climatic conditions can affect all parts of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Martlew: There is no doubt that it is a British problem. Shivers should be running down the backs of Conservative Members——

Mrs. Ewing: They have no spine.

Mr. Martlew: I take the hon. Lady's point. Shivers should be going down the spines of Conservative Members because many of the people that I talked to had voted Conservative in the previous election, but many said that they would not do so again.

An elderly gentleman, who had worked for most of his life, had a small works pension, had put away a bit of money and had fought in the last war. He told me that, although he would have liked to, he did not receive income support because he received a pension. He said that dramatic interest rates cuts may have helped mortgage payers, but had cut the interest on his small amount of savings. He also commented on the fact that German pensioners who had also fought in the last war were treated better by their Government than he was by ours.

We have heard that tale on many occasions, but it is still true. That gentleman knew that he was being badly treated by the Government and that he would have to tighten his belt in order to afford to heat his house after the introduction of VAT on fuel. VAT on fuel is wicked, evil and should never have been considered. Conservative Members agree with that, but they do so because they consider the issue in political terms; we agree because we see it in social terms—VAT on fuel will bring devastation to many people.

People die of cold in the winter. The statistics prove that, in this country, 35,000 people, many of them elderly, die in the winter months. What does the Government do to help? They do nothing to help, but instead decide to put VAT on fuel. That will have only one effect; it will mean that more people will die next winter when VAT comes in at 8 per cent. and even more will die when VAT goes up to 17·5 per cent. in the following winter. However, that is what the Government are contemplating.

The present cold weather payment arrangements do not work well. Reference has been made to Eskdalemuir. It is probably one of the better stations, and better than the one in Northumberland. Eskdalemuir is 400 ft above sea level and last year triggered cold weather payments three or four times. The weather station in my constituency is at sea level. I believe that cold weather payments were triggered on only one occasion. That meant that the people of Gretna received cold weather payments four times, but those who live just over the bridge and across the river in England received only one cold weather payment. There must be something wrong with a system that allows that to happen. Nobody will convince me that temperatures vary from one side of a bridge to another. I know that it has been exciting on the bridge, but that was 300 years ago, and we have calmed down a lot since then.

Recently, the National Lottery Bill went through the House. The cold weather payment system is a lottery—the Government's decisions on where the temperatures are to be taken constitute a lottery. It cannot be seen as a fair system. Unless the Government are prepared to introduce more stations or another system, the cold weather payment arrangements will be seen as unjust by the people who should benefit.

The hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Kynoch) referred to the fact that seven days in a row of cold weather are required before payments are made. Do not people spend extra money on fuel during six days of cold weather? Do they spend extra money only on the seventh day? What if there are six days of cold weather, the temperature rises 1 deg C above the limit for one day and then there are another six days of cold weather? Will that mean that those in the district do not use extra fuel? It will mean that they receive no extra payment. The system is not

fair and it is seen not to be fair. We have a lottery, but the seven-day system is like the football pools—if one gets seven draws, one gets a dividend, albeit a low one of £6. But if one gets six draws, one gets nothing.

Perhaps the system advocated by the hon. Member for Moray is not the right one, but we must arrive at a just system for the whole country. There should of course be fewer people on income support; that can be achieved only by providing more work for those without it. We need the basic pension to be set at a level that allows people to dispense with income support or special allowances of any kind. The people who receive such allowances do not want special treatment: they just want fair treatment.

I am glad that today's motion was tabled. The people in my constituency are angry about VAT on fuel and distressed because they often miss out on cold weather payments. Conservative Members have said that we know only half the equation. That is not our fault. Why did not the Government announce what they were going to do for the vulnerable when they announced the imposition of VAT on fuel? Actually, they did announce it—they intended to do nothing. It is only because of public pressure and the realisation by some Conservative Members that they are likely to lose their seats—they have been looking over the water to Canada and they have seen how cold it can be there—that the Government have thought again.

We must get rid of VAT on fuel. It is no good the Minister being so urbane at the Dispatch Box and giving way all the time when he gives nothing away to the people whom I represent.

9.15 pm

Mr. Alan Duncan (Rutland and Melton): I shall detain the House for only a few minutes as I do not wish to deny Opposition Members the chance to speak.

I have watched the debate with interest and the Minister has already said most of what I wanted to say. At the risk of destroying his political prospects, I hope that the House will allow me to commend the performance by the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. McLeish), whom I have not seen before at the Dispatch Box. I have no doubt that we will see him there again, however.

I believe that the proposal by the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) is fatally flawed because it advocates the delivery of a benefit that does not meet the problem which she described to the House. The hon. Lady speaks in terms of the deaths of elderly people who are deprived of the ability to heat their homes. There is no doubt that any sort of poverty presents risks of that sort, but to defuse that risk the hon. Lady has presented us with a system that massively increases public spending—by her own admission, by hundreds of millions of pounds. That expenditure will not, however, solve the problem that she has so energetically and passionately defined. That is why I want to take her to task and to put this debate in its correct context.

There are two distinct aspects to the motion. The first is the VAT on fuel announced in the Budget; the second is the hon. Lady's proposal for a cold climate allowance. I fear that too many extraneous issues have been introduced to this debate without a proper presentation of the facts.

Over the past few years the costs of domestic fuel have fallen dramatically, partly as a result of privatisation, and partly as a result of world energy prices. Anyone with a constituency in Scotland will know about the oil price movements of the past few years. Domestic energy prices have fallen. Gas prices have fallen by 21 per cent. since 1986, the price of oil has fallen, and the price of electricity, strictly controlled by the regulations included in the privatisation legislation, is also beginning to fall.

Mrs. Ewing: Irrespective of the cost of domestic fuel —I have already mentioned the implications of the RPI for benefits—does the hon. Gentleman dispute the fact that the 10 per cent. of households with the lowest incomes will be hit seven times harder by VAT on domestic fuel than will the richest 10 per cent.—a statistic produced by the university of Cambridge?

Mr. Duncan: I shall shortly deal with that when I examine the percentage of household income that is spent on fuel, because that issue is crucial to the argument. VAT will be levied initially at 8 per cent. and it is planned to raise it to 17·5 per cent. I have discovered from the Library the estimate of how much a household spends on fuel. I have all the figures, but I shall deal with just one category —a retired couple in a household who depend mainly on state benefits. It is said that they spend 7·9 per cent. of their household income on domestic fuel, of which VAT will represent an increase of about 1·5 per cent.

VAT on fuel will be about £1 to £2 a week per household. For most people that is affordable, as it represents the price of a pint of beer or a bit more. However, for many people it will not be affordable and the Government are directing their efforts and targeting money at those people. The cost of the hon. Lady's proposal is excessive, but its benefit to the people that I have described is not particularly effective. The Government can best deliver that benefit to those who are most in need. That is exactly what we on the Select Committee on Social Security are studying and we shall openly recommend to the House what we think is the most effective way to do it.

The hon. Lady and her party have pre-empted the debate by introducing scares and excitement and by examining only one side of the equation by refusing properly to discuss what the Government might be able to introduce. The hon. Lady has done the public a disservice by not presenting the facts equitably.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Kynoch) said, there is already a cold climate allowance and it is working increasingly effectively. My hon. Friend described how it will be delivered automatically to those on benefit. However, he did say—and it should be said—that, thanks to the amendments that we have tabled, that allowance will be delivered within five to 10 days, probably even before bills are received. Therefore, the Government have directed considerable effort towards making sure that the specific delivery of benefits, payments and compensation is targeted to those who are most in need. That is better than the random, massive arbitrary benefit that has been recommended by the hon. Lady and her colleagues.

The motion is sloppily worded. It does not clearly say how the money is to be raised, although now that the Trident refit has moved to Rosyth, the Scottish Nationalists are happy to say that the money could come from that programme. The hon. Lady failed to say that if independence for Scotland is granted the revenue that she described will no longer be available to it. She is calling for

[Mr. Duncan]

a massive and inefficient increase in the subsidies for Scotland and perhaps for other parts of the United Kingdom.

We must consider carefully how these benefits are to be delivered and we must take the debate away from massive, universal benefits.

Mr. Salmond: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Duncan: No, because I am coming to the end of my speech.

Expenditure must be much more closely directed to those in need. Those are the people that the hon. Lady has well described but by her motion has not helped.

9.23 pm

Mrs. Ray Michie (Argyll and Bute): There is not enough time to cover all the issues that I should like to cover, but I shall highlight one or two matters. I congratulate the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) on her excellent speech. She genuinely believes, as we all do, in the worth of what she says.

The debate is about people, about the elderly and disabled, and especially the latter who incur additional costs for daily heating and hot water and need a constant, warm environment.

The way to end fuel poverty is to invest massively in the housing stock and provide basic insulation. There are particular problems with the home energy efficiency scheme in rural areas.

I do not know whether the Minister is aware that contractors are reluctant to undertake work in more remote areas because the maximum grant is not sufficient to cover costs. The additional cost has to be absorbed by the installer or borne by the customer, so contractors tend to keep people in rural areas waiting until they have several jobs to do in one area. Individual jobs in rural areas can sometimes cost many hundreds of pounds more than the maximum grant. For that reason, the energy action grants agency has never been able to find a contractor for the Western Isles.

Most customers have to pay substantially more than the £16 for loft insulation and draughtproofing specified by the energy action grants agency. Many customers, such as those on income support, have had to give up having the work done because they can see no way of paying for it. Clearly, the grants are not enough to help the very people whom they are intended to benefit.

The Government should understand by now that their extraordinarily unpopular suggestion that they put VAT on power and fuel is frightening many people, particularly the elderly.

Let me draw attention to two letters that I have received from constituents. I have had many more letters on this particular subject than I ever had about the poll tax because so many people are genuinely worried about what is going to happen. I received a letter from a 69-year-old pensioner who wrote:

"I now dread the winter. I often sit without heating or with only the limited heating of a storage heater, only putting on one bar of my electric fire. The rest of the house stays cold and I know what hypothermia feels like".

Another writes:

"As a . . . pensioner I feel not welcome in my own country. I don't feel safe or secure over the future. I speak to local elderly folk who just about manage to pay their fuel bills and who did have pride in their meagre independence. They are shocked and hurt over this tax on fuel."

Mr. Kynoch: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Mrs. Michie: If the hon. Gentleman does not mind, I shall not give way as we are short of time. We want to wind up the debate and I am specifically trying to be brief.

The problems that I have outlined are genuinely worrying my constituents and many others. I am aware that there are cold parts throughout the United Kingdom, but it is significant that most Members of Parliament who have spoken tonight represent constituencies in Scotland. It is a very cold place. We have long, cold winters and very short, often also cold, summers. I received a copy of a letter from the Paymaster General to my hon. Friend the Member for Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber (Sir R. Johnston) who had written to him making clear his worry about the imposition of VAT on fuel. The Paymaster General wrote back to him, particularly about the highlands and islands, saying

"However, it should be noted that though the cost of heating in the North may be more expensive this is only one aspect of the overall cost of living. Other day-to-day expenses may be considerably less costly in, for example, Scotland than in the South of England."

It sounds as though the Paymaster General has never been to the north of Scotland, where the cost of food, transport and ferry services make the cost of living much higher. I hope that the Minister will take on board all the points made tonight.

9.30 pm

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): This debate has certainly justified the decision of my hon. Friends and myself to centre it on not just the imposition of value added tax on fuel but a whole range of issues connected with fuel poverty. The existing situation is intolerable and VAT on fuel will make it much worse.

My hon. Friend the Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing) dealt with the social security aspects of our proposals, so I shall concentrate on energy efficiency. The statistics on both are damning and should remove any vestiges of complacency of the kind shown by Government Members this evening.

In the United Kingdom, 7 million homes have heating problems and the figure for Scotland is 750,000. During Scottish Questions yesterday, it emerged almost casually that no fewer than 70,000 homes in Scotland with damp problems are homes where the head of the household is a pensioner. My hon. Friend quoted the latest frightening estimate that 3,000 to 5,000 deaths occur in Scotland each and every year from cold-related medical conditions.

Any Government with a shred of humanity would act to tackle those appalling statistics—not make them worse by imposing VAT on domestic fuel. The complacency on the Tory Benches was epitomised by the remarks of the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Duncan), who revealed at the start of the debate that he had not even bothered to read any of the cold climate Bills that we have presented to the House over the past few years. He ended his speech by inadvertently revealing that he had no knowledge of the Scottish budget, in which our proposals for a cold climate allowance are part and parcel of the calculations.

Even worse than the hon. Gentleman's ignorance was the Minister's display of complacency this evening. He basically said that the Scots are exaggerating the nature of

the problem—that the poor in general spend less in absolute terms on fuel bills and that the Scots do not spend much more. The Minister betrayed his lack of understanding of the very nature of the problem.

The family expenditure survey figures show that in 1992, 5·4 per cent. of household income in Scotland goes on fuel expenditure, whereas the figure is 4 per cent. for the south of England and the United Kingdom average is 4·8 per cent. The poorest 10 per cent. spend seven times more as a percentage of household income on trying desperately to heat their homes compared with the top 10 per cent. The paradox is that the poor spend less in absolute terms because—as the hon. Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mr. Graham) said—they retreat to live in one room and to their beds because they cannot afford adequately to heat their whole houses.

If members of the Government Front Bench claim that we are exaggerating, perhaps they will heed the Northern Scotland Consumers Council (Electricity), which in its submission on VAT on fuel made the same point in respect of absolute expenditure:

"We suggest that this figure could indicate that, through lack of funds, the proportion of underheated homes is much greater in Scotland."

I hope that Government Members who argued this evening that the problem is being tackled through the existing system will feel thoroughly ashamed when they return to face their constituents. Those hon. Members were of course merely echoing the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who said that it is a question of proportion and that those who argue against VAT on fuel are getting matters out of proportion. Of course, it is a matter of proportion—in the sense that, as a percentage of income, a pensioner in Scotland will be affected six times as much as the Chancellor of the Exchequer by the imposition of VAT on fuel. That assumes that the Chancellor will pay his own heating bills, rather than their being met at the public expense.

The Chancellor says—and his view has been echoed this evening—that no sensible person would condemn the proposal for VAT on domestic fuel without knowing the nature of the compensation scheme. We are here this evening to say that no sane Chancellor would threaten such a measure without a precise examination of the vulnerable sections of the community that it would put at risk.

As I think we all know, the previous Chancellor of the Exchequer was being disingenuous when he said in his Budget statement that it was all a matter of trying to save the world by cutting carbon dioxide emissions. As my hon. Friend the Member for Moray pointed out, an area in the north of Scotland that is the greenest in the country in terms of electricity generation will be the hardest hit by the imposition of VAT on domestic fuel. In the Hydro area, some 0·28 kg of kwH of carbon emissions are generated. The average for the United Kingdom is 0·83—three times as much. The greenest area will be hardest hit and will suffer most. It is in this area that the Scottish paradox of fuel poverty amid energy plenty is at its worst.

It is possible to sit shivering at home in the north-east of Scotland, while looking out to sea and observing cheap gas supplies being piped round the coast without benefiting those experiencing fuel poverty. In rural areas in the north, people cannot even obtain a gas supply to gain access to a cheaper form of heating, because British Gas has ordered the Scottish area to increase connection charges by adjusting the previous formula. The Government are on a collision course with the Scottish people: perhaps that is why, according to tonight's latest survey, their support in Scotland stands at 14 per cent. For the benefit of numerate Tories from English constituencies, let me say that that is one-four per cent.

Mr. Graham: The hon. Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Duncan) suggested that the amount involved was only the cost of a pint of beer. How insulting that is to elderly people in Scotland. Do Conservative Members think that such people can go out every night and pay £2 for a pint of beer? The hon. Gentleman clearly has not a clue about the price of a bottle of Calorgas, which is £11·75. Let me tell him, if he does not know, that a hundredweight of coal costs between £5·75 and £6·75.

Mr. Salmond: As ever, the hon. Gentleman has made his point very well and requires only an endorsement from me.

I spent a happy few years on the Energy Select Committee, which I considered one of the most successful Back-Bench Select Committees. A measure of its success was the Government's anxiety to abolish it: that must say something for the reports it produced. Two examples brought home to me the shameful position in regard to energy use and energy efficiency in the United Kingdom. The first came from Andrew Warren of the Association for the Conservation of Energy, who said in evidence that, without any question, on the basis of a range of statistics and examinations, the standards of thermal insulation in Scandinavia were higher in the 1930s than they are in the United Kingdom in the 1990s, 60 years later.

We need look no further for the explanation of another frightening statistic, mentioned earlier. In Scandinavia—which has a much colder climate than parts of the United Kingdom—the percentage rise in deaths in the more vulnerable sections of the community is much less during the coldest winter months. What have the Government proposed? What is the Minister so proud of? In his opening speech he listed a whole range of measures. He said that the Government will engage in the local authorities investment programme, but that has been severely cut across the range of initiatives that local authorities are prepared to make. He mentioned the Green House initiative, but that budget is to be cut in the next financial year to a mere £5 million. Then he mentioned the Energy Saving Trust—which is chaired by the former golden boy, John Moore—but its budget is only £5 million. The much-vaunted home energy efficiency scheme has a total budget of £35 million.

Those measures and budgets are paltry when compared with the billions of pounds of profits generated by the energy industry. The Government should introduce two measures to help them finance a significant programme of energy conservation. First—for this programme and a range of others—they should arrange the transfer of local authority housing capital debt from local authorities to central Government, which would release funds over a period and enable the local authorities to put their housing stock in proper order.

Secondly, we need tougher regulation of the massive energy utilities. At the moment those utilities have an incentive to sell energy to inadequately insulated homes. Energy utilities are not allowed to sell appliances which are inefficient and dangerous, so why should the same utilities be allowed to sell energy to homes which are energy inefficient and dangerous to the occupants? As a strict

[Mr. Salmond]

condition of their licence, the energy utilities should be required to provide an input of investment into the proper insulation of the homes to which they sell their energy.

The semblance of unity that the Government have managed so far on the issue of VAT on domestic fuel is a facade. They have heard enough muted sounds from the Tory Back Benches this evening to know the key concerns that many Tory Members have. Even within the Government there is only a facade of unity, a barely held together position on the question of VAT on domestic fuel.

Not everyone in the House buys a weekly copy of the *Turriff Advertiser*, so for the edification of those who have not read it, I will read a section from the issue of 8 October this year. Under the headline "MP Sproat in Turriff" it reads:

"Arts minister Iain Sproat expressed concern over government proposals to put VAT on to heating bills, while in Turriff at the weekend.

Speaking at Banff and Buchan Conservatives West branch's cheese and wine, the former Aberdeen South MP was applauded when he said he hoped the Chancellor would not tax domestic fuel.

'It is unfair to put this added burden on the elderly and retired,' he added."

That was said by a Minister in Turriff earlier this month.

I have written to the Prime Minister welcoming the freedom of speech that Ministers are allowed and I am looking forward to the free vote that will be allowed when the issue of VAT on domestic fuel comes to the crunch.

The Minister was dissembling in Turriff because he understands the tidal wave of anger that has been generated by the VAT on domestic fuel issue. The hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Mrs. Michie) was right to say that it is a greater issue than the poll tax was in 1989 and 1990. If the Government do not change course on this issue they will be swept aside by that tidal wave of anger. Those on the Treasury Bench may threaten a long cold winter for the elderly and vulnerable in Scotland and elsewhere, but I can promise the Prime Minister, the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the heartless Secretary of State for Scotland a long hot political winter unless they change course on this particular issue.

9.43 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Alistair Burt): It gives me great pleasure to respond to the debate and to support the amendment moved by my right hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People.

I am glad to follow the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond) who gave a typically understated performance. He raised a number of matters which had been mentioned by other hon. Members and I shall comment on them. The hon. Gentleman and his colleagues spoke about inhumanity, and such comments are rather galling to me and my colleagues on the Conservative Benches. We are sick and tired of that sort of stuff.

Over the years we have spent substantial amounts of money on social security and on health. In fact, we spend more on those services than has ever been spent. It is rather unbecoming of the hon. Gentleman and his colleagues to rail constantly on the same sort of lines with such emotional stuff.

All the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan can do is to greet every problem with other people's money, which would fall through his fingers like water. The hon. Gentleman's colleague, the hon. Member for Moray (Mrs. Ewing), yet again bumped up the cost of the cold weather credit scheme to £645 million, which is larger than even we had anticipated. We are all rather tired of the speeches that are given on this subject by the hon. Gentleman and his colleagues. I shall comment in detail on the hon. Gentleman's proposals later.

Obviously, I listened with great interest to all the points that were made in the debate. I am afraid that I heard nothing, however, that would convince me that a cold climate allowance would improve conditions for vulnerable people in cold weather. Our current methods of providing help are far better. They deal with the real problems and focus the money on those who need it most. Income support provides for normal heating needs throughout the year and it is supplemented by cold weather payments when there is a sustained period of cold weather in a particular area.

The home energy efficiency scheme addresses the problems of fuel efficiency in homes and the Government combine their effort with other agencies to spread to vulnerable people advice on how to cope with cold weather. The current package of help is well designed and focused.

The hon. Member for Moray, who opened the debate, spoke with her usual passion and concern on this issue. In common with other colleagues, however, I am not convinced that her scheme would do the job that she intends. As we all appreciate, and as was said in the debate, the cost of heating is affected by many factors other than climate, including the size of the home, the type of heating, the standard of insulation and the like. As my right hon. Friend the Minister said, I do not believe that a cold climate heating allowance would be properly targeted. It would introduce new inequities into the scheme. In common with previous Governments, we believe that it would not be right to deviate from the principle of national benefits levels, but that would be the effect of a cold climate allowance.

I must also take issue with the hon. Member for Moray, as other colleagues have done, on the problem of temperature variations between respective parts of the United Kingdom. Matters are not always as clear as they sometimes appear. The mean temperature variation between parts of the United Kingdom does not tend to be that great. Such variation is as much due to higher temperatures experienced during the year in the southern parts of the United Kingdom as opposed to necessarily much lower temperatures in Scotland in the colder months.

I have one example to cite in answer to the argument of the hon. Member for Moray. I studied the average mean temperatures between 1961 and 1990 for the four coldest months of the year—November, December, January and February—and I found out that the temperatures were lower in the English region that spread from Northumberland to Lincolnshire than they were in a Scottish region which included Orkney, Shetland, the northern areas, Ross, Cromarty and Inverness. Under the hon. Lady's proposed system, however, the Scottish area would have received higher payments of the cold climate allowance. I suggest that those figures reveal that it would not be a well-targeted scheme. It would not do the job that the hon. Lady intends.

Mrs. Ewing: I am listening to the Minister with great interest because it is obvious that he does not understand that it is colder in the north of Scotland in general than it is elsewhere. Is he challenging figures that have been supplied by the Meteorological Office, the Social Security Advisory Committee and a variety of organisations that are concerned for the welfare of the elderly and the handicapped? Does he disbelieve their statistics? Is he cooking up his own figures to suit his argument?

Mr. Burt: The hon. Lady should think twice about querying the figures that were given to me by the Meteorological Office. I have cited the mean average temperatures between 1961 and 1990 to illustrate my point that it is not easy to make generalisations, as under the cold climate allowance scheme, because temperatures vary in different parts of the country. I am afraid that, in some cases, those variations would not do the job that the hon. Lady intends. I am sorry; I shall reiterate the point that in the four coldest months, in two of the areas that the hon. Lady chose, the area in England, to which she would give less money, was colder than the area in Scotland, to which she would give more money. If she would like to query the figures, I would gladly let her have them.

The hon. Member for Banff and Buchan raised the issue of how much is spent on fuel. He quoted the 1992 figures from the family expenditure survey. I have the 1993-94 figures before me. The average expenditure on fuel and power for those who claim benefit in Scotland in pounds per week is around £10·60. In Yorkshire and on Humberside it is £11, in the north-west and in the east midlands it is £10·80. Those figures suggest that to claim that fuel and power expenditure in Scotland is so far above that in other parts of the country is simply wrong.

Mr. Salmond: If the hon. Gentleman had listened, he would have heard that I quoted the key figures from the expenditure survey—those as a proportion of income. On that basis, they are correct, and I take it that the hon. Gentleman does not disagree. He does not seem to appreciate the central point that has been made throughout the debate, that absolute figures, whether they apply to the poor or to people in colder regions, can of course be lower or marginally higher because people cannot afford to heat their homes. The limitation of those figures is that people switch off their fires because they are frightened of having a fuel debt.

Mr. Burt: Let us not change the argument; I shall deal with the cost of fuel in a moment. I am happy to tell the hon. Gentleman that when one considers average expenditure as a percentage of net income for the years 1992 to 1994, in Scotland it is 5·1 per cent., compared with 5·4 per cent. in the north, in Yorkshire and Humberside and in Wales. The Scots do not necessarily come out on top.

I enjoyed, as always, the speech of the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. McLeish), who made his points in a clear and straightforward manner which I respect. Fuel poverty is a matter of concern to us all, and trying to come to grips with how the poorest manage their budgets remains a serious issue. I went to Ireland about three weeks ago and looked at some poverty projects in Northern Ireland and in southern Ireland where there is tremendous emphasis at local level on basic budgetary work. We do not do that nearly as well in the United Kingdom and there are lessons to be learned. For the poorest, budgeting for fuel can be extremely difficult and budget control is essential.

The incidence of winter deaths is a sensitive issue and should be handled sensitively by the House, as the hon. Member for Fife, Central did. He was right: a variety of factors cause deaths during winter. The hon. Gentleman asked whether the Government were interested in doing anything about it. I am glad to tell him that the Department of Health has commissioned the Medical Research Council to undertake research into excess winter mortality and we await the results of the study into that complex issue, which should be handled in a complex manner.

I shall refer later to points made about VAT on fuel, but I would find the concern about fuel costs easier to take from the Labour party if it had not been in office when electricity prices rose by 2 per cent. every six weeks and there was nothing like the comprehensive scheme that we offer to look after people in such situations.

I am grateful for the information from my right hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People, who raised the issue of housing in Scotland and said that that was a problem that any Government would wish to address. It is a problem that we are addressing.

Local authorities have been allocated £393 million for their own stock and £120 million for improvement and repair grants in the private sector. It is for them to allocate the money in the manner we suggest in order to tackle the most difficult conditions highlighted by the Scottish house conditions survey. In addition, Scottish Homes, with substantial funding, already has about 40 strategic agreements with local authorities to meet housing needs. We accept what the hon. Member for Fife, Central said: housing problems cannot be solved overnight, but the Government are strongly committed to doing everything that they can.

Dr. Godman: The Minister mentioned a research project whose findings will, of course, be of considerable interest to us all. What institution is carrying out the research, what funding does the institution receive and when are the findings likely to be published?

Mr. Burt: The information from the Department of Health states that the research is being carried out by the Medicial Research Coouncil. I do not have information about funding or dates, but I shall ensure that it is sent to the hon. Gentleman.

My hon. Friend the Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Kynoch) made an important contribution to the debate, in which he rightly took the hon. Member for Moray to task over what she said about the scheme. It is clear that Braemar primary school provides an extremely important service for the local community. I was interested in what he said about the problems in his area. I can tell him that the scheme is reviewed regularly, but the issue affecting his constituents has been noted and I shall ensure that it is examined.

The hon. Member for Carlisle (Mr. Martlew) spoke about shivers down the spine. He has them because of the Boundary Commission proposals—we have Carlisle marked out as a Tory gain at the next election, so I know that he feels the chill wind pretty keenly. The hon. Gentleman expressed concern about the cold weather payment scheme and moaned about its boundaries and fairness. We all accept that trying to ensure that the 60 stations cover the regions properly will involve an element of selection. However, the hon. Gentleman did not spend

[Mr. Burt]

much time telling us about his party's cold weather payment scheme, and the reason is that it does not have one.

Mr. Martlew: I shall probably not be facing the Minister across the Dispatch Box after the next election because he will not be here. Why are there only 60 stations? Could the number not be increased?

Mr. Burt: With respect, that is mere nit-picking. One could argue for more stations, but the point is that we have a scheme that uses the stations to trigger cold weather payments, in a manner that the Labour Government could not have contemplated or afforded. The scheme is clearly——

Mr. Graham *rose——*

Mr. Burt: I apologise for not giving way to the hon. Gentleman, but I have only a few minutes left.

My hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton made two important points in his extremely helpful contribution. As any oil analyst of worth should, he correctly analysed the defects in the cold weather allowance mentioned by the hon. Member for Moray. He also pointed out that there has been a reduction in real terms in the cost of domestic fuel—it has been reduced by 17·5 per cent. in real terms over the past few years, which is a considerable contrast to the Labour party's record when it controlled fuel costs.

The hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Mrs. Michie) raised the Liberal head above the parapet. We regard comments by the Liberals on VAT and fuel with considerable scepticism. It is only fair that I remind the House of the words of the Liberal policy paper entitled "Costing the Earth", which was published in August 1991. It mentioned as a first priority

"the imposition of a tax on energy".

It stated:

"The UK is unusual amongst EC members in not applying even standard rates of VAT on to domestic fuels . . . If it proved completely impossible to persuade our international partners to adopt energy taxes, we would nevertheless press forward . . . by ending the anomalous zero rate of VAT on fuel".

Is it any wonder that so few of the hon. Lady's colleagues were prepared to grace the Benches tonight, because of their shame over that?

The comprehensive scheme offered by Her Majesty's Government in relation to cold weather payments is simple, fair, fast, responsive, sensitive and improved, and it is generous compared to any scheme offered by previous Governments. I commend it and the amendment to the House.

Question put, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 33, Noes 119.

Division No. 375] **[9.59 pm**

AYES

Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Barnes, Harry
Bayley, Hugh
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Bruce, Malcolm *(Gordon)*
Campbell, Menzies *(Fife NE)*
Canavan, Dennis
Chisholm, Malcolm
Connarty, Michael
Cryer, Bob
Davidson, Ian
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Graham, Thomas
Gunnell, John
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Nigel *(Cheltenham)*
Kennedy, Charles *(Ross,C&S)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Macdonald, Calum
Maclennan, Robert
McWilliam, John
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Mahon, Alice
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Michie, Bill *(Sheffield Heeley)*
Paisley, Rev Ian
Rendel, David
Salmond, Alex
Skinner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Watson, Mike

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Andrew Welsh and
Ms Liz Lynne.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Amess, David
Arnold, Jacques *(Gravesham)*
Arnold, Sir Thomas *(Hazel Grv)*
Ashby, David
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Bates, Michael
Beresford, Sir Paul
Blackburn, Dr John G.
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Bruce, Ian *(S Dorset)*
Burt, Alistair
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth *(Rushcl)*
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon *(Swindon)*
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cran, James
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Elletson, Harold
Evans, Nigel *(Ribble Valley)*
Evans, Roger *(Monmouth)*
Fabricant, Michael
Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Forman, Nigel
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorst, John
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth, N)*
Hague, William
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Harris, David
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Hendry, Charles
Horam, John
Hunt, Sir John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jenkin, Bernard
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Kynoch, George *(Kincardine)*
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Legg, Barry
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
MacKay, Andrew
Malone, Gerald
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Mitchell, Andrew *(Gedling)*
Neubert, Sir Michael
Nicholls, Patrick
Ottaway, Richard
Porter, David *(Waveney)*
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Rathbone, Tim
Richards, Rod
Robathan, Andrew
Robertson, Raymond *(Ab'd'n S)*
Robinson, Mark *(Somerton)*
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spink, Dr Robert
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Streeter, Gary
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian *(Esher)*
Taylor, John M. *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Sir Teddy *(Southend, E)*
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick *(Norwich N)*
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Viggers, Peter
Walker, Bill *(N Tayside)*
Waller, Gary
Watts, John
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Willetts, David
Wood, Timothy

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Robert G. Hughes and
Mr. James Arbuthnot.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments), and agreed to.*

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House commends Her Majesty's Government on its range of policies designed to protect the most vulnerable from the effects of cold weather and to stimulate energy conservation measures in the United Kingdom; and in particular welcomes the improvements in the Cold Weather Payments Scheme, the increased resources devoted to improving insulation for homes, and the extra help amounting to more than £1 billion given to poorer pensioners.

Statutory Instruments, &c.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.).

COMPANIES

That the draft Disclosure of Interests in Shares (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 1993, which were laid before this House on 18th October, be approved.

VALUE ADDED TAX

That the Value Added Tax (Payments on Account) Order 1993 (S.I., 1993, No. 2001), a copy of which was laid before this House on 9th August, be approved.—*[Mr. Conway.]*

Question agreed to.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 102(9) (European Standing Committees).

PACKAGING AND PACKAGING WASTE

That this House takes note of European Community Documents Nos. 8426/92 and 8682/93, on packaging and packaging waste; and supports the Government's view that a harmonising measure is required in this area, and that the amended proposal for a Council Directive provides a good basis for negotiation, but that elements of it will need further amendment if it is to be acceptable.—*[Mr. Conway.]*

Question agreed to.

Low Pay (Lancashire)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Conway.]*

10.11 pm

Mr. Peter L. Pike (Burnley): I am grateful, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to raise the matter of low pay in Lancashire. I also raised the matter in the House last Tuesday when, in my view, I received an unsatisfactory answer from the Minister of State, Department of Employment.

I had asked the Minister in a written question whether he had had any discussions with jobcentres in Lancashire with regard to the subject of low pay. Due to the summer recess, that question had been on the Order Paper longer than the normal period of 10 working days. However, the Minister stated that he had had no discussions on the subject. In response to my supplementary question, he gave me what, in my view, was an insulting reply by referring to something that had been advertised in Victoria street in London. His reply had little or no relevance to the situation in Lancashire or to my constituency.

I feel that the issue is of such importance that I immediately sought to raise it on the Adjournment. I am grateful for the opportunity of having a different ministerial response to the case.

Low pay is a scandal affecting the whole of Lancashire. The incidence of low pay in Lancashire is far higher than it is in the country as a whole; indeed, the whole of the north-west is in a similar position. Low pay is just one example of the way in which the Government have eroded working conditions since 1979. They have eroded protection for workers, and they have introduced policies which I find totally unacceptable. The Government's taxation policy is one example. They have moved from direct taxation to indirect taxation, which penalises in particular people on low pay. Those on low pay must use a high percentage of their income—indeed all of their income—because otherwise they cannot survive.

The Government's policies on privatisation and compulsory competitive tendering lead to job losses and cuts in pay and working conditions. There is not one bus worker in Lancashire who, as a result of the Transport Act 1985, now enjoys the same working conditions as he did prior to the Act.

I have not simply raised the issue recently; I have raised it continuously. I have been fortunate enough in the past 12 months or so to be able to raise the issue of low pay in Lancashire on three separate occasions with the Prime Minister. Even when I raised the matter with him, I received an unsatisfactory reply to the points that I made. The issue is extremely important and I hope that the Minister will respond to my points.

Earlier this year, in early-day motion 1442, I drew attention to a programme shown on Channel 4 on 15 February produced by Hard Cash Productions, Cutting Edge. In the programme the journalist Sima Ray drew attention to the scandal of low pay in Burnley, Pendle, Blackburn and Preston. It gave specific examples of some appalling instances of low pay.

The Lancashire 1993 economic situation report said:

"The deterioration of average earnings in Lancashire is reflected by figures produced by the Low Pay Unit in Greater Manchester, based upon unpublished data from the 1992 New

[Mr. Peter L. Pike]

Earnings Survey, which revealed that more than half of Lancashire employees, (51·8 per cent. . . .), earn below the low pay threshold."

For its purpose, the low pay threshold was £197·27 per week.

When I refer to low pay, I do not mean pay of £197·27, which is £5·19 an hour; I mean pay of £3 an hour or less. It is a scandal and a disgrace. The Low Pay Unit showed that in Lancashire 11·4 per cent. of the jobs on offer in five jobcentres in September 1992 were at £2·60 an hour or less and 85·5 per cent. were at £3·50 an hour or less. Those jobcentres were Blackpool south, Blackpool central, Preston, Blackburn and Burnley—a fair selection of jobcentres.

In Blackpool central and Blackpool south, a high percentage of the jobs offered wages of just over £3 an hour because they were protected by the wages councils. But now the wages councils have been abolished. Already a larger number of jobs in Blackpool are being offered at less than £3 an hour—jobs in the hotel and catering trade, which were some of the last to be protected by the wages councils.

When we consider the effect of abolishing the wages councils, we must bear it in mind that many of the people who were protected were women. The Trades Union Congress said:

"By abolishing Wages Councils on August 30, the Government has removed one of the last remaining forms of protection against wage-cutting and contravention of the equal pay principle for these vulnerable workers."

That is an extremely important point. The Government's record is outrageous and is out of step with other countries in Europe.

The Lancashire economic situation report for 1993 said that a high proportion of employees and advertised jobs in Lancashire were at wages below the contribution level for national insurance. Therefore, those people do not qualify for sick pay, unemployment pay or maternity benefit. That will cause them problems with their pension in the years ahead. It is disgraceful.

I regret that my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) cannot be here for the debate tonight. My hon. Friend the Member for Preston (Mrs. Wise) also could not be present. They would have wished to speak in the debate, time permitting. My hon. Friends the Members for Rossendale and Darwen (Ms Anderson) and for Lancashire, West (Mr. Pickthall) are here to support my argument.

We all have people who come to our advice bureaux about low pay. A young married man with two children came to my advice bureau two years ago, not about his wages but about safety aspects at the factory in which he worked. He did not work in my constituency; he worked in a small footwear factory in the constituency of Pendle which is adjacent to my constituency. He was very concerned about several safety aspects, but he dared not complain. He had been out of work for a long time and he wanted to keep his job. He was terrified of raising the question of safety with his employer because he was afraid that he would lose his job if he did.

As that man was leaving my surgery he suddenly said, "At the top line, my pay is £40 for a 40 hour week." I asked him whether all the workers received that sum and he told me that the foreman received £50 a week. I asked him whether he was a member of a union and whether he wanted me to do something. He said, "Oh no. I don't want to lose the job. I've been out of work two years and it's better to be working than to be out of work." What a disgraceful and shameful position that is.

Ms Janet Anderson (Rossendale and Darwen): I must emphasise that problems like that continue. My hon. Friend referred to someone who was paid £1 an hour two years ago. Only two weeks ago, a constituent of mine came to see me in my surgery. Two years on, she had been offered a job at £1 an hour.

As my hon. Friend has said, the problem is widespread across Lancashire and it has now reached scandalous proportions. To illustrate that, let me point out that a recent survey in the Bacup and Rawtenstall jobcentre area carried out by Labour-controlled Rossendale borough council showed that 75 per cent. of the 239 jobs available paid less than £3·50 an hour. That is a scandal which my constituents can no longer tolerate.

Mr. Pike: I thank my hon. Friend for making those points. She has underlined my case. This is a scandal. It is wrong to call these wages low wages. They are poverty wages and disgracefully low wages, and we must focus attention on them.

I want now to concentrate on examples in a document published in September by the Lancashire and Cumbria citizens advice bureau. The Government sometimes believe that the Low Pay Unit and others are politically biased. The last thing that the citizens advice bureau can be accused of is political bias. I will refer to some of the cases and then state briefly what the Government should do.

The document states that a client from a Lancashire bureau had worked three years for a local solicitor for an hourly wage of £3·54. Her employer paid no tax or national insurance for her and refused to give her a written statement of her terms and conditions of employment. She was dismissed for asking for holiday pay.

A client from another bureau in Lancashire worked for his employer for four and a half years, sometimes up to 60 hours a week, and was paid an hourly rate of £1·86. His comment was:

"If I could get another job or if another employer existed, I would go there."

In another case, a client said that he worked 77 hours a week at an hourly rate of £1·50. He said:

"I had to work seven days a week for three weeks to get my weekend off."

A citizens advice bureau in another part of Lancashire said that a male client working as a hotel cleaner was paid £50 for an 18-hour week which works out at £2·77 an hour. He was told that if he was to receive family credit, his wage would be reduced to take account of that.

There are many examples of such cases. A full-time hairdresser earned £30 a week. That is absolutely outrageous. An 18-year-old client in a fabric company was paid £1 an hour. If he had been covered by a wages council, he would have received £2·72 if he was over 21. Another CAB in Lancashire reported someone working a 39-hour week in a shoe shop for £90.

The document contains page after page of cases like that. The Minister must accept that the problem is not small. We are not talking about people who are working for reasonable levels of pay. We are talking about people who are working for poverty levels. I could produce pages and pages of statistics from citizens advice bureaux, Lancashire

county council, the Low Pay Unit and from Burnley borough council. People cannot impove their houses because they do not have enough money to do it.

The Government have rejected the case for a national minimum wage. It is time that we had a national minimum wage. *[Interruption.]* The Minister shakes her head. She will say that a national minimum wage will threaten jobs and that the idea is a load of nonsense. Every other country in Europe has a form of pay protection—not necessarily a national minimum wage—for workers.

When the legislation that abolished wages councils was being considered, several companies in my constituency wrote, through me, to the Minister, saying, "We are paying people this amount. It is outrageous that we should have to face competition from people who pay £1 or £1·50 an hour less for what is effectively slave labour." It is time that the Government talked of fair pay and fair working conditions for a fair day's work. It is time that the Government recognised that working people in this country are entitled to fair treatment. They have not had fair treatment from the Conservative Government. If it is not too late, the Government must change track and show that they are prepared to tackle these problems and do something to eliminate low pay as speedily as possible.

10.26 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Miss Ann Widdecombe): I congratulate the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) on obtaining this debate. It is also right to acknowledge the presence of other hon. Members at this hour—the hon. Members for Rossendale and Darwen (Ms Anderson) and for Lancashire, West (Mr. Pickthall) and, until I stood up, when for some unaccountable reason they left, the hon. Members for Rochdale (Ms Lynne) and for Cheltenham (Mr. Jones). I appreciate their interest in this extremely serious subject.

I totally reject the criticisms that the hon. Member for Burnley levelled at my hon. Friend the Minister of State. When my hon. Friend replied to the hon. Gentleman, he pointed out quite reasonably that one of the hon. Gentleman's colleagues had advertised a job at no pay at all but that there was nothing disgraceful about that because the person concerned, as a result of the experience that he gained, went on to gain a full-time job. My hon. Friend the Minister of State was trying to point out that there are various patterns of entry into the labour market.

It makes no sense at all, at a time of recession, to try to eliminate low pay if the result is no pay. Firms which have been struggling to survive might find that they can keep jobs if they are able to keep their wages bills low. It is better for the country, for Lancashire and for the people who are employed as well as for employers if firms can stay in existence and maintain jobs so that they are ready to take the fullest possible advantage for themselves and their employees of the recovery which nobody now doubts is happening.

I was most interested to hear of the hon. Gentleman's investigations of the jobcentres in his constituency. I make an offer to the hon. Gentleman. He will know that, some years ago, I had a connection with Burnley, but it is a long time since I have been back there. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman would like me to visit his constituency in due course when the diary permits and we could examine some of the pay rates offered in Lancashire.

Mr. Pike: I recall when the Minister was the candidate for the Burnley constituency—I was then the agent—in 1979. I would be more than happy to welcome her to Burnley. Should not jobcentres make it clear what the rate is for every job so that applicants know exactly what remuneration is being offered?

Miss Widdecombe: I certainly share with the hon. Gentleman an ambition that people who go to a jobcentre should get the fullest possible information not simply about the rates of pay but everything connected with a job, which it is reasonable to assume one would get. I have no information at all to the effect that that is not what is happening in our jobcentre in Burnley. However, I listened to the hon. Gentleman and I am prepared to follow up the matter. Perhaps he will allow me to write to him in due course on that specific point. I will not be visiting Lancashire in the next few days or weeks but, in view of his warmish welcome, I will certainly put a visit on my schedule.

Perhaps I could make some general points. Much of the hon. Gentleman's thesis tonight is based on the reports of the Low Pay Unit. Clearly, he is trying to satisfy himself that the situation that the Greater Manchester Low Pay Unit attempted to describe in September 1992 somehow still exists. Indeed, he is sure that it exists because he has found a number of vacancies that offer less than £100, if I did my calculations correctly. He therefore reached the conclusion that low pay is widespread in Lancashire.

By making that extrapolation, the hon. Gentleman is making the same mistake that the Manchester Low Pay Unit made last year—that is, that advertised rates of pay somehow represent actual remuneration in the local labour market. By basing his arguments about the level of pay on the reports of the Low Pay Unit, he does not get the full picture of the current situation. Not only is the specific report more than one year old; as with so many reports produced by low pay units up and down the country, it is based on research restricted to a survey of vacancies displayed only in jobcentres.

The report of the Greater Manchester Low Pay Unit compared the wages on offer to potential recruits with various thresholds—in this case, national insurance contributions at £54 a week and approximate income tax thresholds of £66 per week for single people and £99 per week for married persons. The Low Pay Unit adds to those benchmarks entirely arbitrary weekly rates of £135 and £155 per week and its spurious low pay threshold of £197 per week. The hon. Gentleman appears to have swallowed whole the assumptions, methodology, reports and conclusions of what I consider to be not very scientific analysis.

Mr. Colin Pickthall (Lancashire, West): With permission, can the Minister estimate what she considers to be a low-pay threshold?

Miss Widdecombe: The hon. Gentleman is not asking a sensible question because what is low pay does not mean that that is the income on which a household must live. A lot of the low pay that is identified is the income of young, single people still living at home and deliberately chosen part-time work on the part of second and third wage earners. One of the ironies is that, if we adopt the policy of a national minimum wage as proposed by the hon. Member

[Miss Widdecombe]

for Burnley, because of the amount of low earning among second and third wage earners, we would benefit the richest 30 per cent. of the population, not the poorest 30 per cent.

Naturally, the hon. Gentleman looked to Europe. I notice that Labour Members always look to Europe when they think that it is convenient, and look sharply away when we have statistics that they do not like. The hon. Gentleman pointed to countries which have minimum wages. The country with the closest to what the Labour party is proposing is Spain. Spain has a statutory minimum along the lines that a Labour Government would go. The fact is that Spain has 22 per cent. unemployment.

If the hon. Gentleman surveyed his constituents—I do not think that they have changed much in intelligence since I was up there, which means that they are a sharp bunch—and said, "Come on constituents of Burnley, would you prefer not to have your job or would you prefer that there were some low-paid vacancies in Lancashire?", I think that they would opt for the latter. People up there are quite wise and I commend their wisdom to their Member of Parliament.

Mr. Pike: Although I realise that the Minister has focused her attention on what the Low Pay Unit said, would she be prepared to look at the evidence of cases that go to the citizens advice bureaux? If I send her a copy of that document, will she respond to it?

Miss Widdecombe: Whatever the document the hon. Gentleman sent me, whether from the citizens advice bureaux or anywhere else, I would certainly look at it and respond to it. I should not dare to throw anything that the hon. Gentleman sent to me in the wastepaper basket. I look forward to responding to that communication in due course.

Earnings constituency by constituency are not as thoroughly documented as earnings by region so I shall consider earnings in the north west region, which will interest those in neighbouring constituencies. The 1993 new earnings survey shows that average weekly gross earnings for both men and women in the north west are higher than in any other region except the south east, including London. In the north west, average gross earnings have grown by 4·5 per cent. for men and 5·8 per cent. for women since the 1992 new earnings survey. People in real jobs in the north west of England are not low paid. On average, they are better paid than people in most of the rest of the country.

Ms Janet Anderson: The Minister has implied that "poverty wages", as my hon. Friend the Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) rightly described them, are generally paid to single people. However, featured in the Darwen *Advertiser* in my constituency last week was a family man with an MA from Cambridge, who had been offered £1·66 an hour as a packer, which was the only job he could get. The Minister implied that the jobs on offer in the local jobcentres do not necessarily reflect the overall picture in the area. Where do the unemployed go for jobs? They go to the jobcentre. Indeed, the Government force them to go there. In the jobcentre in my constituency, a third of the jobs on offer pay less than £2·60 an hour and 75 per cent. pay less than £3·50 an hour.

Miss Widdecombe: The unemployed may have to go to the jobcentre but the Government certainly do not restrict them to the jobcentre. A general fallacy prevalent among Opposition Members—not just in this debate but in a number of arguments that they raise—is that somehow all the information on trends and jobs can be extrapolated just from the vacancies that occur in jobcentres. For example, Opposition Members are always asking me how I account for the large number of people chasing one job. But when one asks what each figure is based on, it is simply on jobcentre vacancies, whereas they are but a proportion of the labour market. I commend Opposition Members to study carefully the high turnover in the labour market and the number of vacancies. Just by looking at the number of vacancies that are filled and created every month they will realise that they cannot possibly be restricted to jobcentres alone.

Although I do not dispute the fact that Opposition Members can come up with examples of low pay, I have disputed throughout that, from those, extrapolations can be made suggesting that the problem is widespread, is worse in Lancashire than elsewhere and is not improving. My statistics, which are thoroughly independent and well validated by the earnings survey, clearly show that the position is improving, Lancashire does well compared with the rest of the country, and low pay is not widespread.

Neither the Government nor any previous Government, of whatever party, have defined low pay. Definitions of low pay, such as those used by the Low Pay Unit, the Trades Union Congress or the Council of Europe, are entirely arbitrary and fail to take account of the particular circumstances of individuals or households. For example, if the Council of Europe's so called "decency threshold"—68 per cent. of the national weekly wage, which was £215 in April 1993—had been held constant in real terms, the numbers earning below it would have fallen by more than 3 million since 1979. Therefore, on those figures, the number of people earning below the decency threshold has fallen. There is a clear lesson to be learnt from that: living standards depend upon a range of factors, not just pay alone. Low pay is relative; there will always be some workers who are lower paid than others.

It is utter wishful thinking to suppose that every wage packet represents a family's whole income. The low paid are the young, single people and part-time workers, many of whom are second, third or even fourth earners in their households. Consequently, only 7 per cent. of those in the bottom tenth of the earnings distribution live in the poorest tenth of the population based on household income. Low pay is not synonymous with low income or poverty, however defined. Having no job is the single most important cause of poverty—only some one fifth of the poorest tenth of the population live in households where the head or spouse is a full-time worker.

Those are the important facts. I thank the hon. Member for Burnley for raising the issue, but I believe that he has done so in a misguided way.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at nineteen minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 29 October 1993

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PETITIONS

Scarisbrick (Petrol Spillage)

9.36 am

Mr. Colin Pickthall (Lancashire, West): I beg to ask leave to present a petition that has been signed by 82 residents of the parish of Scarisbrick in my constituency. The petion is an attempt to draw the attention of the House to the blighting of the residents' homes and lives by a large petrol spillage in the parish more than a year ago. The petrol seeped into the drains and the water courses under their homes, presenting them with a threat to their health and safety as well as inflicting them with a permanent anxiety and rendering their houses valueless.

The cost of remedying the matter could not be met by the local authorities concerned. The petitioners seek the support of the House against the lack of satisfactory remedies available to them, and the unsatisfactory action taken by the local authorities. The petition ends:

Wherefore your petitioners pray that your honourable House would consider our case with urgency and understanding to a satisfactory conclusion for the petitioners.

To lie upon the Table.

London Transport

Mr. Nick Raynsford (Greenwich): I beg to ask leave to present a petition that has been signed by more than 5,000 residents of the Greater London area and of surrounding commuter areas, expressing anger and concern at the lack of investment in London Transport.

In particular, the petitioners highlight the proposals to close the Aldwych station and the threat to Mornington Crescent station, as well as the cuts in investment in London Underground and bus services. The petitioners, together with all other Londoners, feel betrayed that the promised investment in London Underground pledged by the Government immediately before the 1992 general election is now being cut. Following a £300 million cut in last year's autumn statement, a further cut of perhaps 10 per cent. is threatened in the coming Budget.

The cuts will be catastrophic and will delay long-overdue improvements in stations. For example, on the Northern line the cuts will halt the replacement of outdated rolling stock and signalling systems and make it impossible for London Underground to complete essential repairs to track and surrounding walls, bridges and drains. That, in turn, makes the services slower, more vulnerable to interruption and less safe because the track can be blocked by debris from collapsing walls or crumbling embankments and drains.

That comes at a time when there is a desperate need to improve our public transport network in London to ensure a transfer from our over-congested roads to get London moving again. The petition ends:

Wherefore your petitioners pray that your honourable House takes steps to ensure that the investment projects planned to achieve the "decently modern metro" by 2004-2005 and to improve quality of bus services are not cut or deferred, and your petitioners as in duty bound will ever pray.

To lie upon the Table.

Priests (Ordination of Women)

9.38 am

Madam Speaker: Before we commence today's business, it might be helpful to the House if I made a short statement.

In view of the business of the House order which provides that the Questions on both Measures are to be put at 2.30 pm, I propose to allow them to be debated together. The amendment to the first motion is not in order, but of course the arguments contained in the amendment may be deployed in the joint debate.

I am satisfied that all the necessary preliminary procedures relating to the Measures have been gone through and that today's motions are perfectly in order. Whether or not the Measures represent an appropriate way in which to make the proposed changes is a question of argument rather than a question of order for me.

I have been asked to consider whether the financial privileges of the House are being infringed by the financial provisions Measure. I have established that the payments that it is proposed to make out of the Church Commissioners' general fund do not require a money resolution of the House and that the Measure is perfectly in order in that respect.

Finally, an enormous number of hon. Members wish to speak and, alas, I am not in a position to place a 10-minute limit on speeches today. I therefore make a special plea for brevity.

Mr. Andrew Bowden (Brighton, Kemptown): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. If the motions are accepted today, they will have a profound effect upon the Church of England. I am a communicant member of the Church and I am distressed that Members of the House who hold other religious beliefs or who are agnostics, atheists or feminists will be able to influence the future of my Church. I therefore ask you, Madam Speaker, to consider ruling that it would not be proper for those hon. Members to use their votes today.

Madam Speaker: I must tell the hon. Gentleman and the House that our proceedings are pursuant to an Act of Parliament and that all hon. Members are entitled to vote. May we now make progress?

9.40 am

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): I hope that I need detain the House for only a moment. I have two messages.

First, I have it in command from Her Majesty the Queen to acquaint the House that Her Majesty, having been informed of the purport of the Priests (Ordination of Women) Measure, has consented to place her prerogative and interest, so far as it is concerned on behalf of the Crown and the Duchy of Lancaster, at the disposal of Parliament for the purposes of the Measure.

Secondly, I have it in command from His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales to acquaint the House that his royal highness, having been informed of the purport of the Priests (Ordination of Women) Measure, has consented to place his interest, so far as it is concerned on behalf of the Duchy of Cornwall, at the disposal of Parliament for the purposes of the Measure.

9.41 am

Mr. Michael Alison (Second Church Estates Commissioner, representing the Church Commissioners): I beg to move,

That the Priests (Ordination of Women) Measure, passed by the General Synod of the Church of England, be presented to Her Majesty for her Royal Assent in the form in which the said Measure was laid before Parliament.

The two Church of England Measures that I invite the House to approve are complementary—indeed, the first cannot be put into effect without the second, financial, Measure. I hope, therefore, that it will be for the convenience of the House if we discuss the two Measures in tandem, in accordance with what you, Madam Speaker, said. I remind the House of the second motion before us:

That the Ordination of Women (Financial Provisions) Measure, passed by the General Synod of the Church of England, be presented to Her Majesty for her Royal Assent in the form in which the said Measure was laid before Parliament.

The Measures are certainly among the most significant and, it must be said, the most controversial pieces of Church legislation ever to come before the House. Their significance goes far beyond their immediate provisions. They not only raise major questions of theology and Church unity and order but touch on issues of deep concern to very large numbers—probably millions—of people, ranging from regular Sunday churchgoers to those more loosely attached, whose links with the Church of England, if distant, are existent and real. I am grateful and glad that so many hon. Members, on behalf of their constituents, have recognised the importance of these matters by their attendance and by their desire to participate in the debate.

The process by which the Measures have reached the House cannot be said to have been either rushed or superficial. As long ago as 1975, the General Synod of the Church of England passed a motion to the effect that it considered that there were no fundamental objections to the ordination of women to the Anglican priesthood.

The legislation before us began its own journey through the Synod more than five years ago. Prior to its introduction, the justification for and shape of the legislation had been extensively considered by the House of Bishops and the Synod itself. In accordance with the General Synod's constitution, and before they could be considered for final approval by the Synod, the two Measures were referred to every diocese in the Church, and were discussed, I suspect, in every deanery and parish in the land. All but six of the 44 diocesan synods voted in their favour and they were finally approved last November by majorities of more than two thirds in each of the three houses—Bishops, Clergy and Laity—of the General Synod. They reach us, therefore, with a pedigree of timely consideration and immense support within the constituencies of the Church.

The process of careful consideration has continued since that time. The Ecclesiastical Committee—a Committee of this House—whose reports are before the House this morning, heard evidence on the Measures on several occasions and held a joint conference with our matching body in the General Synod, which is called the Legislative Committee. In a departure from past practice, we took evidence in the House from members of the General Synod who were opposed to the Measures as well as from those who supported them. Having deliberated

carefully, the Ecclesiastical Committee has reported by a majority that the legislation and the motions before us are expedient.

Some hon. Members here today may, while applauding the careful consideration given to the legislation in the Synod, seek to argue that it is no business of this House to deliberate on matters that are so exclusively and intimately the concern of the Church of England. I suspect that the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) may address himself to that point during a speech that we look forward to hearing.

To take that approach, however, is not only to ignore the historic role of the Church of England as the national church but to fail to realise how large our Church of England continues to loom in society today. Far from being the organisation in terminal decline that many commentators eagerly seek to depict, the Church of England remains an organisation with a vigorous life whose influence reaches into all corners of the nation. The active membership of the Church is currently increasing in many areas.

Moreover, the Church of England retains a significance far beyond those—still numbering more than a million—who regularly and weekly attend its churches. It is still the Church to which most of us and our constituents go on the big occasions of life—to have our children baptised, to be married or, less willingly, to be buried. The Church of England still ministers to every community in the land. In many of our inner-city areas, Anglican clergy are often the only residential professional people. Some 20 per cent. of our schools are of Church of England foundation. More than 800,000 young people take part each week in the Church's youth activities. Its pedigree in our national heritage—culturally, linguistically, architecturally and artistically—is simply immeasurable. I remind the House in passing that all the Chancellors of the Exchequer from the Norman conquest to the reformation were bishops, or sometimes deans or archdeacons. It is for consideration whether those bishops, deacons and deans did a better job than more recent performers, by which I mean, of course, those performing over the past 500 or 600 years at least.

Moreover, millions more of our fellow citizens and constituents than the comparatively smaller number of those who regularly attend Anglican Church services definitely identify themselves with and value our Christian heritage in Britain. The latest figures taken from the ninth British social attitudes survey of 1992-93 show that 61 per cent. of the entire population identify with one or other of the main Christian denominations. A much smaller proportion—35 per cent.—register no religion. Therefore, we are considering millions of people who identify themselves with and participate in the Christian denominations in our country.

Many of that 61 per cent. are members of other non-Anglican Christian denominations. For those millions of people, the Church of England, with its formal state link, is a kind of valuable stalking horse by which they can bring pressure to bear on the powers that be to promote or to maintain Christian standards in education, complex moral and ethical issues, and so on. Therefore, it is to this House and its elected Members that they expect to write and get a response in that context. Few would know how to get in touch with an elected Synod member, for example, so it is entirely appropriate for the House to debate matters of concern to so many millions of our constituents, whether or not they be members of the Church of England. It is also right for the House to manifest its proper function on an un-whipped Friday by the presence of such large numbers of hon. Members to reflect on, respond to and echo the intense interest of our constituents.

I shall briefly consider the controversy that has surrounded the motion that springs from the varying views in the Christian Church on whether the tradition of an all-male priesthood can be properly modified and whether the Church has authority to make such a change. Right hon. and hon. Members will not expect me as a layman to give an exhaustive and expert account of theological matters. [HON. MEMBERS: "Why not?"] Since the arguments on both sides may well be referred to later, and in view of the response that that little tremor suggested, I shall include a bit of theology.

The case against the proposed legislation on theological and ecclesiological grounds falls in paragraphs 10 to 15 of the Ecclesiastical Committee report under three headings. First, it is argued that, in his incarnation as Christ, God manifested himself unequivocally as a male human being. At the Eucharist, the celebrant in his own person in called on to represent Christ and thus male priests only, it is argued, can properly and adequately do that. That argument is challenged by proponents of women priests on the ground that it is the humanity of Christ that is definitive and significant, not his maleness. To include women in the priesthood would indicate the inclusiveness of all humanity in the person of the celebrant.

I shall tentatively follow that little theology byway a little further. We all understand that when one of Her Majesty's ambassadors is serving Her Majesty in a foreign posting in, say, Washington, that ambassador, if he is male, can properly represent Her Majesty. He does not have to be a representation of Her Majesty or, in other words, a women who looks exactly like the Queen. He can be a full representative of Her Majesty as a male. If one argues that it has to be a precise representation, one should argue that not only should the priest be male, but that he should be a Jew as well. *[Interruption.]* One sees the hazards that arise the moment one brings in the byways of theology.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): Does my right hon. Friend accept that there are many people in the Catholic and Apostolic Church—Anglican, Roman Catholic and orthodox—who would consider that a gross trivialisation of their argument?

Mr. Alison: Certainly it is not an original analogy. It comes from one of the great doctors of the Church of England and I shall take that rebuke and pass on to him.

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): Does my right hon. Friend accept that a number of Christian Churches have had female vicars for a long time, that they have behaved satisfactorily and to the great distinction of those Churches, and that many of us cannot understand the theological nonsense that has kept the Church of England behind other Churches for so long?

Mr. Alison: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his intervention. I shall touch briefly on the extent to which other Churches have already trodden the path that today we are suggesting the Church of England should tread.

Those who lay the weight of the Church of England's tradition on deploying an all-male priesthood also argue that to admit women to that order of ministry would compromise its apostolic continuity. However, others see

[Mr. Alison]

the Church of England as continually developing and do not accept that the apostolicity of the Church would be undermined by the ordination of women to the priesthood.

It is worth reminding the House that for the first 1,000 years of the history of the Christian Church it was normal for bishops and clergy to have wives—one wife only—and it was only after that period had passed that it became necessary for priests to be celibate. We do things in thousand-year tranches in the Christian Church and it may be that in the next 1,000 years we shall make another important change to the lot and scope of women. I do not believe that it represents a significant breach of the principle of continuity in which there is evolution over long periods of the Church's history.

The next main objection depends on the interpretation of certain passages in the Bible.

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): Does my right hon. Friend accept that the arguments that he and others have advanced against the ordination of women are absolutely crucial to a substantial number of people in the Church of England who want the Measure to be passed and form part of the pressure on hon. Members? However, will he assure the House that those who have reservations—as far as I can judge from conversations I have had with them, they will not give them up in any circumstances—will be properly catered for under any new arrangements if the House were to pass the Measure?

Mr. Alison: I hope to be able to reassure my hon. Friend when I briefly expound the content of the Measures, with the safeguards that are written into them.

The next main ground of objection depends on the interpretation of certain passages in the Bible suggesting that headship within the Church and more widely rests with men and not with women. The main texts in question are referred to and set out in paragraph 13 of our Ecclesiastical Committee's report. There has been much debate about the precise meaning of the Greek word Kephale, which is translated as "head" in the biblical text. Many who are strongly committed to the supremacy of scripture cannot find in the passages quoted any bar to the ordination of women as priests.

The third main ecclesiological argument is that the Church of England is part only of the one holy and apostolic church and does not have the authority to make the change proposed. Such a change could be made only by an ecumenical council of the whole Christian Church. This argument overlooks the effect of the reformation and the sad but none the less real divisions that continue within Christendom.

Article 20 of the our Church of England's 39 articles of religion, one of our foundation documents, states that "the Church has authority in controversies of faith".

In spite of the considerable improvements in relations between the churches, an ecumenical council on this matter is not a realistic possibility at present.

The effect of unilateral action by the Church of England on its relations with other Christian denominations has been a constant concern throughout our debates. The ordination of women to the priesthood would undoubtedly represent a setback in the search for unity with the Roman Catholic and orthodox Churches. It would, however, not end the quest for unity with those Churches and would at the same time remove a barrier to unity with other Churches such as those from the Lutheran and reformed traditions.

Mr. John Selwyn Gummer (Suffolk, Coastal): Will my right hon. Friend explain why, almost 10 years ago, the Church of England solemnly agreed with the orthodox Churches that no changes would be made affecting its association and relations without discussion and agreement, yet, in the long discussions, threw that promise to the winds at a time when the orthodox Church, especially in eastern Europe, looked to the Church of England for leadership? Is not that to put our own wishes ahead of the unity for which Jesus asked at the last supper? Why did we make that decision, and why did we not keep our word?

Mr. Alison: My right hon. Friend will understand as clearly as I do that the Church of England is subject to synodical government, which includes a representational and—dare one use the word without theological undertones—democratic factor. No fixed or final undertaking—my right hon. Friend will, I think, understand this—can be given by archbishops or bishops in ecumenical or other discussions with other churches that must stand firmly, fixedly and eternally in the face of the movement of the seas of opinion and, above all, of voting changes in their own church that are likely to shift the sands a little on the basic discussion of ecumenical matters.

Mr. Gummer: Does my right hon. Friend have some sympathy with the leader of the Russian orthodox Church, who found it impossible to meet the Archbishop of Canterbury in formal circumstances and had to ask, "By what authority does he come if he is not prepared to accept the authority of the whole Church but insists upon a unilateral decision by a part of the Church, having given us his word?"

Mr. Alison: I do not think that I can properly respond on the relations of leaders of churches because I have not been privy to their discussions, but since the reformation there has been some division in the councils of Christendom and the Church of England was not extensively consulted by the Church of Rome on some of the fundamental doctrines—for example, the ascension and reception of the Blessed Virgin Mary bodily into heaven, a new doctrine promulgated without reference to the Church of England or its leaders. It is part of the divided framework of Christendom that churches develop their own positions and theological reflections and evolution in this area. We cannot continually be bound by decisions reached in other churches before we can go forward, otherwise no reformation would have occurred.

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): The House will probably be able to hear some of the arguments of my right hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, Coastal (Mr. Gummer) later in the debate, but is it not a fact that the Roman Catholic Church does not recognise the orders of male priests in the Church of England? That does not prevent parishes—Roman Catholic, Anglican and free—from presenting Christianity jointly to people all over the country, and is not that the greater truth and greater cheerfulness?

Mr. Alison: I fully accept what my hon. Friend says. There is nothing significant from the point of view of the Roman Catholic Church in the possibility of women priests

emerging in the Church of England, as the ministry of the male priesthood, in the view of the Roman Catholic Church, is null and void. No terrible sea change is implied in the relationship between the two churches if null is made nuller and void voider by the introduction of the feminine tense to these two words.

As well as considering our Church traditions, we should not overlook the fact that the Church of England is the mother Church of a worldwide Anglican communion of 70 million adherents. Within that communion, many provinces have already moved to ordain women as priests. There are now well over 1,000 women priests within the Anglican communion. While other provinces continue to adhere to the tradition of an all-male priesthood, the communion has already and clearly found ways of living with a variety of practices among its members on this issue.

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): I visited Hong Kong with the Foreign Affairs Select Committee, and last Sunday I took communion in the cathedral. It was administered by a women priest, and although I could not sometimes understand what she was saying because she was an American, I could not help noticing that there had been a significant increase in the congregation for the eight o'clock communion since I was there years earlier. I hope that that woman priest has helped to bring about that increase.

Mr. Alison: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for showing the extent to which communion is feasible and possible where women priests are ministering, certainly in the Anglican community.

The potentially divisive effect of the legislation within the Church of England has captured most attention within the Church and our own Ecclesiastical Committee.

The Priests (Ordination of Women) Measure—the main Measure—seeks to do two things. First, clause 1(1) makes it lawful for the General Synod to provide by canon for a woman to be ordained to the office of priest as long as she meets the other requirements of canon law for such ordination. Clause 1(2) makes it clear that the Measure does not open the way for women to become bishops. A further Measure requiring as elaborate a process of consideration as the present one would be necessary for that to happen.

Recognising the divided views in the Church on the issue, the remainder of the Measure provides an elaborate and comprehensive set of safeguards designed to ensure that those who, in conscience, cannot accept the ordination of women as priests are not asked to act against their conscience. Under canon law, a parish priest can already decide who may share in the administration of sacrament in his church and, if he wishes, he can exclude a woman from doing so.

Clause 3 enables a parochial church council to pass either or both of the resolutions set out in schedule 1. These are, first, under resolution A, that the parochial church council would not accept a woman to preside at or celebrate Holy Communion or pronounce the absolution in the parish—those acts that are specifically reserved to the ministry—and, secondly, under resolution B, that the council

"would not accept a woman as the incumbent or priest-in-charge of the benefice or as a team vicar for the benefice."

Both this and clause 4, which relates to cathedrals, are continuing provisions without limit of time—built-in, permanent parochial safeguards.

Most attention has focused, however, on clause 2 of the Measure, which enables a bishop in office when the canon is promulgated to make one or more of three declarations. As paragraph 2 of our Ecclesiastical Committee report explains, the first of those declarations would prevent a woman from being ordained as a priest within his diocese; the second would prevent a woman from being a parish priest or team vicar within his diocese; and the third would prevent a woman from being given any licence or permission to officiate as a priest within the diocese. By making all three declarations, a bishop could exclude women from being ordained or acting as priests in any capacity within his diocese.

A declaration made by a bishop under clause 2 could be withdrawn by him, but would otherwise continue in force until six months after the bishop's successor took office.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): Let us suppose that the House passes the Measure and that a woman is ordained. Let us suppose that she then goes to a diocese or a part of the country where the safeguards described by the right hon. Gentleman apply. What offence will that woman be committing, who will punish her with what authority, and on what basis is that to be justified to the House?

Mr. Alison: The woman would not commit an offence by travelling to any particular part of the country; but, by definition, she could not officiate without being invited to acquire the title of a benefice, or to accept whatever post she has been invited to minister to. The initiative, therefore, would not lie with the woman; it would lie only with the inviting body—a hospital, a parish or some other corporate body within the diocese. No offence would arise in the woman's simply considering an opening or opportunity.

Mr. Benn: May I clarify this point? Holy Communion is given on a number of occasions. If, under the safeguards that the right hon. Gentleman has described, certain areas are to be no-go areas for women priests, what offence would be committed—and by whom—if a woman went into a no-go area and administered Holy Communion? What would be the penalty, and, if the Measure is passed, will Parliament today be endorsing such a penalty for a woman ordained into holy orders under an instruction and agreement on the part of both Houses of Parliament?

Mr. Alison: The question is whether what the woman did was covert and unauthorised, or whether such an administration of Holy Communion was authorised and supported by the parish priest concerned. We are necessarily talking about a formal liturgical service in a church. The woman could not administer the sacrament in a parish church without the clergyman—the occupant of the benefice—authorising her to do so.

It is conceivable, I suppose, that a group might get together, break the lock of the church in the small hours and hold illicit, covert communion service without the knowledge or authority of the parish priest; but I do not think that that is what the right hon. Gentleman means. He is concerned with some formal breach of ecclesiastical jurisdiction or law. I do not see how that can happen in the context that we are considering: as I have pointed out, the absolute discretion as to who may administer the sacrament and absolution in a parish church remains with the parish priest concerned. He could invite a woman to administer the sacrament in his church—if she was duly

[Mr. Alison]

ordained as a priest—if he and his parish had opted, as the option arises in these Measures, to accept women priests. If they had passed a resolution not to accept women priests, he would never invite her in the first place, and the contingency would not arise unless it was done in a covert and underhand way. I do not think that problems of ecclesiastical law and punishment arise in this contingency.

The provision restricting clause 2 to bishops in office when the canon comes into force was requested by the majority of the House of Bishops in order to maintain their unity and collegiality. Since then, it has become a focus of criticism by opponents of women's ordination, who argue that, because the clause does not extend to bishops appointed after the promulgation of the canon, it is likely to prevent priests who share their views from ever becoming bishops in future. Opponents of the Measure therefore argue that the clause should either be extended to apply indefinitely whenever a new bishop comes in, or be scrapped completely. Supporters of women priests point out that to extend the rights given by the clause to future bishops would, in effect, be to legislate for the permanent geographical division of the Church into go and no-go areas for women priests.

The grounds for the argument over clause 2—which occupied much of the time of the Ecclesiastical Committee—have, I am glad to say, substantially diminished, as has the likelihood of diocesan bishops making any of the declarations under the clause, following publication of the pastoral arrangements which the House of Bishops has indicated that it wishes to operate once the legislation is in force.

The arrangements set out in the two statements of the House of Bishops—which appear on pages 21 and 22 of our Ecclesiastical Committee report—commit the bishop to ensuring that suitable episcopal ministry is provided for those in favour and those opposed to the legislation, while preserving the position of the diocesan bishop. The arrangements are to be embodied in an Act of Synod, which the General Synod will consider at its next meeting on 9 to 12 November.

An Act of Synod—which is the modern-day equivalent of an Act of the convocations—has no legally binding effect, but is regarded by the Church as morally binding. As paragraph 26 of the Ecclesiastical Committee's report records, some members of the committee have pressed, and will no doubt press today, for the Act of Synod to be given legal force by being enshrined in another Measure. While I appreciate the sincerity of those who argue that point, I do not think that their argument can be sustained; nor did the majority of members of the Ecclesiastical Committee.

Pastoral arrangements are about matters of confidence and trust, not law. Flexibility is needed to adapt to the many different circumstances that will affect individual priests and parishes. Nor can there be any guarantee that the Measure—which will, in any event, take two years to enact—could be carried through all its stages in the Synod.

Hon. Members will be aware that a number of people in the Church feel that the arrangements intended by the House of Bishops already go too far in trying to accommodate those who are opposed to the present legislation. I am sure that the bishops are wise both in what they propose and in avoiding any attempt to enshrine their proposals in a further Measure.

Mr. Tim Renton (Mid-Sussex): I very much agree with my right hon. Friend about these issues, and I admire the measured, reasonable and well-informed way in which he is presenting his arguments. However, although I have always strongly supported the ordination of women—I hope that it will happen soon, and I think that it will strengthen the Church of England when it does—I know that the point on which my right hon. Friend has touched worries a number of Anglican priests in my part of the world. The proposed Act of Synod is, in effect, designed to reassure opponents that their place within the Church of England is respected. As my right hon. Friend has pointed out, it has no legal force; its force is only moral and in-house. What guarantees can be given to such people that it will not be withdrawn later, in a different climate of opinion?

I agree with my right hon. Friend that it is not possible to legislate in perpetuity for what could be a perpetual division in the Church of England. However, if he can elaborate on that point, I will be able to reassure priests in Sussex with more certainty about an issue that is worrying them.

Mr. Alison: I shall do my best in a few seconds to reassure my right hon. Friend by reading out a short extract from the ecclesiastical bishops' report. As an old hand and as a parliamentarian, perhaps I can remind my right hon. Friend of some of the realities in that area. He will be familiar with the various Acts that we have passed.

Those Acts went through agonising Committee stages with the most minute discussion on the dots, crosses and t's of provisions about discrimination and anti-discrimination—anti-racial discrimination and anti-sex discrimination. A range of non-discriminatory Measures were introduced and, after agonising procedures, were put on the statute book. However, we must ask ourselves whether they have been fail-safe instruments for securing non-discrimination in race relations, non-discrimination in jobs available for West Indians or other minority immigrants in our community.

In spite of the splendid, detailed, agonisingly constructed statutory provisions that we have made, at the end of the day the small print, the cold legality, does not guarantee the moral impetus which is needed to eschew real discrimination. It depends on the good will, and the heart and mind, of those who live in the community.

If we attempt to turn the Act of Synod into a Measure, to begin with, it would have to go through a committee stage in the Synod, which would delay it by at least two years. The present form of the Act of Synod, as proposed, would be much modified, because immediately it would become a battle as it went through the committee stage and the small print and all the technical requirements were considered. What would emerge might be much less comprehensive and protective than what is already in the draft Act of Synod. Then it would go forth with less of the spirit of moral unanimity than might be the case. There would be no guarantee that it would secure the required objectives.

I think that the words that I shall now quote from our Committee will help to put the matter into perspective. Paragraph 40 reads:

"The preservation of the unity of the Church of England following the introduction of women priests cannot be achieved by legislation alone. Nor could legislation ensure that there is no discrimination against the opponents of women priests in the matter of preferment within the Church. These are ultimately matters which will depend on the good will of members of the Church at all levels and on the making of arrangements within the Church that are seen to promote fairness to all and toleration of different viewpoints. Such arrangements have already been proposed in the two Manchester Statements."

As the House will have gathered, a number of provisions of the main Measure and the pastoral arrangements proposed by the House of Bishops are intended to provide continued room within the Church of England for the ordination of women to the priesthood. As I hope that my right hon. Friend will concede, the Church is trying, through the Act of Synod, to get to the heart of the necessary unanimity and good will spelt out in the Act of Synod. It is doing that in a compressive if necessarily broad-brush way, not with the kind of minute protection against litigious tendencies that is so much a feature of our legislation in the House and, to some extent, in the Synod.

The Measure is a broad-brush attempt to expand and explain the determination to give a breath of life to the skeleton of statutory provision that we are trying to introduce today to make the commitment to fairness and to allowing a hundred flowers to bloom and the two integrities to co-exist as a reality. That is the determination. That is the reason why the General Synod has wisely decided that it will go for an Act of Synod that can be introduced and passed rapidly in the General Synod and not go down the path of further detailed Measures.

I apologise, Madam Deputy Speaker, for detaining the House for so long. I come now to the second Measure, the Ordination of Women (Financial Provisions) Measure. It recognises that, in spite of the attempts that we shall make to maintain unity and to include everybody if possible, there will be opponents who do not feel able to remain within the Church of England. The Measure is an attempted safety net to ensure that those who resign from service in the Church of England, by reason of their opposition to the ordination of women as priests, do not suffer financial hardship.

The Measure is discussed in detail on pages 35 to 37 of the report. It falls broadly into two parts. Clauses 1 to 4 and 9 provide a standard scheme of financial benefits to clergy and others who resign because of their opposition to the ordination of women priests during a period between six months before and 10 years after the promulgation of the implementing canon. That 10-year scope forward is not without interest, because it means that the clergy have a chance to find their feet, or not, in the new regime when we have women priests. It allows them 10 years to make up their mind whether they can stand the new arrangements or not, and apply for the financial benefits of having to resign.

Clause 5 gives a wide discretion to make payments both to those who are not entitled to benefit as a right from the standard scheme and by way of additional benefit to those who are so entitled. All benefits are to be administered by the Church of England Pensions Board with a right of appeal to a tribunal of five persons, constituted as provided by clause 10.

The Measures have been variously criticised as either mean or over-generous. In my view, the level of provision is fair and reasonable—indeed, it compares well with levels of provision in the secular field. The Church of England deserves great credit that, uniquely among these provinces of the Anglican communion who have ordained women as priests, it is making arrangements for those who do not feel able in conscience to remain in its service.

Some of those who have argued that the financial provisions are inadequate from the point of view of those who might receive them have also expressed concern that they are still too generous from the point of view of the Church's capacity to pay them. Depending on the timing of the resignation, the estimated cost of the provision could average £1 million per annum for each 100 resignations at current stipend levels. Illustrative figures on costs are given in the memorandum by the Church Commissioners, which is reproduced on pages 44 to 46 of the report.

As my colleagues will know, the Church of England, as with other institutions, is going through a period of financial hardship, and the costs will add to the burden of all the parishes that will ultimately have to bear them. The Measure was discussed in dioceses when the main Measure was referred to them. It received a 100 per cent. majority in the General Synod. In the House of Bishops, it received a majority of 96·98 per cent., in the House of Clergy a majority of 97 per cent. and in the House of Laity a majority of 95 per cent. The financial provisions Measures reached us with a virtually unanimous endorsement—more than many Measures that have reached us in the past.

Although there is still uncertainty over the number who will leave the Church of England as a result of the Measures, it now looks as though it will be substantially fewer than predicted in some of the initial estimates made in the immediate aftermath of last November's General Synod vote. There can, in my view, be no reasonable doubt either of the Church's capacity or of its will to live up to the commitments represented by the financial provisions Measure.

Miss Ann Widdecombe (Maidstone): Will my right hon. Friend comment, for the House's elucidation—he is giving us a thorough canter through the Measures—on whether the Measures cover serving missionaries abroad, serving chaplains to the armed services, serving chaplains to health authorities, and others who are not immediately in parishes?

Mr. Alison: I am happy to give my hon. Friend that reassurance. All the people in the categories that she has mentioned, whether they are lay members of such bodies or ordained members, will be eligible under clause 5 for the discretionary——

Miss Widdecombe: Ah!

Mr. Alison: —provision which is part of the package that we are now offering. It is being left to discretionary provision precisely because, as my hon. Friend showed by the impressive list of individual organisations against which the waves of the changes might beat in the future, there is a considerable number of bodies and individuals which it would almost certainly be impossible exhaustively to list individually in the body of the Measure. To that extent, we might lose more, and people might be more disadvantaged, if we were to spell out every conceivable individual group that might be disadvantaged.

In those circumstances, it is entirely reasonable to have a prescribed set of provisions for those who are easily identifiable—that is, those in full-time registered ecclesiastical employment—to set the yardstick for all the others whom we wish to include in that broad category, and

[Mr. Alison]

of whom it has been said that we wish to include them. For their sake, we shall not list exhastively lest we miss out some. The discretion will be available widely to include all who can make any kind of case, with an appeal.

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): The right hon. Gentleman knows that he is on the most difficult part of his brief. He knows that it would have been possible to say that the compensation measure should apply to all Church of England clergymen—full stop. We did not need an exhaustive list because that heading would have covered all of them. Hon. Members are rightly worried that some may not be covered because they will have to argue their case for compensation rather than, like others, gaining it by right.

Mr. Alison: The hon. Gentleman speaks of compensation. We are not talking about a compensation package. We are talking about arrangements to help in conditions of financial hardship and difficulty. It is not a compensation measure in the sense that that might arise in secular contracts and conditions of employment precisely because there are so many people who do not have such contracts and conditions of employment in the Church of England. The hon. Gentleman's shorthand formula would definitely leave out some people who are likely to apply for compensation under clause 5—some of the people whom my hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe) mentioned in her off-the-cuff recitation of possible beneficiaries. We cannot be exhaustive in a prescribed schedule 1 list.

Mr. Roger Evans (Monmouth): Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is unsatisfactory, as a matter of legislative practice, to have a clause that gives a general discretion to make payments to office holders, employees or members of religious communities where such people need not, as a matter of definition, have any connection whatsoever with the Church of England? Purely secular office holders who are prepared to sign the declaration that they object to women priests as a matter of conscience are brought within that wide class. Why has it not been defined?

Mr. Alison: I attempted to explain that the definition would be difficult to contain—it would take up pages of schedules of the Measure and almost certainly leave somebody out. My hon. Friend overlooks the fact that there is, in the nature of the discretion, a capacity to be selective and discriminating with an appeals machinery and procedure. I cannot see how one can possibly behave more fairly than that, given the broad demonstration by the Church of England, through the Measure, that it is determined to help those who can show that they have real need and a reasonable title to such help.

Mr. John Ward (Poole): We are in uncharted waters. There have been many declarations of intent, which are welcome. Can my right hon. Friend assure the House that, given the broad estimate of those who may be covered by the Measures, the Church will have at its disposal the financial resources necessary, and still be able to carry out its work? Has there been an accountant's appraisal of the ability of the Church to meet its promises?

Mr. Alison: My hon. Friend will find in the paragraph of the Ecclesiastical Committee report that I have already quoted a broad-band computation of the likely cost to the Church of England, depending on whether 10, 50, 100 or more clergy resign. We have said that the costs will fall on the parishes and the man in the pew. As with all Church finances, the ultimate cost lies on the individual contributors in the parishes. They do not put a vast amount of money into the plate every Sunday. My hon. Friend may know that the average is £2.50 a week. The need will quickly arise for regular communicants of the Church of England to dip slightly deeper into their pockets. There is plenty of scope in the parishes for them to do so, given that small sum.

The question is almost, how long is a piece of string? If a substantial burden of payments arises in parishes, I believe that they will cough up—to put it crudely—because their heart is behind the Measures, as is shown by their voting. My hon. Friend will understand that there will be some savings, if large numbers resign, in existing stipends for fully-fledged clergy. That will give the budget a certain resilience because of the fall away of some of the sums involved.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): Given what my right hon. Friend said about the time perspectives within which changes come about in the Church of England, he may be pleased to learn—if he does not already know—that the present Measures for looking after clergy compare favourably with the Measures made for those affected by the dissolution of the monasteries. Does he agree that we must both hope and expect that, within the 10-year period, large numbers of those who are present find it impossible to accept the principle of women priests will find that many of their fears and anxieties are not as great as they expected, and that they will come round, as many people have already, to the Measure?

Mr. Alison: I am grateful for that helpful, prophetic and constructive intervention.

I shall draw together the threads on the compensation provision. I shall listen with great concern and interest to what the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) says on the issue and to what all other colleagues say in their speeches. I shall hope to try to reassure them with a few further points at the end of the debate. I remind colleagues of the enormous majorities in the House of Bishops, the House of Clergy and the House of Laity in favour of the Measure. All those most intimately affected by the provisions and financial terms that we are discussing—those in the House of Clergy—voted 97 per cent. in favour. That means that they felt that those affected will be adequately provided for by the spirit and letter of the financial provisions Measure.

Throughout the debate in the Church of England on the Measures there has been clear concern to maintain the unity of the Church of England. That concern was shared by the members of the Ecclesiastical Committee. Those opposed to the ordination of women for priesthood naturally focused on the safeguards afforded to those against the Measure. As I have demonstrated, the safeguards provided in the Measure are, when added to the provisions of the existing law, extensive. When the pastoral arrangements proposed by the House of Bishops are taken into account, the protective provisions are formidable. No member of the Church in the worldwide

Anglican Community has gone to such lengths to give those opposed to the decision a continuing place in the Church.

I pay tribute to the lead that the Archibishops of Canterbury and of York and other diocesan bishops have given in the matter. No doubt much will be made in the debate of the divisive effect of the legislation on the Church of England. I ask the House to remember how much more divisive would be a failure to pass the legislation against the wishes of so clear a majority in the Church. I urge the House to accept the considered conclusion of the majority of the Ecclesiastical Committee —a Committee of the House—that the Measures are expedient and to demonstrate that by voting for them at the end of the debate.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Before I call the next Member to speak, may I reinforce the plea that was made by Madam Speaker before she left the Chair this morning? There are many, many Members who wish to speak. Many will be disappointed if considerable self-restraint is not exercised.

10.39 am

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): Many are called; few are chosen. Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for calling me. I shall be brief, not just because the Speaker has asked us to be brief to maximise the number of people who can participate in the debate, but because the Estates Commissioner has given such a good and comprehensive introduction to the measure.

We have already been reminded that there are no theological objections to the women priests Measure. Indeed, the Synod of the Church of England decided many decades ago that it had no such objections, though it would be in order for any hon. Member who wishes to tease the House today to try to put forward an argument to reject that measure on theological grounds. I do not do so. I shall speak briefly in support of the main Measure and against the compensation Measure.

Most of the objections to the women's ordination Measure are not on theological grounds, but on grounds of order. Has the Church of England the authority to make the change? People who object to the Measure hold that view passionately and I respect them for it. I do not agree with them. For we are not only an established Church—hence the debate today and the freedom of anyone who catches the Speaker's eye to participate in the debgate—but a catholic and reformed Church. It seems strange that people claim that a Church that has taken unilateral decisions to reform itself does not have the power to make further changes.

It is possible to argue that the changes that we are making today are of a different magnitude from those made at the reformation. Those made at the reformation were about whether clergy could marry, whether communion should be in two kinds and the meaning of transubstantiation. Whereas today we might think those issues trivial, in those days people were prepared to go to the stake for their beliefs. I wonder how many people would propose or oppose the Measure if the outcome might be the stake and the fire today—but that, fortunately, is not the test.

It seems to me that it is in the power of a catholic but reformed Church—a Church that has declared UDI and banished the Pope's jurisdiction from this realm—to make the change that we are considering, and I hope that the House will agree to the change.

Under the Church of England Assembly Powers Act 1919, the Ecclesiastical Committee—and, I would therefore suggest, the House—has a duty, not to judge the broad sweep of a Measure, but to judge whether the Measure is expedient or not expedient when considering the rights and liberties of Her Majesty's subjects. Therefore, it was appropriate that most of the time in the Ecclesiastical Committee was spent, within those terms of reference, considering how that Measure will affect some of Her Majesty's subjects, especially those who disagree with the Measure.

Not so long ago, those who disagree with the Measure were in the majority. They are not people with different views who joined the Church; they are people who, at one time, found themselves in the majority, and who now find themselves in the minority. The Ecclesiastical Committee, therefore, quite rightly, spent most of its time considering how that group should be protected. The Estates Commissioner has reminded us that the result of that has not been merely the passing of two statements from the House of Bishops meeting in Manchester, but the promise —not yet the fulfilment—of an Act of Synod. That Act of Synod was not offered; the information that Synod could pass such a measure had to be extracted from Synod witnesses and it was almost like getting blood out of a stone.

The starting point for enshrining the rights of the minority did not, therefore, kick off in the best posssible terms. I hope that the House will consider carefully what further measures may be necessary at some later date to protect the rights of the minority who disagree with the Measure.

Against that disappointment of the Synod's not coming forward gracefully and offering that safeguard, however, we have to set the behaviour of the House of Bishops. Two unanimous statements were made, the second strengthening the first, about how rights of that minority can be protected. The House of Bishops promised to support unanimously the idea of an Act of Synod when Synod has its next meeting. There has also been a clutch of appointments of suffragen bishops, and the majority of those appointments—those that were announced last week —have been of people who either oppose the Measure or have grave doubts about it. It therefore appears that, just as no Act of Parliament or Act of Synod can, by itself, guarantee the right of a minority if the majority wishes to persecute that minority, the House of Bishops and individual bishops have done things that are encouraging. I congratulate them on the lead that they have given.

It is a pity that the opponents on both sides have more recently made some wild statements about what they intend to do. I hope that when Synod considers the measure it will not be swayed by those extremist views, from whatever wing of the Church those views come.

The task that I set myself—to support the Measure—is nearly done, but I must draw the House's attention to the compensation Measure, in which we should take a careful interest. The Measure gives a statutory right to some and a discretionary right to others. It also has a formula by which compensation will be computed. Although we are not supposed to refer to it as compensation, it is a convenient shorthand which we all understand, so I shall continue to use it. The formula works against younger

[Mr. Frank Field]

priests. Some of them who have been trained and are married are doubtful about the Measure and will not be compensated as the formula currently stands, because it does not take into account the years that they have spent training as ordinands, but only those that they have spent in post as deacons or priests. For that reason, and the fact that the Measure is vague with regard to a large number of other people who may wish not to continue as Anglican priests after the Measure is passed, I hope that the House, although it should pass the first Measure, will reject the second. If there is support for my view, I shall divide the House on that second Measure.

Mr. Paul Channon (Southend, West): What would happen if the second Measure were defeated? What would be the compensation situation?

Mr. Field: It would concentrate the mind wonderfully, because the second Measure has to be passed for the first Measure to come into operation. We would get another order, meeting our points, so that the substantive motion would come into effect.

The Church may have some financial difficulties in meeting the cost of the compensation package, but, when Church Commissioners have lost between £3 million and £8 million by speculating on the American property market, we should not worry about whether there will be sufficient money to fund the form of compensation that we think desirable.

Mr. Michael Stern (Bristol, North-West): I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way. The Church does not have a power of taxation; to place an indefinite financial burden on it, as he suggests, and lightly to put on one side the fact it might not be able to meet it, is a recipe for potential chaos within the Church.

Mr. Field: Most people who are going to leave are covered and will gain compensation, or whatever phrase we should be using. The minority will not be covered. It is not for the House to say that, because the Church has got itself into such a financial mess by speculating on the American property market, we should deny compensation to all those people who decide that they cannot continue to act as Church of England clergymen after the Measure is passed.

Mr. Benn: I want to be absolutely clear about what my hon. Friend is saying. If his vote succeeds today, it would stop the ordination of women, unless the Church came back with something else. So, despite what he said earlier, the motion is designed to prevent the ordination of women on the basis proposed by the Estates Commissioner, and the House should know that.

Mr. Field: The right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) may well read it that way. The alternative way to read it is that the will of the House will be that the main Measure should go forward, but that before it could be triggered into action, there would have to be a compensation scheme that we believed to be adequate. My action can be read both ways. I hope that the House will note that that is the way that I read it, rather than listen to someone else who wishes to shine a light into my soul and to decide what I am about. I do not think that that sort of behaviour is particularly helpful.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): I think that many of us understand my hon. Friend's motives over the compensation scheme. As I understand it, however, the discretionary part of the order applies to lay persons. Am I right in thinking that the statutory part, to which he referred, refers to the ordinands? Irrespective of that, if a subsequent adjustment dealt with the anomaly of the young priests, would that satisfy him?

Mr. Field: No, because other groups of priests are not covered. Although I want the young priests to be covered by the Measure, there will also be others. The hon. Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern), who intervened before I gave way to the right hon. Member for—[HON. MEMBERS: "Chesterfield."] Yes, I wonder why my mind went blank. The intervention of the hon. Member for Bristol, North-West was to the effect that we should leave the rest of those who disagree to discretion. When the Estates Commissioner was speaking, I said that the Measure is the equivalent to some sort of social fund procedure for some priests but not for the majority. All of us know about our constituents' experiences with the social fund, and the advantage of that fund is that it has a budget. After the Church Commissioners' gambling in the property market we are not sure what the budget will be to pay for any of the Church's actions, let alone the compensation scheme.

Let us be quite clear. I strongly support the Measure and am pleased that the Church has moved to protect the minority who disagree. At first, it was reluctant but now it is less so. We know perfectly well that the Church wants the Measure. If the compensation scheme is defeated, an order will be tabled in the new Session of Parliament to establish a new compensation scheme.

Mr. Ward *rose*——

Mr. Field: I shall not give way, because I want to conclude with a few brief comments, as I know that many other hon. Members wish to catch your eye, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Measure is a dog's dinner. The way in which the Synod produces legislation allows Measures to be ambushed by one group and thereby changed. There does not seem to be any overall responsibility for a Measure. We understand that the next Synod may set up a commission to consider the relationships between Church and State. It has every right to do so, although whether this place will take much notice of its report is another matter.

I hope that the Synod will also consider its own house and the means by which it puts together major legislation, because this House only has the power to accept, not to amend or reject, such legislation. Most people who are fervently in favour of the Measure do not think that the details are as satisfactory as they could be.

Finally, on the Church's leadership on the issue, the Archbishop of Canterbury, showing considerable confidence in his post, asked the Archbishop of York to take the lead and he did so with tremendous skill. The fact that we have not had more difficulties with the Measure is a great tribute to him.

10.54 am

Mr. John Selwyn Gummer (Suffolk, Coastal): I had the immense privilege to be born into a vicarage and to be brought up in the Church of England right from the beginning. However, my father was a convert to the Church of England, having been a Baptist minister.

Therefore, although I was brought up in an evangelical atmosphere, because my father had become an Anglican, I saw clearly that other aspect of the Church of England —its catholicity—as well as its reformed nature.

My father had chosen to become an Anglican to join the Church and to cease to be a member of a sect. I do not use that word in any offensive way but in the technical sense and I hope that no one will object to that. A sect is a group of people who surround a particular doctrine in which they passionately believe. They see themselves as the group of witnesses for that doctrine. It was because he saw the Church of England as the Church—not in its entirety but as part of the Catholic Church—that he joined it. I am sure that the House will understand that my upbringing was therefore in one sense very typically Anglican because I could not miss either of the two great streams of thought which have informed the Church of England down the ages.

I therefore must oppose the Measure for a fundamental reason which concerns authority rather than the ordination of women. I am entirely agnostic about their ordination —I do not know whether women can be ordained or not, but I know that the Church of England cannot make that decision unilaterally. I hope to be able to explain why I think that that is true. The issue is very clear. I am sure that the House will understand that many people like me will be excluded from the Church of England as a result of the Measure and so I am pleased to have the opportunity to explain why.

When a priest is ordained, in the ordination service of the Church of England, he is ordained as a priest in the Church of God, not as an Anglican priest. I noticed that the concept of a priest in the Church of England emerged for the first time in the document before us today. The Church of England is making a change and the Church Estates Commissioner noted that in his excellent introductory speech. I think that he made a slip by referring to a priest of the Church of England. There is no such thing.

At the reformation, the Church of England sought to continue the essential elements of catholicity so that everyone could be comprehended within the Church. There was no division between the pre-reformation and post-reformation orders, which is why the Church Estates Commissioner could make that pleasant allusion to the fact that some bishops were Chancellors of the Exchequer. It is perfectly right that we understand that continuity. The Church of England went to great trouble to ensure the continuity of orders. Some people in the Roman Catholic Church may not believe that, but that is up to them. The Anglican teaching has always been that there was continuity, which means that if one is ordained a priest in the Church of England, it is the same priesthood as that held by orthodox or Roman Catholic priests.

There were changes at the time of the reformation, but those were of a different kind, as the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) should realise. They were fundamentally different. At the reformation, the Church of England sought to return to what had been before, and to what they thought had been changed in the meantime— that was the reform.

The Measure is not expedient because it does not meet either of the qualities of the Church of England, reformed or Catholic. If one is Catholic one says that no doctrine may be taught that is not clearly taught from a biblical basis, and no doctrine may be taught that has not been believed down the ages by the Church. We in the Church of England have always applied the Vincentian canon, which said that orthodoxy of belief was measured by "Quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus"—that which has always, by everyone and everywhere been believed. The difficulty with the ordination of women is that it has been believed nowhere by anyone at any time until now. Therefore, it is difficult to say that it is part of the tradition of the Church.

The reformers argued that their reform was Catholic by saying that everything that they were doing was clearly part of the Church's tradition—they had clearly had married priests, it had clearly been possible to interpret what happened at the eucharist in a different way from that which had been the way, it had been possible to claim that one was a Catholic and not in communion with the See of Rome. They may have been right or wrong, but that was the basis of their argument. That is not the basis of the argument being presented to the House.

One does not have to hold this argument; all non-conformists do not hold it, which is perfectly reasonable. However, one cannot change the argument without changing the nature of the Church of England fundamentally. It is now being demonstrated that the Church of England has said, for the first time in history, that it can change unilaterally the doctrine of the universal Church, and do that which has never been done before, not on the basis of the whole Church, but on the particular basis of a majority in the General Synod. That is the difference which we must address. That difference is a matter of fact and is driving a significant minority out of the Church of England. I think that the hon. Member for Birkenhead will agree with me when I say that many feel as I do and are placed in a fundamental difficulty over what is being proposed.

The Church of England says that by a two thirds majority of the General Synod it can change what has always been taught everywhere and by everybody. I warn the House that it will not be the only step in the process. That change is followed by a series of Measures which will be passed and presented to the House. The Church of England will move further and further away from the orthodox position. We must not think that the ordination of women is the last word.

I do not feel strongly about the ordination of women in itself. It is not an issue on which I cannot imagine the whole Church changing its mind. Jesus gave clear rights to the Church to bind on earth that which would be bound in heaven and to loose on earth that which would be loosed in heaven. I understand that the Church as a whole might make such a decision. However, I warn the House that we are participating in an action in which the Church of England has arrogated to itself a power, hitherto unknown in the Church of England or any other part of the Catholic Church—that a province can make unilateral decisions that run contrary to the long, historic teaching of the Church, and do so by a majority, albeit of two thirds.

There is a problem. It is all very well for those who always want to bring the issue down to political matters, as some people do. It is not a political issue; we are not talking about women's rights. Those of us who worked for a long time for a woman know a bit about women's rights. Those of us who read the memoirs of such women know a bit about women's rights, too. I do not accept the view that we cannot have a serious discussion in the House on the theological issue involved. We would have had such a debate had the Church of England decided by a two-thirds

[Mr. John Selwyn Gummer]

majority to take the virgin birth from the creed. No one in the House should think that such a change will not soon be on the list of things to come.

The issue involves how decisions are taken in the Church. We must face the reality that many will be forced out of the Church because of the change. The Church of England has made an immensely arrogant claim which has been beautifully, delicately and non-arrogantly presented by the Church Estates Commissioner. The Church of England is saying that, despite the fact that the rest of the Church which has priests outside the Anglican communion, all those who understand the priesthood in the way in which the Church of England understands it and every previous part of the Church of England has always believed it to be wrong, we can now, by a two thirds majority, put it right. That is devastating arrogance. I find it hard to accept that the Archbishop of York can say that a hundred of his predecessors were wrong and he is right. I could accept it were it not about a subject on which the Church had always been unanimous.

I should explain why the issue is important. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Eltham (Mr. Bottomley) feels strongly about it. I voted in favour of women deacons because they have existed in the past and the Church accepted that. Therefore, it is perfectly right to say that a part of the Church—the Church of England—can make the decision to reinstate that which the Church has had. A reformed Church can properly take such action. The question is whether a reformed Church can decide to make a necessary part of being an Anglican the willingness to believe that the Church of England can ordain women—a fundamental problem for a reformed Church.

The reformed Church of England said that it would have no doctrines of its own, but would teach only what was necessary to salvation. It said that it would not add to that central body of doctrine. If one had, until recently, asked an Anglican to state the Anglican doctrines he could properly say, "We have none of our own, but teach only the doctrines of the Catholic Church as expressed in the three creeds and we have only the orders of the Catholic Church —bishops, priests and deacons. We have nothing of our own and, in a sense, we are the stalking horse for future unity. We are here to bring people together; we are the bridge Church because we demand of nobody anything in addition to that demanded down the ages." Now, an Anglican will be unable to say that because he will also have to say, "In addition, we are expected to accept the ministries of women priests who are ordained not on the authority of the whole of the Catholic Church, but on the authority of the General Synod of the Church of England." That is the fundamental gravamen of the problem.

It is argued that one will be able to be an Anglican because one will not have to accept the ordination of women and will be able to live in a specific community linked to a bishop who takes a different view. I cannot imagine a less proper way of living the Christian life or a more sexist concept. If I were supposed to go past three or four Anglican churches in order to find one that did not have women priests, I would be saying something both to myself and my children that I should find intolerable. I would be saying that I belonged to a Church, but was in communion with only one third of it. That seems to be an intolerable way of belonging to the Catholic Church.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I think that my right hon. Friend's argument is receiving a sympathetic hearing across the House because he is concentrating on specific issues, not taking them all together. Does he agree that the only part of the argument that might be described as unfair involves the two thirds majority in the Synod? Before 1919 the House, without the help of the Synod, would have been able to pass the legislation. The question is whether the habit of not ordaining women has been such an historic negative that it should rightly be described as a doctrine. To describe the two thirds majority vote of the Synod as rather unusual is to miss the point that the House allowed the Synod to have such a role in this Measure.

Mr. Gummer: I should not like to say anything about the Synod that would disturb my hon. Friend. I agree that that is how such decisions are now made. However, I disagree with him about the habit. The saints and fathers of the Church specifically and without doubt state that the mind of the Church is that women cannot be ordained. I shall not argue that case because it is not the one that I am putting to the House, nor the view that I hold.

Secondly, I am putting to the House the fundamental case that the decision changes the nature of the Church of England in a way which means that many faithful Anglicans cannot remain Anglicans. It is right for the House to understand that before it votes, although I accept that that will not change the result. I am grateful to hon. Members for their kindness in listening to me because I know that my argument is unpopular. But the House is the place to put minority views as plainly as possible when such decisions have to be made.

If the Church of England is changed in this way it will cease to be the comprehensive Church that it once was. The glory of the Church of England was that I could kneel at the altar as an Anglo-Catholic next to an extreme evangelical for whom, to quote Lord Boyle's words about my right hon. Friend, who introduced the motion,

"The word Protestant is a trumpet call."

That quote covers many people in the Church of England but we knelt at the same altars—or holy tables, I had better be careful—and received the same sacraments from a priest whose validity we all accept.

The nature of the Church of England brought together that wide range of views and insights into God. It did so by insisting on only two things—the doctrines of the creeds and the orders of the Catholic Church. Once such orders are unilaterally changed, the range of people in the pews will be much more restricted.

Thirdly, it denies the whole basis of the Elizabethan settlement, which sought to create a Church of the nation in which everybody, except those who were at the extreme ends, could worship together. It did not succeed and perhaps it was wrong, but that was what it attempted, and that is what has made the Church of England so different. There has now been a denial of that attempt because a section of the population who could once be members of the Church of England now cannot be.

Fourthly, the Church of England had a real role in unity. I admired the speech by my right hon. Friend the Member for Selby (Mr. Alison) but on that issue he spoke rather oddly.It is not that anyone who argues my view says that somehow or other the Roman Church or the Orthodox Church has a veto on these matters because, of course, that is not so. It is that many of us feel that the Church of

England's vocation was to recover that unity for which our Lord prayed at his last supper, that we should be one that the world might believe. That is what he asked for.

Therefore, for some of us unity is the most fundamental part of our vocation, and the Church of England seemed to us over many generations as the one Church that had begun to show how to hold together the insights of Catholic and Protestant, although we use the word reformed. It was a beacon of light in a world in which the Church shows the disaster and disgrace of division.

Mr. Rowe: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Gummer: I should like to finish this point and then I shall give way.

The Church should have sought unity first and from that unity sought the ordination of women, which would have been a proper thing to do. I do not mind the Church of England using the phrase from the Roman Church "in pectore", kept in its heart, meaning that it wished to ordain women but would seek unity first and try to convince the whole Church. Instead, it has gone for access religion. It takes the waiting out of wanting because it wants so much that it does not want to wait. That is the fundamental issue for many of us. We longed for the unity of which we thought the Church of England could be the harbinger, but that is no longer possible.

Mr. John Marshall: Does my right hon. Friend accept that unity can mean unity between the Church of England and the free churches and that the free churches are happy to have women priests? Does he also accept that the only act of Christian unity has been the creation of the United Reformed Church in which women are allowed to be vicars?

Mr. Gummer: I shall be careful in replying to my hon. Friend because I do not want to be rude. He is not speaking about priests, because the United Reformed Church does not claim to have priests: it claims to have ministers. It does not believe in the priesthood in the sense of the Apostolic priesthood that is taught and held in the Church of England. My hon. Friend's point is on a different issue. Any body such as the United Reformed Church or the Methodist Church can decide to have its own ministry and that is perfectly proper. My sister-in-law is a Methodist minister and I have no problem about that because that is the basis of Methodism, which does not claim to have the priesthood.

The issue is that the Church of England claimed to have the priesthood in the Apostolic tradition. Some Anglicans do not hold that view, but they accept it as the price of unity that many reformed Anglicans have accepted down the ages. That price is now being thrown away.

Mr. Rowe: Some of us are having difficulty with some parts of my hon. Friend's otherwise brilliant and lucid argument. I do not understand how he thinks that it is essential for the Church of England to wait until churches that have unilaterally added to the body of belief without consulting any other parts of the communion agree with it.

Mr. Gummer: There are two reasons. First, Christian disunity is the greatest disgrace to the Christian gospel, and we should think carefully before adding to that disunity. Secondly, whatever my hon. Friend's view of the Roman Church, he does not need to hold the same view of the Orthodox Church which has added nothing in these areas to the corpus of catholic faith. The Orthodox Church is the one which most needs the Church of England at this moment because it is trying to rediscover in Russia and elsewhere how to be a Church after being submerged by the communist authorities for so long. It looks and reaches to us.

In a sense, the biggest and most damaging comment about unity that I have ever heard was from the leader of the Russian Orthodox Church who felt that he had to say, "What authority does the Archbishop of Canterbury have now that he has given up the authority of the historic catholic church?" I shall end by concentrating on that.

The Church cannot teach the gospel unless it can point to its authority for doing so. It cannot teach the gospel unless it is clearly part of that body against which Jesus said the gates of hell would not prevail. It cannot teach unless it can say, "Yes, we bind on earth what is bound in heaven, and we loose on earth what is loosed in heaven." That is the gospel authority given to the Church, and any doubt about our being part of that Church removes our ability to preach the gospel to the people of England, and that is what the Church of England is supposed to do. It was the way in which in the form closest to the people of England the gospel could best be preached.

During recent months and years, it has become impossible for a significant number of Anglicans to be members of the Church of England, because it has denied the basis of its authority. It no longer upholds the principles of reform—because it has insisted upon a doctrine that has no biblical foundation and has never been taught in the Church—and it has denied its catholicity because it has unilaterally decided that it can change its orders.

What does the Church of England intend to do to those who feel that they can no longer be members? I want to underline what was said by the hon. Member for Birkenhead. Young men who have trained for the priesthood, but who do not fit into the prescribed number of years—that is, they have been priests for fewer than five years—have no certainty of help for themselves or their families as they contemplate that terrible possibility for them—that the vocation in the Church that they thought they had is to be removed.

What about a school chaplain who is not directly employed by the Church? I think in particular of one man, an excellent school chaplain, who finds it impossible to remain an Anglican. He cannot continue in his job because that position is open only to Anglicans. He will lose his job because of his faith, yet he is not open—to use shorthand —to compensation, only to discretion. Therefore, I ask the Second Church Estates Commissioner, my right hon. Friend the Member for Selby, for a simple assertion. I want him to state, absolutely clearly, that anyone, whether or not he has been employed in a parish, no matter how long he has been in orders, and who in every other way fits the statutory requirements, will receive compensation—not as of right, because that is not possible under the law, but as though he had the right.

If my right hon. Friend can tell me that all such people will get the compensation that they would have received had they been beneficed clergymen of the Church of England, there can be no problem with what the hon. Member for Birkenhead said. However, if my right hon. Friend cannot tell me that, that is very worrying. All these matters have been the subject of enormous discussion within the Church of England but, so far, it has refused to make that very simple assertion.

[Mr. Gummer]

I am very sad that the issue of authority should have arisen in this House on the subject of the ordination of women. It would be easier for the House to consider the nature of authority and the nature of the Church of England were the arguments not clouded by the perfectly proper desire to ensure that women are not excluded from an area from which many feel, for all sorts of reasons, they should not be excluded.

However, that does not mean that those of us for whom this is a matter of fundamental belief should not warn the House of one simple fact, which is that already in training in other denominations are significant numbers of Anglican priests who were formerly serving in the Church of England, but who now look to serve in other Churches. Significant numbers more have already said that they will have to leave the Church when promulgation takes place. Already, many lay people are in the same position.

Nevertheless, in a sense all that is much less important than what happens to those of us who want to bring up our children as Christians. We feel strongly that we cannot do so in a Church that says to them, "You are in communion with these people, but not with those people." One cannot be a partial Anglican. One cannot be a bit of a bit of a Church which itself, at best, is a bit of the Catholic Church.

We must take our Christian vocation seriously. For that reason, many of us have no choice but to say that when the Measure is passed we will be excluded from the Church of England and a great part of its way of presenting the gospel to England will be damaged. At the centre of the Church of England's appeal is the fact that it is comprehensive, that it is Catholic and that it is reformed. In the future, it will never again be able to claim to be Catholic.

11.25 am

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): The speech that we have just heard from the right hon. Member for Suffolk, Coastal (Mr. Gummer) must have been made many hundreds of times over many hundreds of years, for example, against the admission of Catholics into Parliament, against the admission of Jews into Parliament —*[Interruption.]* Of course it has.

The right hon. Gentleman failed to recognise that conscience is not the exclusive property of men. Many women moved to service in the Church have waited most patiently, not for five years but for 70 or more. The right hon. Gentleman said that his father was a Baptist minister who became an Anglican. My mother, an Anglican, was a member of the League of Church Militant in 1920. It was the predecessor of the movement for the ordination for women. Archbishop Randall Davidson, the Archbishop of Canterbury, summoned her to Lambeth Palace in 1925 —the year I was born—and rebuked her for advocating the ordination of women.

During the last world war, the Bishop of Chekiang ordained Miss Lee Timoi to give Holy Communion in that province of China. At the end of the war, the Church of England said to the bishop, "If you do not remove her orders to prevent her from giving Holy Communion we will stop giving money to the Church of China."

We are discussing human matters because matters of faith are deeply entrenched in the human soul. I had more happiness from seeing the young women outside Church House embracing each other when the news of the vote in the Synod came through than I have had from many of the decisions taken by this House over many years. Women have waited patiently for ordination. I have met—as I am sure others have—young women training for ordination, yet without any knowledge of when they would ever be ordained in the Church of England.

The arguments used by the right hon. Member for Suffolk, Coastal—who, dare I say, has no theological qualifications—to persuade Parliament to turn down the Measure were absolutely invalid. As the Second Church Estates Commissioner, the right hon. Member for Selby (Mr. Alison) said, the Anglican communion worldwide has already accepted the ordination of women. Bishop Harris —a woman—is an Episcopalian Bishop in America and she may come to the next Lambeth conference. Is that a breach of the unity on which we are so often lectured? A year or two ago, I met an American woman who had been ordained into the Episcopalian Church and she gave Communion in this country. That is one reason why I ask what offence would be committed. When she gave Communion, an Anglican vicar approached the Communion table and bit her on the thumb when she administered the sacrament to him.

We must recognise that at the heart of this debate, however it may be covered up in theological terms, is prejudice against women and the attitude that they are not human beings. The right hon. Member for Suffolk, Coastal says that the great thing about the Church of England is that it is comprehensive. What is the price of being comprehensive if the Church will not give women the opportunity to serve it through ordination?

As I have said, matters of faith are deeply felt. I have a great respect for people of all faiths. So few people believe in anything today that when we meet people of conviction, of any sort, we must respect them. The hon. Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe) has, I believe, left the Church of England. Of course, it is a fact that in America many Roman Catholics joined the Episcopalian Church when it ordained women. The hon. Lady must not rule out the possibility that, as a result of the ordination of women, Roman Catholic women will join the Church of England so that they, too, can be ordained.

I remind the House that in the Roman Catholic Church there is a movement called the League of St. Joan—rather like the League of Church Militant. I think it not improbable that when the present Pope dies—God rest his soul—there might be appointed a Pope who recognises that the strength of the Roman Catholic Church worldwide depends upon the ordination of women. I am not making any theological argument, because I do not pretend to believe in anything more than the priesthood of all believers. I have never believed in bishops, any more than I believe in regional organisers. All organisations in the world begin with a burning faith and end up with a bureaucracy more interested in burning and expelling people than in the faith that brought them into being. I will not go into that in any greater detail.

Should Parliament decide this matter? Of course, in law it must, because the Church of England is a nationalised Church. It is our oldest nationalised industry. The right hon. Member for Suffolk, Coastal said that Henry VIII nationalised it so that it could be a Church of the people. In fact, he nationalised it because he had a row with the Pope, who was imposing too much taxation on Britain. The king wanted the tax instead of the Pope. It was what one might call a value added tax argument in theological terms.

Do not let us be told that it was because, in the Elizabethan settlement, the king suddenly was moved to provide spiritual comfort. There is not a word of truth in that.

The Act of Uniformity has been very brutal in its implications. A Rev. William Benn—I do not know whether he was an ancestor, but I hope to God that he was—was ejected from his living in Dorchester in 1662 under the great ejectment because he would not accept the provisions of the Act of Uniformity. Everyone knows that that the Church has been most intolerant as a nationalised Church.

I mentioned earlier that at one time, Catholics and Jews could not sit in the House. Everyone must know the story of Charles Bradlaugh who was elected to represent Northampton. He said, "I cannot take the oath because I am a Humanist." The House said, "Sling him out." There was another election and he was returned again, and the same thing happened. On the third occasion—being a reasonable, moderate man—Bradlaugh said, "All right, I will take the oath." The House told him, "You can't, because you are not a Christian." At that point, the Speaker intervened with the sort of discretion that only Speakers have and said, "I instruct the hon. Gentleman to take the oath." The Church of England should not be presented historically as anything other than it was—a state Church which was sometimes enormously intolerant but which has gradually come to recognise that there are other views as well.

Today, we are asked to comment on the matter, and that raises in my mind the absolute absurdity of the Establishment of the Church of England. I have always been interested in three nationalised industries. One is the Church of England and another is the Post Office. When I was made Postmaster-General, I wondered what great socialist spirit had moved Charles II to nationalise the Post Office. I discovered that it was because he wanted to open everybody's letters, and he could only do that by setting up the royal mail.

The third great nationalised industry is the BBC. Just as Henry VIII wanted a priest in every pulpit in every parish every Sunday, telling parishioners that God wanted them to do what the king wanted them to do, a Conservative Government nationalised the BBC because they wanted a pundit on every channel every night, telling the public that there was no alternative to what the Conservatives wanted to do. I do not want it to be thought that nationalisation is the prerogative of the left. It has been used by the right to control our thoughts and to open our letters for many centuries.

The right hon. Member for Suffolk, Coastal spoke from the Government Back Benches—as is appropriate for this debate—of the role of the bishops as part of the united Catholic Church. Has any right hon. or hon. Member read the homage that a bishop must recite before he is ordained? It reads:

"I . . . do hereby declare that your Majesty is the only supreme governor of this your Realm in spiritual and ecclesiastical things as well as in temporal"—

bishops do not even recognise democracy—

"and that no foreign prelate or potentate has any jurisdiction within this Realm."

The Maastrich treaty will be ratified today, yet every bishop has taken an oath that

"no foreign prelate or potentate has any jurisdiction within this Realm."

Let us be clear. If the Queen became a Catholic this afternoon, the throne would be vacated. Something else will happen—she will become a citizen of the European union. Perhaps she could go to the European Court and say, "I have lost my job because I have changed my religion." Let us be sensible. It is time to be rid of all that.

I heard that the Queen had to give her consent to the Measure—and I know that because I have often sought her consent to establish a republic and to other minor measures of that kind—before we could discuss the ordination of women, yet she is supposed to be the supreme spiritual governor of the Church. What are the Prince of Wales's theological qualifications in this matter passes beyond belief, but he owns some benefices in Cornwall, so he had to consent, too.

A couple of days ago, the judges intervened with a judicial review of the ordination of women. On Monday, I wrote an angry letter to the Speaker because I thought that the arrogance of the judges had gone beyond control. I was reassured by the Clerk that the judges did what they ought to have done. What nonsense that is.

There is no spiritual requirement for being a Member of Parliament. I should be surprised if any right hon. or hon. Member put in his last election address, "If elected, I will vote against the ordination of women" or mention the matter in any speech. No one has the political mandate, spiritual authority or denominational requirement to do that.

As to the House of Lords deciding the matter, the last 10 Prime Ministers put 800 people in another place. Are those party placemen to judge whether women are qualified to become ordained? That is an impossible position.

I believe that the Church of England will free itself before the end of this century, and I hope that it does so by agreement. If we turn down this Measure, then, candidly, I believe that it will accelerate disestablishment because the Church will not have it—rightly so. But I do not want the freedom of the Church of England to come as a result of a row, but by general agreement.

There is one other matter that I find offensive. I know that the Church Estates Commissioner has a job to do, but I found it offensive to be told that the House need not worry because there will be safeguards for male priests against ordained women coming into their parishes. Safeguards? My God!—what sort of man wants a safeguard in case a woman gives communion in his parish?

I will vote for the Measure because I do not believe that we have any right in the matter. As to offering safeguards and financial compensation, if it is a matter of conscience, how many people have gone to the stake for exercising their consciences? Would Cranmer have withdrawn if the Church had offered him a cheque? Are we to believe that in a deeply spiritual matter, conscience can be overcome with money? Are we to believe that a chaplain in a private school that requires an Anglican cannot carry on because of the thought that a woman might approach his school with the sacrament, and that money would settle his conscientious objection? The House is facing an absurdity.

If any compensation is to be given, it should be given to the women who have waited so patiently for the right to be ordained and to be called to serve. Compensation for the promotion of women is not an unattractive idea. When Mrs. Thatcher became Prime Minister, we might all have been compensated for the awful business of seeing her exercise supreme power. When my right hon. Friend the Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) was made deputy leader of my party, I would have been happy—having once aspired to that post—to receive some beneficial bounty

[Mr. Tony Benn]

from Walworth Road. Even when the Labour party ceased to be a socialist party, I did not ask for compensation. I do not see why Church of England vicars should obtain it.

I hope that I have not detained the House or diverted it from a very important decision. I hope to live to see the day when a woman Archbishop of Canterbury greets a Pope in a Church that has ordained women. If that sounds a little extreme, it is no more extreme than a Member of Parliament telling a male-dominated House of Commons 90 years ago that one day, a woman Speaker would preside over its proceedings.

11.39 am

Dame Peggy Fenner (Medway): As somebody said to another performer, "Follow that". I hope that I shall keep to Madam Speaker's request for brief speeches.

Although history relates that the unbroken tradition of a male-dominated Church has been under pressure since the second world war, it is from about 1962, however, that the question of the ordination of women has gained some momentum. The House of Bishops, the Archbishops Commission and the General Synod have all made reports and passed motions on the subject. It seems that the Church has arrived at a conclusion after, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Selby (Mr. Alison), who represents the Church Commissioners, said, long, careful consideration and sometimes controversial debate. Surely after such a long traumatic journey the decision is due.

I deeply respect the views of those in the Anglican Church who cannot agree to the ordination of women. They hold that belief because of 19 centuries of tradition and they do not believe that that should be set aside. I do not agree. I hesitate to say that they are wrong, because Christians cannot always feel themselves to be right, but can only pray to take the right decision. I believe that they are wrong because when the barriers against womens' ordination were erected, the role of women was so very different. In the past, women were not expected to be educated; they were expected to be at home and to be subservient to their husbands.

Christians believe that Jesus is alive and here today, although we know that he is not present in the form of man, as he once was. Who can doubt, however, that if he were on earth and was naming his apostles and calling his disciples, there would be some women among them?

I have been delighted to note that hon. Members on both sides of the House have spoken today about vocation. Over the years in this secular establishment, we have discussed the issue of equal opportunities. I believe that many tasks that are carried out in various professions and jobs—call them what you will—are a vocation. It has become unfashionable to refer to a vocation, however, because that is seen as an excuse for inadequate pay and discrimination against women. Who can doubt that the calling to be a priest is a real vocation? If God called, would he discriminate? I do not believe that he would.

In these secluded surroundings, secular as they are, we have passed laws, sometimes painfully and, I regret to say, still in the teeth of some remaining male chauvinism, to ensure equal opportunities, equal pay and equal educational opportunities for women to ensure that we do not waste that superb asset, which makes up half of our population.

How very much more important it is that women who feel themselves to be called to serve in the Christian Church as priests should be able to do so. They should not be put off by being told that they can be deacons or can carry out some purpose in the Church. If they are called to be priests, they should be priests.

The World Council of Churches noted in a document produced in 1982 that those churches that have accepted women into ordination

"have found that women's gifts are as wide and varied as men's and that their ministry is as fully blessed by the Holy Spirit as the ministry of men."

Women have found it very sad and hurtful that they have been excluded from serving the Lord and their faith in parishes and dioceses where undoubtedly they have a calling and could bring such love and service tok that calling.

11.44 am

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): I am delighted to follow the hon. Member for Medway (Dame P. Fenner), who made a clear and concise speech as the first woman to contribute to the debate.

I may be the only member of my party to speak in the debate and, as has already been said, we are all speaking as individuals today in a way that is not constrained by party obligations in this matter. However, I believe that all my colleagues support the Measure and I add one qualification. Some of my colleagues who are not here are absent only because they are at the funeral of Lord Grimond, Jo Grimond, a former member of this House. It would be inappropriate for me to commence my speech without paying my tribute on behalf of colleagues in this place to that great parliamentarian who was an inspiration to many of us on many issues.

The right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) has asked today, and on many other occasions inside and outside the House, should Parliament be dealing with this major question? Whether or not we should have to do so, we are. I am proud to be a member of a federal party which, at a recent English conference, passed by a significant majority a motion in support of disestablishing the Church of England. That is a view I share. I just wonder whether, given that it was a Liberal Government who disestablished the Church of Ireland and a Liberal Government who disestablished the Church of Wales, we shall not have to wait for a Liberal Democrat Government before the Church of England is also disestablished. As the right hon. Member for Chesterfield has said, the pressure for disestablishment is mounting fast: that may be the sign that the other scenario may not be far away.

I welcome the fact that the Church is likely to set up an inquiry into the relations between it and the state. That is timely and I hope that the Synod will decide on that at its sessions the next month.

I am strongly in favour of the Measure. I was present at the cathedral in my constituency, Southwark, a few years ago, at the first ordination of deacons after women were allowed to be deacons in the Church of England. I saw for myself that those first ordinations revealed a representative tide of womanhood who were waiting and ready to fulfil a vocation in the Church.

I am all for, as the right hon. Member for Suffolk, Coastal (Mr. Gummer) put it, taking the waiting out of wanting for the hundreds of people who have been called —they know that for sure—to serve in the leadership of the

Church. At the moment, they cannot fulfil that calling and I want the Church to allow them to fulfil their clear vocation. They have been stopped so far by the barrier of legislaiton which does not allow women to be priests in the national church of this land.

On the Ecclesiastical Committee, we asked ourselves whether we had the legal right to go ahead and propose that it was expedient that women should be ordained as priests. We took advice and we were clear that we were entitled to do so, just as the courts confirmed in their judgment this week.

We asked ourselves whether the decision was theologically justified. We came to the view that, to be honest, we were not equipped to answer to that question and that it could always be subject to dispute. It is abundantly clear to me, however, that if there can be a scriptural dispute, as there is among Christians—the most avid Bible readers and competent theologians among them —about who can be a priest and whether there should be a priesthood, as well as differences of interpretation about the meaning of what Christ said, it is not surprising that there is a difference of interpretation, then and now, about whether women should be priests, if priests are a specific category of Ministers of the Church. Because there is no clear authoritative scriptural answer, the churches of each denomination in different parts of the world have had to seek their own minds on this matter. The Church of England has done this with integrity and with honesty.

We had to ask ourselves the question posed by the right hon. Member for Suffolk, Coastal: should we, the Anglican Church, wait until the worldwide Catholic Church agreed that we should go ahead? I understand the argument made by the right hon. Gentleman. Can we be Catholic and reformed and yet be true to the rest of the church if we are to break with the traditions of some parts of it? But many parts of the Church have already made the decision. Many parts of the Christian Church have women in leadership as ministers. Many parts of the Anglian Church have already made the decision to allow women to be priests. For example, I happen to be a member of the Church in Wales, which has made the decision. It does not appear to have caused grief, angst or any significant hardship.

I want to pick up on another point made by the right hon. Member for Chesterfield. I know, because I have heard them say it, that many women in the Roman Catholic Church are desperate for the Anglican Church to make this decision. They feel that it is important that moves are made towards having more women in leadership. They feel also that, in time, the Roman Catholic Church will also ordain women as priests. We will not just be leading in our church or in our denomination, but we will be leading in the Church as a whole.

As the Church is that diaspora of views, the decision will no more break our links with our sisters and brothers in the universal church than other decisions break those links now. I am sad every time I am told that I cannot take communion in a Roman Catholic church in my constituency with my constituents, neighbours and friends. I regard that as a barrier to Christian unity and I hope that the Roman Catholic Church and other denominations break down those barriers between churches, just as we are trying to do today.

The last question we asked ourselves was whether the Measure was reasonable. It is not perfect, and that is clear. However, at the end of the day we had to decide a simple question. Was the Measure expedient, meaning was it timely, appropriate and suitable overall? The answer to the question by a clear majority was yes.

The road to today has not been a short one for the Church. The Anglican Church in England has taken 20 years to decide on the matter, up until and including our debate today.

I hope that the House will not be distracted by the fact that there may be—there probably will be later—a debate on whether women should be bishops. That may come to us to decide, but it is not the matter for today. I hope that the matter will be judged on its merits and that the House will leave its judgments about the other matter to a later date, although some of us see no barrier to that either.

Let us look at what the Church is saying to us. The Church overwhelmingly has endorsed this proposition. If they had been repeated in the House, the majorities in the Synod would have given the Measure majorities of 325, 260 and 222. Each of those majorities would be more than that for the Third Reading of the Bill to endorse the Maastricht treaty which was passed just before the summer.

It was clear that there was a majority on the Ecclesiastial Committee in favour of both the main question and the financial question. I have to make a fairly obvious constitutional point. The majorities in the Church for the measure are far more substantial than the majority the Government have in the House. The majority in the Church is far more substantial than the 42 per cent. of the population who are represented on the Government Benches. The majority in the Church is far more substantial than the majorities that are usually given to any measure in the House. Over two thirds of the Church at all levels—in rural and urban areas and in nearly every diocese in the land—has said yes to the ordination of women priests.

I hope that the House will realise that our duty, as well as expressing our views, is to respond to the wish and witness of the Church. We were careful in the Committee to try to be fair, because whatever our views—those are given in the report—our job was not to adjudicate in theology, but to make sure that the rights and liberties of Her Majesty's subjects were protected. The Committee spent most of its time on the minority rights questions. For that reason, the Committee insisted that opponents of the Measure were included in the deputation from the General Synod. The right hon. Member for Selby (Mr. Alison) said that that was unusual and it was done so that the Committee could hear every view on the questions. We felt a particular responsibility to those who were and are still unhappy with the proposal. They are unhappy either because they believe that the Church is changing a position which they accepted and which they thought it had to a new position with which they disagree, or because they believe the position is fundamentally wrong.

The Committee looked at the financial implications also. We cannot amend the Measure. This is not a revising Chamber. This Measure is not like the rail privatisation Bill that will come before the House next week, where their Lordships have looked at that Bill and said that the House should think again. All that we could do on the Committee was say yes or no, but we did better than that. We said to the Church that there were areas in which we were unhappy. The Manchester Statements of the House of Bishops at the beginning and the middle of the year and the proposal for an Act of Synod currently before Synod have

[Mr. Simon Hughes]

now addressed some of those concerns. The Committee insisted on extra protection for those who will be in a minority in the church if the Measure is passed.

We did one other thing as well and I should like to draw the attention of the House to one paragraph in the report. The Committee addressed the question whether—whatever our views—we wanted the Church to try to hold together and to remain united. The Committee wanted to make sure that, whatever the differences of view, the Measure did not break up the Church.

That is why paragraph 44 of report says:

"The Manchester Statements have manifestly been formulated and issued with an earnest desire to preserve unity of the Church of England and to allay the fears and doubts of the opponents of the measure. The majority of the Committee see the proposed Act of Synod as a demonstration of that desire. As already indicated, the preservation of the unity of the Church of England following the introduction of women priests will need goodwill on all sides and cannot be secured by legislation alone. It is the fervent hope of the whole Committee that that unity will be preserved."

There was only one dissentient from the report and from the proposition that the Church should remain united even though its practice was about to change. Those espousing the majority view have for a long time been denied the enactment of what they believe to be right, but they have stayed within the Church. Women who want to be ordained have argued their case and prayed and stayed within the Church. Eventually, last November, the Church responded to a generation and more of commitment to change. I hope that those who still hold the view that women cannot be priests will remain in the Church after the decision has been taken, just as those in favour of the ordination of women remained in the Church before it. The Church is not saying to them that they must change their view or that they will not be regarded as equals in the Church. The Church is not denying the holders of such beliefs the opportunity of promotion. The Church is simply saying, "We have sought over 20 years to discern the will of God. We have come to a view—it is a human view, a fallible view, perhaps even a wrong view—but we ask you to accept that it is clearly the considered view of the Church. Retain your own view. Argue your case. Hold your position. But do not do anything different from what you did when the other side of the argument prevailed."

The Church needs both traditions. Whatever views we hold and however strongly we hold them, our duty is to hold them together. A local priest whose curacy was in my constituency and whose living is just over the river came to see me earlier this year to talk the issues through on behalf of many people in the Southwark diocese. He was most helpful. He drew attention to the Manchester House of Bishops' statement, which says:

"Differing views about the ordination of women can continue to be held with integrity within the Church of England"

and that the views of those who do not accept women as priests

"will continue to be held within the Church of England and . . . those who hold them remain valued and loyal members of the Anglican family."

In the future, as in the past, we must have, in that priest's words,

"the two eyes of the Church trying to bring Christ into focus."

The Church has told us that there is no theological objection, that there is precedent and that there is an overwhelming will among its members that the Measures should be implemented. We are still the national Church and because of that we have a particular responsibility to lead the way. We have the precedent of the ordination of women as deacons and the leadership of our national Church has clearly benefited from the participation of women. The leadership of our national Church should be a role model for society and therefore should include women. It should be representative of society and therefore include women. It should be a practitioner of the equality and justice that the Gospel preaches and therefore should include women. It should reflect the feminine values and characteristics of humankind as created by our creator and therefore should include women. Finally, the leadership of our Church, if it is to be anything, should be inclusive, comprehensive and united. It can be those three things only if no one is excluded, either as a member or as a leader of the Church.

I hope that we will vote resoundingly in favour of the Measures. If we do, this will be a great day of liberation not just for women in the Church, for the Church itself or for the nation but for the cause that many of us feel that above all we are here to serve: those of us in the Church want the Gospel better to be preached and people to be saved for eternal life. In the view of the overwhelming majority of members of the Church, that will be achieved if women can play their full role—an opportunity which many of them have for too long wanted and have for too long been denied.

12.3 pm

Miss Ann Widdecombe (Maidstone): First, I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Member for Selby (Mr. Alison) on the extremely comprehensive and moderate way in which he introduced the Measures, which I believe will have won the respect even of those who profoundly disagree with the reasons that he advanced. I also congratulate my right hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, Coastal (Mr. Gummer) on giving a clear and moving exposition of the reasons why those of us who believe in the authority of a universal Church find it quite impossible to stay within the Anglican Church if the decision to allow the ordination of women is taken and if this is now to be the nature of the Church. My right hon. Friend's speech was extremely profound, as well as being extremely learned and lucid, and I for one regretted the amount of what I considered to be inappropriate barracking that greeted his extremely serious attempt to try to get away from the secular debate and instead to explain the theological objections that some of us hold most strongly.

Let me deal first with what this issue is not about. It is not about women's rights in the secular sense. I believe that those who would promote the role of women within the Church, of whom I consider myself to be one, have to ask a rather different question from the question on which we have been concentrating. Instead of talking about women fulfulling the sacramental role of the priesthood, to which I shall return, we should ask a much more basic question: has the Church—I use the term in its broadest sense, to mean not just the Anglican Church but the Church universal—got its balance of authority right as between the clerical and the lay? There are many positions of authority held in the Church universal that do not necessarily have to be held by the priesthood. If we consider that rather more fundamental question, the role of women in the Church could be increased. None of us who object to women holding the sacramental priesthood have ever objected to

the fact that the Queen is the Supreme Governor of the Church of England, have never objected to women deacons, have never objected to women in the ministry, as opposed to the strict definition of the priesthood, and in the Church to which I now belong, I see no reason why there should not be a woman Papal Nuncio. After all, a nuncio is an ambassador and I do not see why a nuncio has necessarily to be a priest.

Let me make it clear from the beginning, I am not opposing the Measure because I do not want to see women fulfulling an important role in the Church. I am opposing it because I believe that it is theologically impossible for women to perform the specific role of the sacramental priesthood. If a woman represents Christ as victim and priest at the Holy Communion, there may just as well be a man who represents the Virgin Mary in a nativity play. Considering the way that the Church of England has been going over the past two or three decades, it would not in the least surprise me if one day I attended a nativity play and found that the Virgin Mary had a beard.

The Church is surrendering its moral authority to purely secular arguments. I am not at all surprised in following today's debate that there is a concentration on women's rights issues—the House is a secular body, but the Synod is not. The debate in the Synod appalled me because Church matters were being determined with reference to secular approval. As a reason for voting women into the priesthood, the Archbishop of Canterbury, to whom one should be able to look for spiritual, moral and theological leadership, advanced the argument that it would make the Church more acceptable to the secular world. It seems that the Church of England has not yet learned the basic message that the secular world has been sending back for the past 20 or 30 years, that compromise and a sacrifice of creed to compromise and of doctrine to doubt, and of faith to fashion does not increase congregations or the approval of secular world but decreases congregations, decreases the standing of the Church and undermines its moral authority. Until the Church can send out the straight, simple uncompromising, courageous and at times unpopular gospel message, all the other compromises that it regularly makes come down merely to rearranging the deckchairs on the Titanic.

I could not share the rosy view of the health of the Church of England to which my right hon. Friend the Member for Selby subscribed in his excellent and able speech. He rightly said that when choosing to be baptised, married or, as he put it, reluctantly to be buried, the majority of the people in the country choose the Church of England medium through which to conduct those ceremonies. However, the fact remains that during the rest of their lives, there is a minimal number of people in the country who find spiritual sustenance from the Church of England. I will not embarrass my right hon. Friend by drawing comparisons with the ways in which congregations have grown or have been decreasing less in other denominations. One of the reasons for that failure is the way in which the Church looks to the secular world for approval instead of taking its message to the secular world.

I cannot improve on the exposition of my right hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, Coastal on the issue of authority, but I should like to deal with one point that my right hon. Friend the Member for Selby made. He said that, if the Church of Rome could take decisions on the immaculate conception and glorious assumption without reference to the Church of England, the Church of England could take decisions on orders without reference to the Church of Rome. He entirely ignored the point that my right hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, Coastal made about the agreement over the last decade between the various members of the Church universal not to take decisions that will damage the united base of those churches. The decisions to which my right hon. Friend the Member for Selby referred were taken by the Roman Catholic Church many decades ago and they precede this agreement. He very cleverly said that it does not make any difference because the magisterium says that Anglican orders are null and void. It does not make any difference whether those orders will be held by men or women. That is not the point. The difference is the taking of the decision in isolation. I grieve for members of the Church of England who have devoted their lives to the Church but who cannot stay as a result of that single departure from the united Church.

The right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), in a very amusing but not always relevant speech, said that he hoped the day would come when the Roman Catholic Church would ordain women.

Mr. Derek Enright (Hemsworth): Hear, hear.

Miss Widdecombe: I point out to the right hon. Gentleman and to those who are uttering sedentary approval that it has taken us 400 years to get round to forgiving Galileo and I do not think that the right hon. Member for Chesterfield or I will see a Roman Catholic Church that ordains women.

I now want to deal with the package of compensation for those who have been driven out of the Church by this Measure. If I have derived any amusement from this terrible, grievous and serious subject it is the sight of so many hon. Members who always cry out for employees' rights and for justice and equity brushing aside the inequity and injustice of this provision. The right hon. Member for Chesterfield asked whether Cranmer would have gone if instead of facing the stake he had faced a cheque. Even before this compensation package is in place or any money is available, at least 60 priests have left the Church of England, some of whom are married and have family responsibilities, having sacrificed their rights to that compensation in many cases. There may be no stake for them, but there is no cheque either. I find any condemnation or ridicule of the consciences of those who could not stay utterly offensive and out of keeping with the way in which we should be debating this.

I find the financial provisions Measure entirely inadequate. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Selby said, it does not cover, except in a discretionary sense, a man who has spent five years studying at theological college, a further two years as curate, who has been ordained for 30 years in the Church of England, whose wife has given up her career to support his priesthood but who is, instead of an incumbent of a parish in the Church of England—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Thurrock (Mr. Mackinlay) knows my views about seated interventions. It is the strength of this place that we listen to views with which we may profoundly disagree.

Miss Widdecombe: A man who has served for 30 years as an ordained member of the Church of England but who

[Miss Widdecombe]

is not an incumbent of a parish because he is a serving missionary overseas is not covered by this compensation. The case I cite is an actual one, not a theoretical one.

There is no coverage, except under discretion, for those who are serving as chaplains—for example, to the armed services or to regional health authorities—although such people might previously have been parish priests. There is no protection for them. Nor will they have protection under ordinary law as a result of the Measure. If they feel that they cannot stay, they will have no protection against constructive dismissal if they are employed by a third party—for example, a regional health authority.

If monks and nuns in religious orders, who have taken vows of poverty and have no resources of their own—and who had reasonably believed that, at the end of their lives, they would be cared for by their order—feel, as a result of this Measure, that they cannot stay, they too will have no automatic compensation.

I believe that this Measure is unpassable as it stands. I had originally thought that I would be obliged to vote for the compensation Measure because the worst of all worlds would be that we pass an order in favour of ordaining women but not an order for compensation. I am grateful to the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) for making it clear that that will not be the result of voting against the compensation Measure. The one cannot be valid without the other, even if there is a huge vote in favour of the ordination of women.

Those who believe in justice and equity for the people who have no resources of their own, and who will not be covered by this Measure, should know that if the compensation package is rejected, it will not mean that no one will get compensation; it will mean that the legislation will have to be reworked.

I very much regret the inadequate compensation package. We have had a year since the Synod decision last November. Too little was done in advance of that decision; the attitude was, "Oh well, we have another five years. The Measure will not be passed." No sense of urgency was shown before that decision to have in place, at the time it was taken, a proper package that people could respect and take into account when voting for the main Measure.

There has been no sense of urgency since then. There has been ill-concealed panic and some hasty patch-ups, but no great sense of urgency to get to the bottom of the compensation provisions and present them to the House in a form which at least meets our standards of justice, whatever our doctrinal objections to the main Measure may be.

I have listened to the glowing accounts of the Ecclesiastical Committee's work—which was indeed difficult and complicated—but if the early Apostles had shown the same sense of urgency as the Church of England in its approach to moral issues and this compensation package, we would still be worshipping Zeus. The Church of England has failed its own members.

We have heard a lot, particularly from those in favour of the Measure, about the women who have waited patiently within the Church, sat it out and prayed for the resolution that they desired. Those in favour ask why we should be sympathetic to people who have lost the argument when those women have waited patiently for all these years. The answer is that the terms were never changed for the women who waited patiently. When they came into communion with the Church, when they took confirmation, even when they took ordination as deacons, they knew the terms that the Church was setting out. Those who were confirmed and ordained decades ago—like the clergyman to whom I referred, who is now a serving missionary and excluded from compensation—came into the Church on one set of terms and on one doctrine to which they subscribed, which has now been changed over their heads. That is the fundamental difference.

If those who exhibit disagreement with what I am saying were not so wholly taken up with the argument about women's rights—which is not the main argument here—they would feel strongly about the injustice and inequity of the compensation package.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Miss Widdecombe: Before I give way to the hon. Gentleman, let me make a plea to hon. Members. The way in which they vote on the first Measure must be a matter of conscience, but the second Measure is another issue. The people to whom I have referred look to us to ensure that the position is somewhat better than it is now: only the House can afford them protection.

Mr. Simon Hughes: The hon. Lady is right to identify the distinction between those who joined the Church under the old order, as it were, and those who joined, and find themselves in a different position, under the new order. The answer to the anxiety that she has expressed is that the Church will exclude no one if we change the rule. The Church will allow those who object to remain in it, to have their views respected and to be promoted in the Church. They are not being driven out in any way. If they choose to leave, that is their choice; but the Church wants them to stay.

Miss Widdecombe: When I said that such people were excluded from the Measure, I was talking about exclusion from the compensation package. Many of us, however, would regard ourselves as being excluded by the Measure. I was one of those who said, right at the start, "This is the nature of the Church of England. I shall not stay in it, and cause a division; I will go, because I accept that this is the direction in which the Church is now going—although there may be a few setbacks on the way for proponents of the Measure. Once that was decided, I went; but, at the time, I felt that I had been driven out.

I strongly sympathised with what the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) said earlier about the need for Churches to be in communion with each other. I spent four months in technical communion with no one; even when I believed myself to be in communion with the Holy See, I was still out of communion until all the formalities had been completed.

I am a member of the laity. It is relatively easy—in physical and financial terms, if not in spiritual terms—for members of the laity to leave the Church. The struggle that I have described however, is deep rooted: it will not simply disappear, as my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) seemed to suggest. Many serving members of the clergy in the Church of England—missionaries, monks, nuns and chaplains—will say that they have been excluded.

The way in which my right hon. Friend the Member for Selby proposed the motion showed, in large measure, the

attitude that I hope the House will adopt. Even if hon. Members cannot understand the reasons involved, I ask them to understand that the matter goes well beyond rights and secular concerns. The sacramental nature of the priesthood is precious, and some people will never be able to come round to the change. At least 60 clergy have already left the Church, and I believe that many more will go when the Measure is passed and the first priestess is ordained—because they will then be confronted with the utter reality, and will know that there is no turning back.

Members of the laity can make the decision that the right hon. Member for Chesterfield suggested was so easy. We can just go, albeit with a huge struggle; but the clergy cannot, and they are not well covered by the compensation Measure. The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey and my right hon. Friend the Member for Selby have more or less admitted it. What will determine whether those people receive any protection is the amount of money that the Church Commissioners have—and, as we know, the Church Commissioners are facing a black hole of £800 million, which is not entirely accounted for.

Mr. Rowe: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Miss Widdecombe: I shall not forget my hon. Friend. I shall give way to him at a convenient time, and he must remind me quickly if I end my speech without having done so.

I think it important that we do not, at any rate, vote for the second Measure. As for the first, I seek to persuade no one. I think that the issue of the sacramental priesthood is very personal: it is based on a person's own spirituality, belief, prayer and receipt of the Holy Spirit and guidance. I do seek to persuade the House, however, to recognise the grievous position that those in holy orders who share my views—there are some in my own family—now face.

I do not believe that the Church has yet done all that it may. I do not believe that the provisions outlined by my right hon. Friend the Member for Selby, which will sustain the freedom to dissent, are sustainable. They are okay for an immediate transition, but I do not believe that the conscience clause will be worth the paper that it is not written on in 10 years' time in the Church of England.

I think that we shall find a self-selecting Church where vocations are not recognised by priests who do not believe in the ordination of women, where preferment is denied to bishops, or would-be bishops, who do not believe in the ordination of women. The transition period may be quite satisfactory, but it is unsustainable. The Measure, as drawn, is designed to be unsustainable. It is designed not to be written down as legally binding for ever. I think that we have given them a raw deal. Before I sit down, I shall give way to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Rowe: My hon. Friend's powerful case has been weakened by the contempt that she pours on the Church that she has recently left. I should like to ask her whether she has such a low opinion of the Church of England that she does not trust its discretion, for example, in the case of the ordained man about whom she spoke who has been in the church for 30 years. It seems inconceivable to me that, under the discretionary powers, such a person would be excluded from the compensation package.

Miss Widdecombe: If it is so inconceivable, the Church had a simple option. It could have included certain specified categories of people and still had an open category for discretion. It could have included those people within the statutory compensation package. It did not. I am not respectful of the way that the Church of England has put its message across in recent years. That is no secret to anybody. I do not feel contempt, and the hon. Gentleman has failed to recognise that. I feel deep grief, deep disappointment and, yes, deep anger.

Contrary to the views of the right hon. Member for Chesterfield and the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey, who spoke as a member of the Ecclesiastical Committee, although the division between myself and the Church of England is very deep, although the disrespect that I feel for a lot of it—but not all of it—is deep, I never want to see that Church disestablished. If the price that we have to pay for having an established Church is that unbelievers and others will be voting on Anglican Measures, it is a price worth paying, if the other option is finally to remove the tenuous spirituality of this country, where only the recognition of an established Church, through having a crown which holds its authority as a result of a coronation by an Archbishop of Canterbury, gives us religion in schools. If we cut those links, it will be the death of spirituality in Britain. I do not believe that the Church of England has done much to promote it.

12.27 pm

Ms Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): Like many, I would imagine, I found the speech of the hon. Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe) sad. Obviously it is sad for someone to feel such dislike of a Church that they cared about, but the hon. Lady has joined my ex-Church. She should be celebrating that. If she joined the Catholic Church full-bloodedly, why is she so bitter? Why does she not celebrate her new Church? I am absolutely confident that there will be women priests in the Catholic Church before long.

Miss Widdecombe: I must say to the hon. Lady that she is not hearing bitterness. She cannot discern between the two. It is utter grief and anger, which sometimes sound like bitterness. It is utter disbelief at what has been going on, that we have not only managed to consecrate bishops who do not believe in the resurrection and the virgin birth, but that we cannot get our moral message across. Yes, I am very angry.

Ms Short: I am sorry that the hon. Lady feels like that. I hope that she will feel better soon and that her new Church will comfort her.

Some of us find ourselves in an odd position in this debate. The Church of England has decided by an overwhelming majority in its three houses—Bishops, Clergy and Laity—after a debate lasting many years, that it wishes to ordain women as priests. Obviously, in the House of Commons there are many of us of other religions and faiths, and of none, who do not believe that we are entitled to tell the Anglican Church what it should do. However, because it is the established Church in Britain, we are having the debate and we have a right to vote.

It would be deeply wrong for the House not to uphold the decision made by the Synod of the Church of England. Many of us who are not of the Anglican Church have received all sorts of letters and messages from people in our constituencies who are deeply committed to that Church asking us to vote for the Measure and thereby uphold the decision. I am sure that that is the right way to

[Ms Short]

proceed, and anyone who is fair about such matters will vote in that way.

Many hon. Members wish to speak in the debate, so I shall try to be brief. Yesterday, I met briefly Mrs. Caroline Davis of the Movement for the Ordination of Women. She made clear something that the hon. Member for Maidstone denied—that the argument within the Anglican Church has been conducted not as an argument over women's rights but as a theological argument. The issue is theological.

The right hon. Member for Suffolk, Coastal (Mr. Gummer) hides his true reasoning. He cannot say that a woman or a girl can be a full member of the Church, can be baptised and welcomed into it, but that if she had a vocation cannot become a priest. By saying that, he is saying that women cannot be full members of the Church and cannot be fully baptised and belong to the Church. Let me take the right hon. Gentleman back to the days of slavery in the Caribbean. It was an offence for anyone to baptise a slave because baptism recognised full humanity. Once girls are baptised and are members of the Church, if they have a vocation, they must have the right to become a priest. If not, one would be saying that they are inferior and that there is something different or wrong about them.

Mr. Gummer: I do not think that it is right for any of us to try to understand each other's motives. I do not know what the hon. Lady's motives are. She is a former member of the Roman Catholic Church and is taking part in the debate, as all of us have a right to do; that is perfectly reasonable. My motives are simple. I do not have a view about whether women can be ordained because my theological position is that that is a decision that can be made only by the whole Church. That is a straightforward theological view. We may have different views on other matters, but on that she must not say that I have a hidden agenda.

Happily, many members of the Movement for the Ordination of Women have been kind enough to accept, even though they may be ardent feminists, that there is no reason to doubt the position of many of us on the issue. We would hold it if the Church of England had changed the creed or any other orders. The hon. Lady must accept the bona fides of those who try to put a logical theological case before the House.

Ms Short: The right hon. Gentleman must indeed make his own argument. Everyone respects that. It would be extraordinary if a Church that changed so much at the time of the reformation could not change now. I could not comprehend that; it would not make any sense. There is no logic or reason, but I accept that the right hon. Gentleman thinks that there is reason and logic in it.

The theological reality touches on women's rights because it is a profound acceptance of women's equality as human beings. How can anyone who believes that Jesus Christ came to earth to save men and women say that he was representing men and not women? The more one continues with the argument, the more intolerable it becomes. It does not stand up.

I have here a quote from Archbishop Desmond Tutu which makes this argument. He said in 1992:

"I am more convinced than ever before that theologically, biblically, socially, ecumenically, it is right to ordain women to the priesthood. The most radical act that can happen to any human being is to become a member of the body of Christ. If gender cannot be a bar to baptism, then gender cannot be a bar to ordination. The Bible is quite clear that the divine image is constitutive of humanity, irrespective of gender. I cannot have stuggled against an injustice that penalises people for something they can do nothing about, their race, and then accept with equanimity the gross injustice of penalising others for something they can do nothing about, their gender."

That says it all, and says it finely, and it is a fine and brave man who says it.

I must put a couple of other arguments before the House. First, the first Anglican woman to be ordained a priest was ordained 50 years ago, and half the Anglican Church worldwide now has women priests. That is not a new step. In Ireland—north and south—the Church of Ireland, which is the Anglican authority there, has women priests.

Secondly, women were first ordained deacons—the first stage in holy orders—in 1987. That was when the General Synod and Parliament first agreed to the important extension of the ministry to women, that women could be deacons. There are now about 1,500 women deacons in England. They work in the Church of England as vicars, curates, chaplains, preachers and teachers. They baptise and take weddings and funerals. They are in charge of parishes, university chaplaincies, hospital chaplaincies and so on. They are the priests to their people in all but name.

Parishes want—the figures are clear—the deacon who works in their parish to be a priest. People do not want to continue having to import a male priest to say the one prayer in the Holy Communion that must be said by a priest. It makes nonsense of the pastoral care given by the women deacons all this time.

The Measure writes itself. We have got there. The Anglican Church has had its argument. There are women out there doing it. This is a democratic decision; it is right in principle. But it is also right that the Church should be generous to those who are wrong. It is always right that we should try to be generous to those who disagree with us and who are, in my view, profoundly wrong.

The arrangements that have been made and carefully organised so that everyone can be cared for are fine and are to be respected. I believe, as does the hon. Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe), that when the situation settles down the numbers of people who leave the Church will be small. The Church of England has conducted itself with great dignity in the argument and in the arrangements that it has made. It has come to the right decision, and those who are wrong should accept it and uphold the democratic decision of the Church.

12.37 pm

Mr. Michael Stern (Bristol, North-West): I am grateful for the opportunity to make a few brief comments in the debate. Like the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms Short), I come to the debate as a non-communicant in the Church of England; indeed, I come to the debate as a lapsed Jew.

The first question that I ask myself is one that was brought out by the intervention of my hon. Friend the Member for Brighton, Kemptown (Mr. Bowden) at the beginning of the debate: what role does someone in my position have in debates on matters affecting the Church of England? That aspect of the debate has not been questioned for some time.

Let us recall a measure that caused as much controversy in the Church as has the ordination of women—the introduction of the new prayer book in 1927. I am

heartened by the comments that were made in that debate by Sir William Joynson-Hicks. He was approached by hon. Members who felt that there was something wrong in their taking part in a debate on Church matters when they were not part of that Church. He told them:

"' . . . you are sent here as Members of Parliament. You have no right in, perhaps, the most difficult and dangerous vote that this House has ever given, to disfranchise your constituents.' . . . every Member who comes into this House has a bounden duty to consider for himself the great issues which are put before him and to decide those isues in what he believes to be the interests of right and justice."—[*Official Report*, 15 December 1927; Vol. 211, c. 2550.]

In a House that, after many years of vilification and abuse, finally admitted Catholics, non-conformists, Jews, atheists and today, I believe, Muslims, there must surely be as valid a role for every Member of Parliament in debates on the Church of England as there is for communicants.

The next question that I have to ask myself is not what is the role of Members of the House within and without the Church in such debates, but what is the role of the House? We are considering this Measure not as members of different religions but as Members of the House of Commons. Our role is difficult to define, but I find it easy to define what it is not. It seems clear that in a multi-faith —increasingly no-faith—House of Commons we must not attempt to take on the role of redefining or defining the doctrine of the Church of England. Doctrinal matters do not play a part in this debate. With all affection towards my right hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, Coastal (Mr. Gummer) and my hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe), under that definition the major part of what they had to say—however interesting—was out of order.

If the House defines matters relating to the Church of England by reason of doctrine, the House is also saying that there are first and second-class Members. No matter what our doctrine, we must decide the matter as Members of this House. It therefore seems to me that we must decide it on the basis of what is the good governance of the established Church. I entirely agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone. I find it inconceivable that the House will ever concede the disestablishment of the Church, just as I find it inconceivable that a tree that is many hundreds of years old can hack away one of its major roots.

If we are to conclude the matter on the basis of what is right and proper for an established Church, we must conclude that the Measure must be passed. The Church is part of this country's constitution in every other part of which women are given an equal and full part to play. Male and female monarchs have alternated, we have had a female Prime Minister, and we now have a female Speaker. I find it difficult to imagine that we can set aside one part of the constitutional fabric that makes up the United Kingdom and say that there, and only there, women will not be permitted to play their full role. I therefore feel that the Measure must proceed on that secular basis.

12.42 pm

Mr. Peter Hardy (Wentworth): I think that the hon. Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern) and I will vote in the same Lobby. My only criticism is that he seemed to suggest that the arguments of right hon. and hon. Members should be restricted and that spiritual or theological aspects should not impinge on our debate. Hon. and right hon. Members must be free to choose their own topics. If they wish to make arcane, bitter, or even extremely well-informed speeches, they must be allowed to do so. For me, the one light moment in the speech of the hon. Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe) was her reference to the impossibility of a male impersonating the Virgin Mary —in boys' schools they have to, which is why I am in favour of co-education.

I shall be brief. I was a member of the Ecclesiastical Committee and I thought deeply about the subject, although I said little because most of the words were spoken—sometimes exhaustively—by people who opposed the Measure. I am not criticising some Conservative Members who take an entirely different view from my own, but I have three reasons for my view and for the votes that I cast in favour of ordination and the principle of decent treatment for those who find that they cannot accept the decisions.

The first reason is that I believe that it would be outrageous for Parliament and the country to disregard the decision made by the Synod of the Established Church, not least because of the overwhelming number of votes cast in the Synod. In November 1992, 553 votes were cast in all three houses, of which 384 were cast for and 169 were cast against. A two-thirds rule applied—I wish it existed here as it would have meant that we would not have some of the legislation which has been passed through our establishment in the past few years. The Synod's vote was decisive. It would be catastrophic for the Church and damaging for the House if we sought to stem that tide of democracy on an issue that had been under consideration for a long time. The House would do the Church a profound disservice if it sought to stem that development.

The second reason for my vote is that the position that we are seeking to change was established because in biblical times and for much of not only the first millennium, but the second, it was impossible for women to gain equality. They were little more than chattels. It would have prevented the development of Christianity if forward-looking decisions had not been made. We are not talking about forward-looking decisions now, but about more than 51 per cent. of the population. As my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms. Short) reminded us, gender is not a bar to baptism, and gender should not remain a bar to ordination, as an inhibition and restriction on the pastoral work of the female deacon.

I am a nonconformist who clings to and enjoys attendance in the established Church, and the third reason for my vote is that it would be entirely wrong for us to vote against the ordination of women when there is no clear biblical authority to deny that. I have not found any spiritual authority to justify a different decision.

Miss Widdecombe: Timothy?

Mr. Hardy: The hon. Lady may have a different view of the scriptures, but when the day of Pentecost came, the decision was unavoidable. By 1992, the historic limitations on the role of the female in our society were being gradually removed. It would be wrong for the House to say that the clock must remain for ever in medieval times.

We need a Church that is vigorous and attractive, and is seen as having a modern and realistic purpose. In recent years, we have seen a great deal of greed, and privilege has been given a high priority. There has been a little less concern than there should be for those who are

[Mr. Hardy]

underprivileged or disadvantaged. The voice of the Church needs to ring out and to spell out not only the old message, but the modern judgment. A Church that did not allow women to echo that judgment would be failing its tradition and its future.

12.47 pm

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): I am delighted to follow the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) who, like me, serves on the Ecclesiastical Committee. I am sorry that I shall have to cross swords with him, but he will not be surprised at that.

A disappointing theme which has run through the debate and has come from those who support the Measure has been the implicit suggestion in so much of what has been said that, historically, women have not played a crucial role in the history of the Church. What about Mary Magdalene, Hilda of Whitby, Julian of Norwich, Teresa of Avila and Teresa of Calcutta? The idea that a woman has to be a priest in order to fulfil her spiritual role in the Church is a gross distortion and misconception.

I do not oppose the Measure on grounds of equality or ability. I yield to no one in my admiration for women and in welcoming the fact that they now play such a full and vibrant part in the life of our community in all spheres and at all levels. I am delighted that our Speaker is a woman. Over 14 years, we had the interesting experience of a woman Prime Minister. I viewed that with delight on some occasions and with less ecstasy on others, but nobody could deny that she was a great Prime Minister.

For me, this is not a question of equality, still less a question of ability. Nobody suggests that women do not have the ability to answer the highest calling and to fulfil all manner of roles. The issue is not that, and anyone who suggests that it is, as did the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms Short), is doing the cause of women a disservice.

I have been an Anglican all my life and sang, perhaps not altogether well, in a choir as a boy. I have rung the bells, served at the altar, and have been a sidesman and a church warden. I also think that I have served longer than any other hon. Member on the Ecclesiastical Committee. Throughout, I have been proud, and remain proud, of my membership of the Anglican church.

It is on this that, to some extent, I cross swords with my right hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, Coastal (Mr. Gummer) and my hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe), both of whom I deeply respect and greatly admire. My hon. Friend has left the Church of England, and I inferred from my right hon. Friend's speech that a decision in his case is imminent about whether the Church of England can any longer contain him if we take this step. I respect their views, because I have wrestled with the matter and continue to do so.

But there is another way. I hope that the Church of England can continue to provide a home for people like me who are distressed by the Measure. At stake is the survival of a broadly based national Church. There are many virtues in having an established Church, but I shall not expand on that because it has been well dealt with by my right hon. Friend the Member for Selby (Mr. Alison), who introduced the Measure, and by the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), who dealt with it hilariously and who supports the Measure.

Suffice it to say that I wish to see this broadly based national Church remain established. But it can only be broadly based and national if it is characterised by tolerance and can say to those of us who have not changed, "You are still welcome." It should also say to priests and those who have the vocation to be priests that the highest offices of the Church are still open to them.

This is a difficult issue over which many people have agonised for a long time. I do not pretend that the majority of the thousands of letters that I have received on the issue were not in favour of the measure. There was a small majority in favour, but many hundreds of people were not. I shall not bore the House by quoting at length, but I should like to quote brief extracts from two letters, one from a layman and the other from a group of clergy. The layman said:

> "People like me, who have just continued to believe the traditional teachings of the Church of England as set out in the 39 Articles of Religion and the Ordinal of the Book of Common Prayer, find ourselves marginalised and discounted by the vociferous campaign of those in favour."

A group of clergy in the dioccese of Exeter wrote:

> "The division will be felt not only in the relationship of the Church of England to the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church, but also locally within the Church of England, and within every diocese, wherever bishops choose to embark on this course of action . . . Those of the clergy and laity who understand the Church of England in the light of Scripture, the Creeds, the Fathers and the early Councils, cannot put aside their deeply held, conscientious convictions . . . They seek the peace and unity of the Church on Apostolic and Catholic foundations. They desire that the offices of bishops, priests and deacons, as they have existed since the Apostles' time, be continued, and reverently used and esteemed."

No one can pretend—and I hope that no one who has studied the subject would pretend—that there are not deep feelings among some of the most profound believers.

Although it is true that 70 million people belong to the Church within the Anglican communion, we must accept that many more millions belong to the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches. However, the overwhelming view of those of Catholic and Apostolic belief is that it is not possible for a woman to be a priest. In using the word "possible", I ask those hon. Members of the female sex to accept that it is a question not of equality, but of difference. I do not believe that a woman can be a priest any more than she can be a father. To me, it is as simple as that—*[Interruption.]* My hon. Friends may mutter in disagreement, but that is a view which is held by the vast majority of practising Christians in the Church. If we want to be tolerant of people's beliefs, we must recognise that fact.

Mr. Andrew Mackinlay (Thurrock): It is not true.

Mr. Cormack: It is true. Whatever the hon. Gentleman does with his head—and he can gyrate it backwards, forwards or sideways—it is a fact. He may regret that it is a fact and he may profoundly disagree with that view, as he is entitled to do. A number of Churches have ministers, not priests, who are women. There is a difference between the minister's role and the priestly function.

If, in future, the Church of England is to contain both those who believe in the ordination of women and those who cannot accept that, there must be a realistic accommodation. Most of the debate in the Ecclesiastical Committee centred on the issue of safeguards for those of

traditional orthodox persuasions and what could be done to encourage them to remain within the Church of England. When we first began our deliberations, it was with just the Measure before us and in the immediate aftermath of the first meeting at Manchester and the statement that has become known as "Manchester 1". In Manchester at the beginning of the year, there was already a recognition among bishops that the traditional orthodox believers were far more deeply distressed than the bishops ever thought they would be. I speak of not only the clergy but the laity. Ia am glad that the hon. Member for Wentworth agrees.

When the Committee met, we inevitably fastened on to that. As an Ecclesiastical Committee, we decided that while we would recognise the theological differences, we would not become bogged down in them, but would concentrate on the safeguards issue. We did precisely that. It is partly, if not largely, a result of cross-examination in that Committee that we had the promise of an Act of Synod. That was incorporated in the second Manchester statement, which came to be known as "Bonds of Peace".

While many of us on that Committee, which voted fairly consistently, welcomed the Act of Synod, 11 of us did not feel that it went far enough—lacking as it does the full force of a Measure and, therefore, not affording the same legislative protection. We begged the archbishops to think again. The 11 of us who voted against the Measure wrote to the archbishops in the summer:

> "We hold to the orthodox Christian doctrine on these matters and we hold to the view that if there is to be a movement in this direction it should be on the basis of a decision taken on behalf of the whole of the Catholic and Apostolic Church. Nevertheless, our main concern now is for the continuation of the Church of England as a broadly based and national Church, and one in which there is indeed not only a present but a continuing and welcome place for those who think and believe as we do."

We begged the archbishops even at that late stage to contemplate another Measure—not to delay this one, but to promise that another would follow.

Even at this stage, I beg the archbishops to think of that. I do not doubt their integrity or good faith, but they will not be in office for ever. If we are to preserve the Church of England's continuity and the possibility of a continuing role for traditional, orthodox believers, two things must happen. First, such believers must be made to feel welcome. That is difficult to achieve by legislation. Secondly, there must be positive steps and movements. Last week, three suffragan bishops were appointed who hold to traditional and orthodox beliefs, but one of the most eminent theologians in the Church of England, the Warden of Keble, has gone to Basingstoke. That is a wonderful place, but I shall not believe that we are on the way until one has gone to Durham when the Bishop of Durham retires this year.

Durham has a tradition of lively, off-centre and perhaps rather eccentric bishops, so perhaps that would be the place for a real advocate of what I acknowledge to be a minority point of view. Nevertheless, let us have one or two senior diocesan bishops, and then we shall really believe that there is continuity, that we have a welcome place and that there is a future for the Church of England as a broadly based national Church.

My second appeal is not to the archbishops but to all those in the House and outside it who are worried, questioning and concerned believers who hold the Church of England dear, as I do, and who have a deep and abiding affection for it. Let us at least give the archbishops a little time to deliver. Let us test their resolve and good faith and not leave unless we really feel forced out. But if Basingstoke is succeeded by Basildon, Basildon by Barnsley, and if Durham and Winchester and the other high points within the Church of England go to those who are prepared to contemplate only one view—the ordination of women—we shall believe that we are excluded.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): The Bishop of Winchester does not support the ordination of women.

Mr. Cormack: That may be so, but, sadly, Winchester will become vacant soon, as will Chichester. Those are some of the key bishoprics that must give the continuity that we seek. If we have that, I believe that there is a future for a broadly based Church of England. If not, I am sad to say that within a year or two I will feel as my right hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, Coastal and my hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone feel now. I hope that, from the outside, they will look in and that their prayers will sustain us as we struggle to maintain a Church of England that is a true national Church.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. Before I call the next hon. Member I must tell the House that 11 hon. Members are trying to catch my eye to speak. In this debate of all debates, it is important that I try to call as many hon. Members as possible. I therefore make a plea for succinct speeches.

1.5 pm

Mr. Andrew Mackinlay (Thurrock): It was not my intention to attend this morning, not because I consider this matter to be unimportant, but because I deeply resent the fact that parliamentary time and energy are being spent on one Church of the country. I also resent the fact that a Question Time is devoted to Church of England matters, which also takes up the energy and resources of Parliament. It is time that people paused and thought how ridiculous it is that Parliament is considering matters which should be the exclusive concern of the Church of England.

Reference has been made to the national Church. We should remember that we are the Parliament of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. It is, therefore, important to remember that the Church of Wales and the Church of Ireland are disestablished. The legislation of the Church of Scotland is not dealt with in this place and we do not have a Question Time devoted to it. It is, therefore, wrong for us to discriminate in favour of the Church of England. Why should we spend the time and energy of this place on a supposed national Church when it is the Church of England exclusively?

I turned up today because the overwhelming consideration in this matter is justice. My women constituents have written to me because they feel strongly about this issue. I do not believe that there is any theological impediment to prevent women from becoming priests. On this occasion, I will support the Measures, but I hope that this will be the last time that other hon. Members and I are distracted from the more important issues of social justice, unemployment and constraints on the national health service. Those are the issues which should be the business of this place, rather than legislation governing the Church of England.

[Mr. Andrew Mackinlay]

When we discuss such matters, we cannot help but trespass into matters of theology and doctrine. Hon. Member after hon. Member has done just that and there is a danger that I, too, have fallen into that trap, because I said that I do not believe there is any theological impediment against the ordination women priests. When we debate such Measures, we will always end up discussing theology, but is it not crazy that the legislature of a modern-day parliamentary democracy should be discussing this issue when so many other matters should be pre-occupying our time?

Mr. Gummer: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will accept that, for many of us, there is no subject more important than eternal truth. The day that this Parliament considers any of the subjects that he has mentioned to be more important than that is the day that this Parliament has denied its entire history. The hon. Gentleman does not understand that this Parliament is what it is because of its Christian background; without that, it would be of very much less value.

Mr. Mackinlay: I object to the whole thrust of the right hon. Gentleman's remarks. The matter of seeking truth is one with which we are all charged, but it is a matter of individual conscience and not a matter for a national legislature. It is ridiculous that the matter is raised here. If it is correct for Church of England matters to be raised in the House, why is not it correct for every other denomination?

Mr. Roger Evans: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that it was an appropriate course for the House to intervene and to pass legislation twice in this century that enabled different creeds of the Methodist Church to unite, and to allow the Baptists and the Congregationalists to become the United Reform Church? Were not those interventions proper parliamentary activities?

Mr. Mackinlay *rose*——

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it correct that the Baptists and Congregationalists did not unite? Was not it the Presbyterians and the Congregationalists who united?

Mr. Mackinlay: It is obvious that the House passes legislation on a whole range of issues. There are private Bills and public Bills and there are occasions when it is necessary for legislation to be passed. On exceptional occasions, there are Acts that relate to the Church of Scotland. If it is necessary that legislation be facilitated at the request of certain churches, because there is no other way, I would welcome that.

The matter today is one where the Church of England is trespassing on important parliamentary time and energies at some cost in resources. That is an irritant to me, and others believe it to be archaic. If it continues, and there is no attempt to repatriate the business of the Church from this place to the Synod, it will become an impertinence. I want hon. Members and anyone who reads our debates subsequently to pause and reflect that surely the next Measure to come before the House should be a request from the Synod to repatriate or to devolve these parliamentary duties from here to that Synod. I would support that.

Before speaking today, I spoke informally to one of my hon. Friends, who told me that I was talking about disestablishment. With respect, I am not. I am agnostic on the question of disestablishment. It is not a corollary of the House removing its jurisdiction and responsibility for Church of England matters. The Church of Scotland is a national Church which has some constitutional relationship with the monarch and with the head of state. However, we do not discuss Church of Scotland matters in the House.

I am angry that the matter is before the House. It is a constitutional anachronism, but I did not want the debate to pass without registering a protest. The Measure is before us and, as an hon. Member, I feel obligated to attend and vote on it because of the interest of my constituents. I listened carefully to the hon. Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern) who pointed out that once a Measure is before the House, every hon. Member is obliged to address themselves to it.

The Measure should not be before the House. For that reason, I hope that this will be the last occasion on which the time and energy of the House are taken up. I wish the Church of England well. I am not an Anglican, and the fact that I am voting on the Measure makes it even more barmy. I hope that the Church will decide that such matters are exclusively for the Church. The Synod, and then the Church as a whole, should come knocking on the door of Parliament, asking us to devolve to the Synod in future all matters that relate to the Church. Then, we could move on to other, more pressing and important national business.

1.13 pm

Miss Emma Nicholson (Torridge and Devon, West): I should like to thank the Whip who is on duty and to mention to him the remarkable speeches that we have had on a one-line Whip on a matter that affects us all most profoundly. Generally, such matters tend to be concerned with life and death, and I would put this great spiritual debate in that context. There have been some remarkable speeches, several of which I profoundly disagree with. I would not wish that disagreement to denigrate the quality of the speeches. I am referring to the speeches made by hon. Members who are opposed to the Measure.

Let me sound a less comfortable note for a moment. Although the quality of speeches has been high, the point of order that preceded the debate left a sour taste in my mouth. My hon. Friend the Member for Brighton, Kemptown (Mr. Bowden), who raised the point of order, claimed that hon. Members who did not belong to the Church of England should not have the right to debate this issue. He referred to the great religions and to those who did not belong to any religion at all, be they atheists or agnostics. He defined the Christian denominations, and said that only communicant members of the Church of England should participate, or words to that effect. The argument that the matter should not be before the House at all has been exhaustively and effectively explored by the hon. Member for Thurrock (Mr. Mackinlay) and others.

But my hon. Friend the Member for Kemptown—in a way that I found unsatisfactory, unattractive and denigratory of many hon. Members and millions of people outside the House—added feminism to his list of the religions whose members should not participate in the debate. I found that profoundly shocking, not just for the obvious reason that feminism is clearly not a religion—neither a faith nor a belief in God—but because my hon.

Friend, perhaps without realising it, sought to debar from the debate on this important subject, and presumably also on other matters, men and women who would argue today that women can be doctors, lawyers, sailors, bus drivers, Members of Parliament, peers, Prime Ministers, queen, Cabinet Ministers, stockbrokers and teachers.

Miss Widdecombe: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Miss Nicholson: My hon. Friend has had her turn and I know that time is short, so I shall not give way for the moment.

I suggest that, although the question of the authority of this House to debate such matters has been explored, the proposition that all of us should debate it with honour and propriety has not been properly explored. One of the greatest women to live in the last century wrote:

"I would have given the Church my head, my hand, my heart. She would not have them. She did not know what to with them. She told me to go back and do crochet in my mother's drawing-room; or if I were tired of that, to marry and look well at the head of my husband's table. 'You may go to Sunday School if you like it', she said. But she gave me no training even for that. She gave me neither work to do for her, nor education for it."

That was a letter from Florence Nightingale dated 1852.

Women of Florence Nightingale's quality have been debarred by the Church of England from participating in the life of a priest and in 1852 would have been debarred from debating in this Chamber. Such a woman would not have been allowed to put her name down to speak this morning. Indeed, she would presumably have been classified as a feminist and therefore not allowed to speak on those grounds alone.

Those who believe, as I do, that women should be ordained as full priests in the Church of England have conducted a high-ground debate. But the level of debate among those who oppose the ordination of women—apart from those who have spoken this morning—has in many cases been abominable. The word "priestess"—with the implied pagan connotations that that term carries—has consistently been used in Church of England newspapers. It is implied that there is a connection with human sacrifice, or with something squalid, or with the Roman religion, by which, of course, I mean the religion of Julius Caesar.

I suggest that the basis of those people's argument is fear. What is it that people are so worried about in the concept of women standing at the altar saying the prayer of consecration? The reasons are complex and, in my view, frequently beyond the realm of human understanding and debate. It has a lot to do with fear of women and power.

One of my constituents heard an opponent of the Measure describe his nightmare scene of a monstrous regiment of Thatcheresque women. That merely shows that the curious and conflicting views of people in opposition to this Measure are in some way connected with fright. The trouble is that when part of the debate is based on fright rather than reason, people's views become so deeply entrenched that they cannot think rationally.

We cannot escape from the theological debate at the core of the argument, and we should not do so; I agree with the hon. Member for Thurrock on that. If we are to debate religion, we must talk about theology. Theology means "the Word of God," and it is the purpose of religion to explore and to dissiminate the word of God and, if we happen to be Christians, to live the life of Christ.

Alas, the debate also has to be related to gender, but not, in my view, to feminism, which is something different. I agree that feminism is a secular matter. It is about equal rights and opportunity for all people—men, women, children, young, old, black, white or any other colour. Feminism is a strand of the human rights debate, but not a strand of the theological debate. I wish to put the theological points, which are of necessity concerned with gender because we are talking about the gender of Christian priests. I do not subscribe to the argument that if priests represent Jesus Christ, they must of necessity be male as Christ himself. If Christ is to be the salvation of men and women, it is not as easy as that. Christ was born to represent humanity, not just one gender. Surely the critical aspect of Jesus Christ as the leader of the Christian faith is not that he was male or had a certain hair colour or was unmarried or was a Jew or had a certain facial colour or was a certain height or was a certain size or had a certain eating habit. As Christians, the point must be made that he embodied God; he was God made man. The English language is sometimes sparse. Since it is the common, leading language of the world, many words are less complex than the words they translate. In Greek, there is a distinction between "anthropos" and "homos", as in Latin between "homos" and "vir".

God was made man not as a male but as the human being representing humanity. Who can say that one group of human beings can uniquely claim to represent he who represented the Word made flesh, not the Word made gender-identified man? The Word made flesh is not somebody who is defined by the physical mechanism of procreation. It is nothing to do with human fertility; it has to do with relationships between us and God. If one believes that only one particular group of human beings can represent Christ, those people must not only be male, but to be Jewish, unmarried, have a certain hair colour, be the same age as Christ when he died; and be the only son of God. In addition, all priests would have to be perfect and flawless, which clearly they are not.

It is a heresy to say that the priest representing Christ has to be a man physically akin to Christ, and of the same background. That was the heresy to which the Archbishop of Canterbury referred on which he was misquoted in *Reader's Digest.* I suggest that transubstantiation is the key. It is, for an Anglican, proper to choose to believe that the body and blood of Chirst, when consecrated, become Christ in actual essence but not that the priest carrying out the consecration is also transubstantiated. We are indeed pagans, if that is the view that we hold.

The other function that a full priest can carry out that a partial priest, as many women are today, cannot is to give the blessing. Yet over many decades, the wording of the blessing has been fractionally altered so that women can and do deliver it. Who in this Chamber will dare to suggest that a man of the human species is uniquely equipped to be the only link with God, the only transmitter of the Almighty's power in delivering the full blessing? Is that the way in which we deliver the logos and honour the Word of God?

1.25 pm

Ms Jean Corston (Bristol, East): I agree absolutely with the point that was made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn). It is inappropriate that the House should be discussing the matter at all. The Church has agonised over the issue for most of my lifetime and has now reached a clear decision, which we should all respect.

[Ms Jean Corston]

I should want to identify myself with the comments of the hon. Member for Medway (Dame P. Fenner). If Christ were to come to earth now it is inconceivable that he would not choose women as his apostles. The Bible shows that the treatment Christ accorded to women must have been remarkable, given the time and place. He treated them with an equality that was found lacking in this country until probably only 100 years ago.

I base my support for the Measure on my experience of growing up in the Church of England. As a child, I was required to go to church three times on a Sunday. By the time I had become a young woman, I felt that the Church had nothing to say to me at all. I felt excluded. In fact, I concluded that the Church would rather I arranged the flowers and sang nicely, because there seemed to be no other way of my influencing it.

When my children were growing up, I encouraged them to go to Sunday school and my daughter eventually took the same view as me. I believe that the Church has lost a great deal in making so many women feel the same. One of the most liberating aspects of the Church's decision was that for the first time in my lifetime I felt that the Church to which I was supposed to belong, but with which I have had little to do in my adult life, included me for the first time. It is all very well for some Conservative Members to say that they feel excluded. I have felt excluded for most of my life, but the Measure will exclude no one because, for the first time, the Church of England will be inclusive.

The Bible tells us that Christ was not a misogynist, but many people who purport to spread his doctrine certainly are. I give as an example the fact that, when my first child was born more than 30 years ago I was asked whether I was going to be "churched"—cleansed because of what had happened to me. I was outraged and am pleased that the Church has now cast aside its pagan attitude to women, but the attitude still survives. There has been talk about who should succeed the Bishop of Durham, and whether he takes a particular view on the ordination of women. I should like his successor to be succeeded by a woman.

I was pleased as a young woman to see on television a woman called Una Kroll speaking about the ordination of women. That is when I realised what was wrong and why I felt so alienated from the Church. I am pleased to be here to support and congratulate the people who have argued so patiently and persuasively for such a long time for the body of the Church to be universal.

My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms Short) referred to comments made by Archbishop Tutu. He said that if race was not a bar to the priesthood, gender should not be either. That must be right.

I am informed by the Bishop of Bristol that there is a large majority in favour of the Measure in the city. In a letter to me, he wrote:

"You will already appreciate the importance of this legislation to the Church and, indeed, its wider significance. In the Diocese of Bristol in which your constituency lies there was a 92 per cent. vote in favour of the legislation at our Diocesan Synod. There are thirty-seven women deacons awaiting to be priested as soon as the legislation is passed."

It is not within the gift or power of any Member of Parliament to deny those 37 women—and many others in the same position—the right to fulfil what, for them, is a vocation. If it is about anything, the Church should be about the true fellowship of humankind. I am proud to support the Measure.

1.30 pm

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): In 1927 and 1928, two historic debates were held in the House of Commons on the revised prayer book. In one sense, today's debate reflects those debates; in another sense, it flows from them. It may interest hon. Members to learn that I read three Roman Catholic newspapers every week and that I follow carefully statements made by the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church.

During the controversy, Cardinal Hume made it clear in a statement that, although he did not like the controversy, it could be a way of securing his aim—the return of England to Rome, and the ending of the Church of England as a separate church. In 1928 a Scottish Member, Mr. Rosslyn Mitchell, reminded the House of the aim of the Church of Rome in this country, in the words of one Cardinal Manning.

Cardinal Manning said:

"It is good for us to be here in England. It is yours, right reverend fathers, to subjugate and subdue the mind and break the will of an imperial race, a will which, as the will of Rome of old, rules over nations and peoples, invincible and inflexible. It is the head of Protestantism, the centre of its movements and the stronghold of its power. Weakened in England, Protestantism is paralysed everywhere. Conquered in England, it is conquered throughout the world. Once overthrown here it is but a war of detail."—[*Official Report*, 13 June 1928; Vol. 218, c. 1126.]

I find an echo of that in the words of Cardinal Hume.

In the same debate, a man with a strange name in that context—a Mr. Bridgeman—said that people viewed the Church of England as far too narrow for the religious life of the present generation. That view has been widely echoed in today's debate.

At the opening of the debate, the hon. Member for Brighton, Kemptown (Mr. Bowden) lodged a strong objection: he told the House that those who were not members of the Church of England should not dare to speak. Everyone knows that I am not a member of the Church of England; in fact, I belong to one of the "sects" referred to by the right hon. Member for Suffolk, Coastal (Mr. Gummer) in loving, gracious and tender tones. It occurred to me that the right hon. Gentleman would make a very good Pope: he would be able to excommunicate all the other religious bodies, telling them that they were only sects. I wonder what the Church of Scotland thinks about having been relegated to that minor spiritual level. However, I happen to believe that it is the relationship of the human soul personally to Jesus Christ that settles eternal things, not the relationship of a human soul to any Church body, no matter what its claims may be.

The hon. Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern) quoted partially what was said in that debate. Sir William Joynson-Hicks stressed the great importance of the House of Commons. He said:

"As long as the Church is established, the final right lies with Parliament. To-day, the final right lies with the Commons of England. In another place, there was a Division which disposed of the matter there, but the final appeal which the Protestants, the old-fashioned believers in the Church of England, make to-day is to this House of Commons. I am told that some hon. Members do not wish to vote in this matter because they are not members of the Church of England. I say to those Members: 'You are not sent here as Nonconformists, you are sent here as Members of Parliament. You have no right in, perhaps, the most difficult and dangerous vote that this House has ever given, to disfranchise

your constituents.' Vote against me if you wish, vote for the new Prayer Book if you wish, but every member who comes to this House has a bounden duty to consider for himself the great issues which are put before him and to decide those issues in what he believes to be the interests of right and justice."—[*Official Report*, 17 December 1927; Vol. 211, c. 2550.]

I think that that is a basis on which we should have this debate. No matter what their views may be, whether they are believers or unbelievers, they should have the right to say.

The right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) said that no one at their election ever mentioned that. In my election I mentioned it and said that it was an issue. I said that it would be an issue that would be coming to the House of Commons. Needless to say, the people knew the attitude that I would adopt in such a debate as this.

Mr. Alison: Did my hon. Friend mention in his election address which way he would be voting at 2.30 pm on the Measures?

Rev. Ian Paisley: I must tell the right hon. Gentleman that it will be no surprise to him how I vote. Let him read how we voted in the Lobbies and he will see which way I voted. That will give him a little extra homework to do.

The hon. Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe) spoke with great depth of feeling, naturally, and made a valid and important point. She said that the heart of this issue was the sacramental priesthood. Let us not allow anything to cover over that. The great divide comes when one believes in the sacramental priesthood or when one rejects it.

Some hon. Members spoke about figures in the Reformed Church. The Reformed Church is an amalgam of the Congregational Church and the Presbyterian Church in England. It does not have vicars. It has ministers. There is a distinction that must be drawn between the conception of a minister and the conception of a priest. No one will ever hear me claiming to be a priest. But for 47 years I have exercised a ministry right in the heart of Belfast. The priesthood, however, as envisaged by the hon. Lady, is the priesthood that has been seen in the Roman Catholic Church.

In canon 11 of the Council of Trent, Rome states:

"If any one shall say that in these words 'do this in remembrance of me', Christ did not appoint the apostles to be priests, or did not ordain that they and other priests should offer His body and blood, let him be accursed."

The Church of Rome anathematises those who do not hold to that sacramental priesthood. When a bishop of the Church of Rome ordains a person to the priesthood, he says:

"Receive thou power to offer sacrifice to God and to celebrate Masses both for the living and the dead."

The catechism of the Council of Trent further says:

"when the Bishop makes that offer to the person being ordained by these words he is committed to becoming a mediator between God and man."

That is the basis of the Roman Catholic priesthood as it is the basis of the Anglo-Catholic priesthood. I do not want to be unfair to them, but I take an entirely different view. I do not see anything about a sacrificing priest in the New Testament. I have never read in the New Testament that the Apostles or those whom they ordained to the gospel ministry ever made priests in such a ceremony.

The Bible also talks about the choosing of Apostles. I resent the suggestion that the Lord Jesus was afraid to go against the feelings of his day and therefore did not appoint one woman apostle. The Lord Jesus Christ was God incarnate. He was fearless and He was without sin. If He felt that the apostleship should have been shared by womenfolk, He would have set that in train and established that foundation for the ministry. He did not. As we know, when the apostle talked about ministers in the Christian Church he said that a minister had to be the husband of one wife. I do not understand how that can be transferred to the other gender. I believe that womenfolk have a place in the ministry of the Church, but it does not happen to be in that particular phase of gospel ministry.

I was rather amazed when the right hon. Member for Suffolk, Coastal said that the Church of England doctrines were contained in the three creeds. I wonder what he does about the 39 Articles. Does he completely jettison them? They have a lot to say about transubstantiation and about the Lord's supper. I shall not weary the House with all of them, but let me quote article 31. It is entitled:

"Of the one Oblation of Christ finished upon the Cross."

It says:

"The Offering of Christ once made is that perfect redemption, propitiation, and satisfaction, for all the sins of the whole world, both original and actual; and there is none other satisfaction for sin, but that alone. Wherefore the sacrifices of Masses in the which it was commonly said, that the Priest did offer Christ for the quick and the dead, to have remission of pain or guilt, were blasphemous fables, and dangerous deceits."

That is not my language. That is the language of the Book of Common Prayer, which is opened every day in the House and from which we have our prayers. Here we have the divide, and it is a great divide.

A member said to me, "Will you be in the Pope's Lobby today?" I said to him, as I said some years ago when a Labour Member asked me the same question in a debate about abortion, "If the Pope wants to join my Lobby, he is very welcome."

Hon. Members have said today that the New Testament has nothing to say about the matter, but it has everything to say. The Lord Jesus Christ certainly elevated women and where the Christian message is heard women will be elevated, but the Bible states clearly that the man is the head of the woman and Christ is the head of the man. My right hon. Friend the Member for Selby (Mr. Alison) explained that away in a few sentences.

Mr. Gummer: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the occasion in which God showed his particular favour towards womanhood was when God chose Our Lady to be his mother, and that the position of the blessed Virgin Mary shows clearly the very particular way in which God and his Church have upheld womanhood down the ages?

Rev. Ian Paisley: I find it difficult to follow the right hon. Gentleman, for God had no other way in which he would bring about the incarnation because it was based on a promise:

"The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head."

I entirely agree with the right hon. Gentleman, however, that my saviour is Virgin-born, and certainly God chose the Virgin to be the mother of Our Lord's flesh. That is revealed in the Word of God, which I accept.

Let me return to the subject of authority. The authority, to me, is the Holy Scripture and there is specific teaching in the Holy Scripture that cannot be argued away about these matters. If I am to accept one part of the 39 Articles, which I do, I must accept the other part about the authority of Holy Scripture. The authority of Holy Scripture is above

[Rev. Ian Paisley]

councils, above Synods, above Parliament and above every other authority. The scriptures alone bear the Word of God and they should be heeded and harkened to.

This is a solemn day for the House. Changes in the national Church are serious for everyone, not only members of the Church of England. The spiritual life of the nation has to a degree been held together by the cement of an established Church.

The Presbyterian Church in Scotland is an established Church. The Scottish Presbyterians learnt the bitterness of royal rule over them in the crusade of the covenanters and the reformers. They came to the conclusion that, although they could be established, they would not brook any state interference.

The Church of England has a different set-up. Henry VIII was mentioned today. I do not think that he was a Protestant. I believe that he continued to be a Roman Catholic to the end, but he thought that he would be a better Pope than the Pope so he de-poped the Pope and took the Pope's job. That does not mean that he set the basis for the Church of England.

Thomas Cranmer was mentioned today and it was said that if he had received a cheque he might have reneged. He certainly would not, because Thomas Cranmer was prepared to die for what he believed. The prayer book largely owes itself to the work of Thomas Cranmer.

Before we touch eternal truths that refer to the spirituality of our nation we need to be careful. I read carefully the "red book", as I call it. I read what the hon. Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack) said. He asked the bishop, "Does eternal truth change?", and I was appalled at the answer. According to that bishop, it can change on every occasion. The bishop was confronted by the hon. Gentleman about the fact that it was said when a deaconess was ordained in the Church that it would go no farther, yet now they are going to have women as priests. They say that there will never be a woman bishop, but we all know that there will be if they go on.

However, other things worry me far more, for example, the fact that the Bishop of Durham denies every tenet of the gospel and everything that is in the Bible, yet he is supposed to chase false doctrine away from his diocese. He is the greatest propagator of false doctrine. That is the sort of thing that should concern legislators. Whatever any hon. Member says, the fact that people in this country have the opportunity to go and listen to the Word of God will help us to get over our difficulties. It is an anchor of the soul. I trust that, even out of all this controversy, He, who can make the wrath of man to praise Him and the remainder of that wrath restrain, will prevail and that all things will work together for good to those who love God.

1.50 pm

Mr. Roger Sims (Chislehurst): When the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) rose to his feet, we anticipated that he would approach the issues and discussion from his own unique angle and he did not disappoint us.

My son's wedding was the highlight of my summer recess. When discussing it a few weeks beforehand with my bishop, I commented that my niece would be marrying my son, which caused raised eyebrows until I explained that my niece is a deacon of the Church and would be performing the ceremony. I need hardly say that she did it very well. It was a very happy occasion and I look forward to attending her ordination as a priest in the Church before many months elapse. Incidentally, Opposition Members will be interested to know that the wedding took place in Tolpuddle and that my daughter-in-law comes from the Loveless family.

The House will, therefore, not be surprised where my sympathies lie, and they are confirmed by the voting record of the Ecclesiastical Committee, of which I have been a member for some years.

As the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) said, the Committee has not gone through any Measure more thoroughly than the Measures that we are discussing today. Usually, we spend one or two meetings discussing the Measures that come to us from Synod. We met no fewer than 11 times to discuss these Measures, including a full conference between our Committee and the legislative committee of Synod. As has been said, the Synod representatives included two people who were against the Measure, as well as those who had promoted it. The Committee concluded, by a clear majority, that both of the Measures are expedient—an expression used to show that we recommend to both Houses that they be approved.

On the theological issues, the Committee took the view that it was not for us as a body to pass judgment. Personally, I am not persuaded that there is any theological objection to the ordination of women. One of the weakest arguments that I have heard against their ordination is the Apostolic succession which, it is alleged, would be broken by women's ordination. That succession is defined as

"an uninterrupted transmission of spiritual authority, through a succession of bishops from the apostles downwards."

In other words, the Apostles ordained others, who became bishops and in turn carried out ordinations, and so on until the present day. I fully understand that, but I do not understand why spiritual authority can pass on when a bishop lays his hands upon a man's head but not if he lays his hands on a woman's head. I put that question to one of the bishops who had expressed opposition to these Measures. I was not surprised when I received no response.

It can be argued, as it has been by the hon. Member for Thurrock (Mr. Mackinlay), that it is not a matter for Parliament, but we know that, for historical reasons, as the law stands, it is a matter for Parliament. Our task is to satisfy ourselves on three issues.

First, does the Church want the Measures? The fact that it does is clearly shown by the vote of the General Synod and by support for the Measures throughout the country. That support is clearly tabulated on page 20 of the Ecclesiastical Committee report, which lists the votes in the various diocese.

Secondly, are there any practical objections to the ordination of women? Clearly, there are none. It can be argued that there are some jobs, for example, those of police officers, where in certain circumstances, a woman is not ideally equipped to deal with all the situations that may arise. However, that is not the case with women priests. There have been women deaconesses for many years—for some years, there have been deacons—and their qualities have proved ideal for the job. They are particularly suited to pastoral work.

Thirdly, are the concerns of the minority who take a different view adequately protected? That question has naturally taken up much of the Ecclesiastical Committee's

time and of today's debate. I venture to suggest that the position of bishops who do not want to ordain women priests and of those parishes that may object to having women priests is fully covered in the provisions, in the two Manchester statements and in the proposed Act of Synod.

The Committee certainly satisfied itself that the Measures include appropriate safeguards and financial provisions for those clergy and lay people who feel unable to remain in the Church of England. The provisions were carefully analysed. It is fair to say that while some felt that the financial provision was inadequate, others felt that it was over-generous, particularly given the Church of England's financial state. I believe that the balance is about right. It is my fervent hope that those provisions will be little used.

The Measures are not about splitting the Church; they are about enriching it. The Church is not a body separate from the rest of the community—it is part of it. It is possible to maintain the eternal truths on which the Church is founded—truths to which my hon. Friends, including my right hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, Coastal (Mr. Gummer), have referred—while adapting its structures and practices to reflect the influences and climate in which it exists. The role of women in our society is different, as the hon. Member for Wentworth (Mr. Hardy) said, from when the Church was founded and from only a few decades ago. I do not believe that the Measures are the product of some sort of militant feminism, with which some are seeking to associate them.

The Measures are a recognition of the increasing momentum towards sex equality in society generally. That equality has already been gained in a number of spheres, including this place, certainly in quality and achievement, if not yet in numbers. The Measures are also a recognition that women have very much to offer to the priesthood. Nor is it right to link the issue with certain trends in the Church, which have led to its ambivalent attitudes towards homosexuality and its incongruous recognition of gay priests, which I find a contradiction in terms.

The Measures stand on their own merits. They have support in the majority of what might be called the active Church and among those who simply call themselves Church of England, and whose church attendance may be sporadic. I do not deny that endorsing the Measures will cause pain to some, but failure to do so will cause pain to many more.

I hope that the House and the other place will support the Measures and will endorse the final paragraph of the Ecclesiastical Committee report. The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey quoted it, so I shall repeat only the final sentence which states:

"It is the fervent hope of the whole Committee that unity will be preserved."

Perhaps the appropriate words to add are "Amen to that".

2 pm

Ms Glenda Jackson (Hampstead and Highgate): I think that I am an agnostic. I know that I deeply believe in a spiritual energy which finds its expression in many ways. There is no limit via gender to the expression of that spiritual energy in every aspect of our national life. Although I think that I am an agnostic, I am privileged to represent a constituency in which many people are absolutely clear about their passionate commitment to practice within the Church of England.

Well before this issue came to the House, I received from men and women, from laity and clergy, by letter, by telephone, by being stopped in the street and by a lobby in this place, an expression of the desire of my constituents to assure and reassure themselves that when the issue eventually came to the House I would vote for the ordination of women.

I was somewhat surprised that my constituents were not aware of my passionate and spiritual commitment to equality for women in every aspect of our national life.

The debate has been of a remarkably high quality, although I found it rather odd that those hon. Members who oppose the ordination of women tend to be opposed because, for example, a woman cannot be a father. The hon. Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack), who said that, did not say that a man cannot be a mother. The harsh realities of life in these islands are that 1·5 million women have to be both father and mother to their children.

The central issue is who is privileged to hear the voice of God? Who is privileged to have delivered to him or her a call from the Supreme Being? I find utterly unacceptable the idea that the Supreme Being speaks exclusively to those of the male gender. For a long time, many women have patiently remained in the Church of England and have never threatened to leave it if they could not be ordained. They have completely acknowledged that that burden was part of their spiritual progress towards responding in full to the voice of God. Excluding the issue of equal rights for women, that is the strongest possible argument and it concentrates on the spiritual and theological dimensions of the matter. That is why I shall vote in favour of ordination for women and why I urge all hon. Members to do the same. God has called upon those women and no one in the House or outside has any right to deny their response to the Supreme Being's call.

2.3 pm

Mr. David Atkinson (Bournemouth, East): As a Roman Catholic, I hesitated somewhat before taking part in the debate. However, having listened to the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley), I do so with less hesitation. He will not be surprised to learn that, like my Church, I oppose the ordination of women. In addition to the more sophisticated theological arguments, I hold the view, however simplistic, that if our Lord had meant there to be women priests—and certainly women bishops will follow—he would have chosen women to be among his Apostles and would have invited them to participate in the last supper to celebrate the first Holy Communion.

Of course, his women disciples were present at the foot of the cross, but the roles of Mary his mother, of the other Mary, of Martha and of his other women disciples, although important, were also different. So were the roles of those women who held important positions in the early Christian Church, so many of whom were martyred. Women have never been precluded from very full and fulfilling positions in the Christian Church.

There are three reasons why I oppose the Measures. They have been influenced by my meetings with local Anglican clergy, whose clear distress in wrestling with their consciences in trying to respond positively to the Measures concerns me greatly. First, it appears that the overwhelming consensus for the Measures claimed by Archbishop Carey is far from true at the grassroots of his Church. I understand that in the voting in the deanery

[Mr. David Atkinson]

synods, a two thirds majority was achieved in only 300 deaneries—it failed to reach two thirds in 424. If true, that is hardly a consensus for such an important change in doctrine that it requires this Parliament to approve it. It is certainly not the two thirds majority in the Church as a whole claimed by the General Synod.

Secondly, as the Measures stand, there will be an undoubted split in the Church, but that can be avoided if they are amended to include a more protective conscience clause. I am appalled to learn of the attitude being taken by some, including bishops, towards those clergy known to be opposed to the Measures. Apparently, there is rarely any practical chance of promotion for them. In my area, 40 priests covering 30 parishes have told their bishop that they can no longer look to him as their father in God. They have formed their own chapter, which meets regularly. I find that very sad.

Finally, I oppose the Measures because they will undoubtedly delay, perhaps even prevent, the ultimate unification of the Catholic Churches in this country. They will encourage Anglican clergy, as well as laity, to seek integration in the Roman Catholic Church, but it will be for the wrong reason. I want both Churches to be reconciled as the result of a successful outcome of the ecumenical process at the top of those Churches, not through disillusionment at the bottom of one of them.

I hope that the Measures will be defeated today. I hope that the General Synod will think again. It remains a challenge to both Catholic Churches in this country to find ways to develop the ministry of women in this modern world, but it does not lie in the priesthood.

2.7 pm

Mr. Michael Bates (Langbaurgh): I am grateful for the opportunity to contribute to this historic debate, to which I have listened with interest. Many people have said that, perhaps, it is not the responsibility and role of this place to debate such issues. I profoundly disagree with them and I suggest to those hon. Members who have participated in and sat through the debate that that view will be proved wrong. This has been one of the most edifying and uplifting debates in which it has been my privilege to participate during my brief time in the House. From time to time, it is a good thing, even in this House, to consider matters spiritual as well as temporal, and that we have done.

I am sure that many people at this time have great anxiety about the ordination of women to the priesthood. I am a believer in the sacramental priesthood and I have no problem squaring that with my belief that women should be part of the priesthood. The emancipation of women in this country has brought great variety and different strengths to our society and has been a great success. It should have been introduced here some time ago.

There will be friction and division. My right hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, Coastal (Mr. Gummer) kindly alluded to his background in the Free Church as being part of a sect. I, too, have a background of growing up as a member of a small Evangelical Church. One difference that I notice as a member now of the Anglican community, of which I am very proud, is that at least the Anglican Church divides over matters of substance, such as the ordination of women and transubstantiation. In my previous Free Church capacity, we divided over matters such as whether women should wear hats and whether the organ should be played to accompany hymns.

It is essential to focus on the issue of where authority is vested. Some believe that it is vested in the structures here on earth. That is not true. As we know from Matthew, chapter 28, verse 18, Jesus said:

"All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth."

Therefore, we believe passionately that all authority is vested in Jesus Christ. We try to dilute that authority in to our human structures at our peril. That is the central plank of our belief. That passage from Matthew is from the great commission, and in it Jesus tells his disciples what is their role on earth. It serves as a warning, because the threat of division in the Church is real.

The Church of England is taking part in a decade of envangelism. It would be tragic if this great decade, which is fulfilling the mission and great commission set out so clearly in the Bible in the context of authority, were to be diluted by the effects of any division. I urge archbishops, bishops and individuals to make every effort at reconciliation, so that their great mission in this decade will not be diluted in the slightest.

Inconsistencies remain. If one believes that women can be baptised into the Church of England and be ordained into the priesthood, as we do, a division remains in the sense that women may not become bishops. We have been told that that matter will be dealt with at some future time —but if one accepts that women should be ordained into the priesthood, the entire structure of the Church of England should be open to them. That aspect should be addressed as a matter of urgency.

I am honoured by the opportunity to speak in this debate. It has proved how reflective the House is of the views of the public. The contributions made were broadly in line with views expressed in three houses of the Synod and by many of my constituents.

2.13 pm

Mr. Alison: The time is slipping away and it would be a courtesy to the House, in view of the large number of speeches made in the debate, if I were to attempt to make one or two comments in response.

In the light of the enormous constituency interests represented by the Measures, the House must be glad that so many right hon. and hon. Members found it worth while to attend on a Friday, without any Whip, to contribute so eloquently and passionately. Many old hands will recall debates of earth-shattering national or international importance attended by only two or three Back Benchers on each side of the House, a Minister, a Whip and a few others on the Front Benches. For today's debate on an eternal theme there was only a one-line Whip; yet right hon. and hon. Members are present in large numbers to argue the case—if only that we should not be here arguing the case. That paradox always arises in such debates.

I should like to address first the significant points which the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) raised about the compensation provisions. I want to counter the suggestion that the financial provisions Measure and the financial assistance that it seeks to introduce are in some way niggardly, grudging or limited. They are not. They are specifically tailor-made to help as many people as possible who might suffer financial hardship as a result of their personal and private decision to resign from their official position in the Church of England.

The provisions in the financial assistance Measure are unique in the Anglican communion where, as the Opposition spokesman, the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms Short) said, women priests have already been readily accepted. Those priests were accepted, however, without the benefit of the financial provisions that we are seeking to introduce.

The financial assistance takes the form of substantial housing grants, a large resettlement lump sum and regular payments that could last for as long as 10 years in certain circumstances. They are markedly more generous than secular compensation figures.

If hon. Members refer to paragraph 13 on page 49 of our Red Book, they will see that had we tried to introduce something comparable to the unfair dismissal terms that are provided for under secular law, the basic and compensatory awards

"would not exceed, in a typical case, one year's stipend (or some £12,000). This, it will be seen, is less than one-third of the value of benefits available under the Measure."

The terms offered under our voluntary scheme are way ahead of anything that is available in the secular sphere.

Mr. Roger Evans: In the secular sphere if one has an employment contract for life up to the age of 72, which is the equivalent of a freehold incumbency, full compensation would be much greater. Is that not the appropriate comparison?

Mr. Alison: I always think that my hon. Friend would have made a formidable advocate if we had sought to include in the Measure tight and detailed provisions for particular circumstances, individuals and categories. I could just imagine hearing my hon. Friend arguing his case before a judge and trying to get the last squeeze out of the compensation lemon.

It is precisely because we do not believe that we should introduce such a watertight, technical compensation package that we have gone for the broad-brush approach in an attempt to help people in different circumstances. That is why the compensation provisions have not been spelt out as definitively as my hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone (Miss Widdecombe) and my right hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, Coastal (Mr. Gummer) would have wished.

I will remind the House of the reason why we have made two separate provisions in the compensation Measure, a standard scheme and a discretionary scheme, the latter under clause 5. The schemes are entirely designed to try to maximise the scope for inclusiveness. Many variations will occur in individual circumstances, even under the tailor-made scheme for incumbents. However, there will be so many variations of the sort that my hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone referred to in her illustrative example of a missionary with 30 years service abroad, so it will be much better to have a discretionary scheme alongside the model scheme.

Hon. Members will not have failed to notice that the standard scheme makes provision for application for those who are included under the standard scheme for application to the compensatory scheme. Those in the standard scheme can have that topped up with further discretion. That means that the discretionary scheme will be able to offer more than the model scheme.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Alison: I feel that, because of the limit on time, I shall give way to the hon. Member for Birkenhead, who first raised the matter. I shall also give way—for fear of the wrath of womanhood—to my hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman).

Mr. Frank Field *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I clearly heard the hon. Gentleman say that he would give way to the hon. Lady. I am sorry if he has changed his mind, but will he clarify to whom he is giving way?

Mr. Alison: I am sorry if there has been some indecision. I will give way to my female colleague first, and then to the hon. Gentleman.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman Is not it correct that if the report simply included those who had been ordained many cases would be covered?

Mr. Alison: It is not confined to those who have been ordained. There will be individuals and lay people in organisations outside the parochial ministry. The scheme will also apply to those who are ordained in those extra-parochial ministries and to those fixed in the full model scheme. There will be interplay between both structures so that the maximum amount—a generous amount, far exceeding the compensation available in secular schemes—can be offered to those who are suffering real hardship. It is a good scheme for those suffering real hardship.

Mr. Frank Field: The concern of those who have raised the issue of compensation has not been whether people will gain the basic compensation plus top-up payments, but whether some people will be excluded altogether.

I wish to put a question to the right hon. Gentleman that may determine how some of us vote, although not on the major motion. He has given a number of examples of people who will not be covered by any statutory entitlement. Does he expect those examples which were cited in the debate to gain compensation under the discretionary proposals which he has described?

Mr. Alison: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman has made clear to me—I hope I have got it right—that he is worried that the discretionary scheme may exclude certain categories or individuals. That does not mean that they will not get enough money if they manage to get into the scheme, but rather that their particular category will not fit in with the discretionary scheme.

I can reassure the hon. Gentleman on the matter. The report mentions on page 35, for example,

"missionaries serving abroad, forces chaplains, school and college chaplains and lay employees of organisations in which membership of the Church of England is a condition of employment."

I can assure my right hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, Coastal that the individuals about whom he is concerned will undoubtedly secure financial assistance under the discretionary scheme. The same applies to the case that was made by my hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone.

Several hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Alison: I must press on, as I have only six minutes before we reach the end of the debate.

[Mr. Alison]

I will pursue the point made by the hon. Member for Birkenhead. If we had tried to make an exhaustive list of those who might be eligible under the discretionary scheme, it would have run into several pages of schedule and would almost certainly still leave out someone whom it was necessary to include.

Mr. Cormack: Cannot my right hon. Friend accept that what we are asking is that the provision should state that clerks in holy orders are eligible—not may be eligible or may apply for, but will be eligible—to receive a sum not specified? Should not the provision apply to all ordained clerks?

Mr. Alison: That is implied in the statement on page 35 of our report, which not only refers to missionaries, school chaplains and others who are ordained but goes wider, to include laymen. I cannot see what other category or group of individuals—either lay people or non-lay people—one could possibly include without extending the provision to, for example, the animal liberation movement. One can only be ordained or non-ordained and people in both categories will be eligible for discretionary help.

Mr. Gummer: If it is true that every clerk in holy orders will have the same eligibility as those who are eligible at the moment, why will not the Church say that in the legislation, and go on to say that there are other categories to which it will extend discretion? Does not my right hon. Friend understand that there is a suspicion—I do not want to use the word, but I must—that every time the matter is pressed, the Church refuses to say what we all believe it ought to mean if the discretion is to be extended to all those people?

Mr. Alison: My right hon. Friend seeks a special discriminatory selection of or emphasis on the ordained ministry as such. Why should it be necessary to highlight the ordained ministry given that its members are automatically highlighted by the standard scheme, which can apply only to incumbents? Why should it be necessary to mention both the ordained and the non-ordained in connection with the discretionary scheme? The essential aim is to make the provisions as inclusive as possible and that inclusiveness is secured by the discretionary element, especially in the light of the categories that have been spelt out.

I remind the House that, in that context, votes in the General Synod—from the House of Bishops, the House of Clergy and the House of Laity—were very nearly 100 per cent. in support of the whole of the financial provision Measure. The House of Clergy, in particular, felt that the kind of assistance that we are anxious to secure was properly and fully available.

The financial assistance scheme is a generous one by Anglican standards and an extremely generous one by the secular standards applying to our communities.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, Coastal expressed his anxiety about the future of the Church of England, as did my hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South (Mr. Cormack). My right hon. Friend made the point that we have no authority to make fundamental changes such as this. The hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) referred to the 39 Articles and I felt that it was somewhat disingenuous of my right hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, Coastal—I do not mean to be insulting to him—to refer to the changes that we propose in the Measures while overlooking the changes that were made in the 15th and 16th centuries in the 39 Articles, including the repudiation of transubstantiation, the repudiation of clerical celibacy and the reduction in the number of sacrements from seven to two, all of which were fundamental. My hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire, South was especially anxious that the broad base of the Church of England includes as many people as possible and should not be undermined by what we are discussing today. I refer especially to paragraph 3 on page 24 of the report that he joined me in publishing. It says that we hope to

"enter a process in which it is desirable that both those in favour and those opposed should be recognised as holding legitimate positions".

I cannot think of a more comprehensive or promising statement than that made by the bishops at the Manchester gathering in June.

It being half-past Two o'clock, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Order [22 October]:*

The House divided: Ayes 215, Noes 21.

Division No. 376] **[2.30 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Ainsworth, Robert *(Cov'try NE)*
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Arbuthnot, James
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashby, David
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Austin-Walker, John
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Bates, Michael
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Dr. Roger
Betts, Clive
Boateng, Paul
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Boyce, Jimmy
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Byers, Stephen
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Chapman, Sydney
Clapham, Michael
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Colvin, Michael
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Couchman, James
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'shire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davies, Quentin *(Stamford)*
Davies, Ron *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dobson, Frank
Dowd, Jim
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eagle, Ms Angela
Enright, Derek
Evennett, David
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fisher, Mark
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Fox, Dr Liam *(Woodspring)*
Fox, Sir Marcus *(Shipley)*
Fraser, John
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
Gale, Roger
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Gunnell, John
Hall, Mike
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hardy, Peter

Harman, Ms Harriet
Harris, David
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Heald, Oliver
Heppell, John
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hoey, Kate
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, Rt Hon David *(Wirral W)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Bdgn)*
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kilfoyle, Peter
Knapman, Roger
Knox, Sir David
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Leighton, Ron
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Mackinlay, Andrew
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Maddock, Mrs Diana
Mahon, Alice
Malone, Gerald
Marshall, Jim *(Leicester, S)*
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martlew, Eric
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Michael, Alun
Miller, Andrew
Milligan, Stephen
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Hara, Edward
Oliner, William
Ottaway, Richard
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Ruddock, Joan
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Sedgemore, Brian
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Streeter, Gary
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Tipping, Paddy
Tyler, Paul
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Waller, Gary
Walley, Joan
Ward, John
Wicks, Malcolm
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Wolfson, Mark
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Madel and
Mr. Roger Sims.

NOES

Atkinson, David *(Bour'mouth E)*
Bowden, Andrew
Carlisle, John *(Luton North)*
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Cormack, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hunter, Andrew
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kirkhope, Timothy
Leigh, Edward
Merchant, Piers
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Paisley, Rev Ian
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Waterson, Nigel
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Michael Trend and
Mr. Roger Evans.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the Priests (Ordination of Women) Measure, passed by the General Synod of the Church of England, be presented to Her Majesty for her Royal Assent in the form in which the said Measure was laid before Parliament.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith, pursuant to Order [22 October],

That the Ordination of Women (Financial Provisions) Measure, passed by the General Synod of the Church of England, be presented to Her Majesty for her Royal Assent in the form in which the said Measure was laid before Parliament.—*[Mr. Alison.]*

The House divided: Ayes 195, Noes 19.

Division No. 377] **[2.41 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael *(Selby)*
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald *(Swansea E)*
Anderson, Ms Janet *(Ros'dale)*
Arbuthnot, James
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashby, David
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Atkinson, Peter *(Hexham)*
Austin-Walker, John
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset North)*
Banks, Matthew *(Southport)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Bates, Michael
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beith, Rt Hon A. J.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F.
Blunton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Betts, Clive
Boateng, Paul
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter *(Eltham)*
Boyce, Jimmy
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thorpes)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle upon Tyne E)*
Browning, Mrs. Angela
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Byers, Stephen
Campbell-Savours, D. N.
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Chapman, Sydney
Clapham, Michael
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr David *(South Shields)*
Clarke, Tom *(Monklands W)*
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Colvin, Michael
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Ms Jean
Couchman, James
Cousins, Jim
Cryer, Bob
Cunningham, Jim *(Covy SE)*
Currie, Mrs Edwina *(S D'by'ire)*
Curry, David *(Skipton & Ripon)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'dge H'l)*
Denham, John
Dobson, Frank
Dowd, Jim
Durant, Sir Anthony
Eagle, Ms Angela
Enright, Derek
Evennett, David
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Fisher, Mark
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don *(Bath)*
Fraser, John
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
Gale, Roger
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Godman, Dr Norman A.
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, John
Griffiths, Win *(Bridgend)*
Gunnell, John
Hall, Mike
Hanley, Jeremy
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Heald, Oliver
Heppell, John
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence L.
Hill, Keith *(Streatham)*
Hoey, Kate
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Hughes, Kevin *(Doncaster N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Jackson, Glenda *(H'stead)*
Jackson, Helen *(Shef'ld, H)*
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Martyn *(Clwyd, SW)*
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Jane *(Lpool Bdgn)*
Key, Robert
Kilfedder, Sir James
Kilfoyle, Peter
Knox, Sir David
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Leighton, Ron
Lester, Jim *(Broxtowe)*
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Mackinlay, Andrew
Madden, Max
Maddock, Mrs Diana

Mahon, Alice
Malone, Gerald
Marshall, John *(Hendon S)*
Martlew, Eric
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Miller, Andrew
Milligan, Stephen
Mitchell, Austin *(Gt Grimsby)*
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Estelle *(B'ham Yardley)*
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholson, Emma *(Devon West)*
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Michael *(N W'kshire)*
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, William
Ottaway, Richard
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray *(Ogmore)*
Prentice, Ms Bridget *(Lew'm E)*
Prentice, Gordon *(Pendle)*
Primarolo, Dawn
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Roche, Mrs. Barbara
Rowe, Andrew *(Mid Kent)*
Ruddock, Joan
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim
Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas
Sedgemore, Brian
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew *(Oxford E)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Taylor, Mrs Ann *(Dewsbury)*
Taylor, Rt Hon John D. *(Strgfd)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Tipping, Paddy
Trend, Michael
Tyler, Paul
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Waller, Gary
Walley, Joan
Ward, John
Wicks, Malcolm
Wilkinson, John
Wilshire, David
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Madel and
Mr. Roger Sims.

NOES

Bowden, Andrew
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Cormack, Patrick
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Greenway, Harry *(Ealing N)*
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hunter, Andrew
Jones, Robert B. *(W Hertfdshr)*
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Leigh, Edward
Merchant, Piers
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Paisley, Rev Ian
Robinson, Peter *(Belfast E)*
Ross, William *(E Londonderry)*
Winterton, Mrs Ann *(Congleton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Miss Ann Widdecombe and
Mr. Roger Evans.

Question accordingly agreed to.

CONSOLIDATION, &c., BILLS

Ordered,

That, in respect of the Crofters (Scotland) Bill *[Lords]*, the Health Service Commissioners Bill *[Lords]*, the Pension Schemes Bill *[Lords]*, the Pension Schemes (Northern Ireland) Bill *[Lords]*, the Probation Service Bill *[Lords]*, the Scottish Land Court Bill *[Lords]* and the Statute Law (Repeals) Bill *[Lords]*, notices of Amendments, new Clauses and new Schedules to be moved in Committee may be accepted by the Clerks at the Table before the Bills have been read a second time.—*[Mr. Arbuthnot.]*

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): With the leave of the House, I shall put motions Nos. 4 to 6 together.

Ordered,

That, at the sitting on Wednesday 3rd November, notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 15 (Prayers against statutory instruments &c. (negative procedure)), the Speaker shall not later than Ten o'clock put the Question necessary to dispose of proceedings on the Motions in the name of Mr. John Smith relating to Sports Grounds and Sporting Events, namely the Question already proposed from the Chair.

That, at the sitting on Wednesday 3rd November, notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business), the Speaker shall put the Questions necessary to dispose of proceedings on the Motions in the name of Mr. Tony Newton relating to Members' Salaries and to the Ministerial and other Salaries Order not later than one and a half hours after the commencement of proceedings on the first such Motion; such Questions shall include the Questions on any Amendments to those Motions which she may have been selected and which had not been moved by that hour; and the said Motions may be entered upon and proceed with after the expiry of the time for opposed business.—*[Mr. Arbuthnot.]*

That, at the sitting on Thursday 4th November, notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 14 (Exempted business), the Speaker shall put the Questions necessary to dispose of proceedings on:

(a) the Motions in the name of Mr Tony Newton relating to Members' Pensions not later than one and a half hours after the commencement of proceedings on the first such Motion;

(b) the Motions in the name of Mr Tony Newton relating to Parliamentary Questions and Notices of Questions not later than one and a half hours after the commencement of proceedings on the first such Motion; and

(c) the motion in the name of Mr Tony Newton relating to Financial Assistance to Opposition Parties not later than one and a half hours after their commencement;

including the Questions on any Amendments to the said Motions which she may have selected and which had not been moved by those respective hours; and the said Motions may be proceeded with after the expiry of the time for opposed business.—*[Mr. Arbuthnot.]*

MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Ordered,

That Mr Peter Viggers be discharged from the Select Committee on Members' Interests and Sir Anthony Durant be added to the Committee.—*[Mr. Arbuthnot.]*

Gravesham (Rail Link)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Arbuthnot.]*

2.52 pm

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): I appreciate this opportunity to raise a matter that concerns not only my constituents in the borough of Gravesham but those of my hon. Friends the Members for Medway (Dame P. Fenner), who is here, for Dartford (Mr. Dunn) and for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe).

The channel tunnel high-speed rail link has been a blight on the lives of far too many of my constituents for five years. Every imaginable route has crossed my constituency—originally on stilts past the village of Istead Rise, it has swung from Culverstone in the south to the current route which skirts Northfleet and Gravesend in the north.

We are now in the final stage of the consultation period on the announced route, and I shall highlight today the principal matters that remain of concern to my constituents. First, Pepper Hill. The announcement of Union Railways last March showed the link passing through a tunnel beneath 90 houses at Pepper Hill, Northfleet. It claimed in the environmental appraisal of its reference case that there would be no noise impact on Northfleet and Gravesend other than to Hazells, a local farming community, due to the Waterloo spur junction.

In respect of irradiated noise, Union Railways claimed:

"No dwellings are predicted to be affected at Pepper Hill, assuming a mitigated track design."

It went on:

"around 10 dwellings above the tunnel at Pepper Hill. . . would be at risk of settlement. This would be of low moderate concern."

I must tell the House that it is of major concern. I do not believe its claims about noise or vibration. That is why on 24 March of this year I called for an assessment of the impact of vibration and noise on the houses, both during construction and in operation of the link. It was not until 6 May that the then chairman of Union Railways confirmed that he would commission a geological survey of the tunnel area beneath Pepper Hill.

Inexplicably, it was not until September that drilling for samples for the survey started. I was told that the final factual report on the laboratory tests of samples and detailed geological descriptions would be available only on 29 November. That is why I called for a time extension to consider final representations on the Pepper Hill route options. I am grateful to my right hon. Friend the Minister for his confirmation earlier this month that he would receive representations on those routes from Gravesham borough council and myself by 31 December and that those would be taken into consideration. I trust that he will confirm that again today.

As both the A2 rail action group and I cannot interpret geological data as to the impact of noise and vibration, I called last March on the Gravesham borough council to appoint experts on our behalf. The then Conservative administration of the council rapidly and efficiently undertook to do so. Sadly, Gravesham borough council now has a Labour administration. I have called on it to honour the undertaking of its Conservative predecessor. I stress that it must finally appoint the specialist consultants to assess the steady flow of geological data that has already been sent to it. It must be ready with its well-researched representations before 31 December.

All that would be academic if we could achieve a better tunnel route option. Tunnel route 226, beneath the National Grid Company electricity substation, would avoid tunnelling beneath any houses. I was alarmed that Union Railways developed and then dropped that option. To use its words, it parked it. I called on the chief executive of the National Grid Company to give his maximum co-operation to a study of the option. He has undertaken that and Union Railways has now unparked the option.

My right hon. Friend the Minister has confirmed to me that the National Grid Company is undertaking a study of the sensitivity of the existing equipment with something more modern and the relocation of the switching station. That report is due at the end of October. I ask my right hon. Friend today to reconfirm that timetable and call on the National Grid Company to keep to it.

Much of the electricity switchgear at the substation is 60 years old and serves much of west Kent. Surely it is due for replacement by ultra-modern and less bulky equipment. Surely new facilities will be required for the proposed Ebbsfleet international and domestic stations and associated developments, for Blue Water park and for the rail link itself. It cannot and must not be beyond those various authorities to find a compatible outcome that would allow the tunnel to pass below the current site.

That route option is clearly preferable. The current option—beneath the houses—would be an unacceptable imposition on the residents. The only remaining option—on a high viaduct around Pepper Hill—would cause noise, to the detriment both of Northfleet and Istead Rise and would be even more unacceptable.

I shall deal now with the elevations—the vertical alignment of the remainder of the A2 route past Gravesend and Northfleet. That is conditioned by the requirement for freight working of the rail link. I am not convinced that freight working is necessary. From the opening of the channel tunnel until the high-speed rail link is open for traffic, all trains from the channel tunnel will travel on existing routes through Tonbridge and Borough Green. British Rail has spent £1,200 million of Government funds to ensure that they can do so adequately.

The Tonbridge route in particular is especially suitable for freight, which does not need to go at high speeds and can travel around London to the west along existing lines to the remainder of the country. When the high-speed rail link is ready, passenger traffic will come off these two lines in rolling stock built for passengers and high-value cargo such as that carried by airliners. That rolling stock can manage gradients of up to one in 40. The freight should, therefore, stay on the existing lines. I ask my right hon. Friend to consider that carefully, because if the rail link is confined to high-speed trains, with corresponding power units and rolling stock, scope opens up for route engineering which would bring considerable environmental advantages.

Current plans provide for freight loops at Singlewell, parallel to Old Watling street and Hever Court road. Indeed, railway buffs such as our late good friend the previous Member for Christchurch, Mr. Robert Adley, will know these as sidings. If slow-moving freight trains stick to the southerly route, those freight loops would not be required and the link could cross the A227 Wrotham road at a far lower vertical alignment.

I should still like Union Railways to consider the possibility of the railway going under that road or of, at the very least, lowering the alignment of the crossing—if

[Mr. Jacques Arnold]

necessary, by realigning the A227 to the bottom of the dry valley. A lower alignment with appropriate sound-mitigating measures would help residents by the Tollgate, notably at Templar drive, which overlooks the site, and at Istead Rise, which is up the valley.

The environmental impact at eastern Gravesham is also a matter for concern. I thank my right hon. Friend the Minister for his decision, taken nearly a year ago, to reject the Union Railways board reference case, which would have taken the link through the Luddesdown valleys and close to the historic village of Cobham. He was right to insist on following the A2-M2 corridor at that point.

Nevertheless, the detailed route that was announced has caused concern at Scalers hill and Cobham hall, which are of historic interest, and for Ashenbank wood, which is of environmental value. I appreciate the improvements which have since been made by Union Railways to move the link northwards at that point, but close attention is required for further environmental protection.

Bearing in mind the need to extend the time for representations by Gravesham borough council and myself until 31 December, the detailed announcement cannot be made until the House returns in January. Can my right hon. Friend give a hint as to the timing of the announcement and of the hybrid Bill arrangements?

The announcement will clearly trigger the safeguarding prodedures and with them the right of householders to serve blight notices. Although Union Railways originally told us that it would sympathetically consider hardship cases, not one of the small number of cases that I forwarded to it led to purchase. That has not been very helpful.

I have read the "Property purchase and compensation policy" paper of my right hon. Friend's Department. I have considerable misgivings. In particular, I note that it states:

> "Blight notices would not be accepted for properties within safeguard zones over bored tunnels, except where there are surface works such as ventilation shafts."

If that policy were applied to a Union Railways tunnel beneath houses at Pepper Hill, it would be unacceptable, especially if the geological survey shows that potential vibration and/or noise would occur. Residents bought the houses there without such perils and they should be adequately compensated for any detriment.

I also note the rights of householders to compensation for environmental intrusion under part I of the Land Compensation Act 1973. However, it is unreasonable that that legislation can only be invoked 12 months after the use of the railway. There are years of real property blight until then and my right hon. Friend must consider the subject of compensation again.

Lastly, I turn to the prospect of a station in the Ebbsfleet valley, for international and domestic traffic. I welcome it wholeheartedly. It would bring thousands of jobs to the area in association with related development. It would improve the lot of our long-suffering commuters, reducing travel time to work in London from 50 minutes to 19, in enhanced comfort. It would bring about new roads, a Northfleet town bypass and a new junction with the A2, and it would inevitably bring improved house prices to thousands of local home owners.

The only drawback for which a solution must be found is the impact on archaelogical Roman remains and the environment of the ancient Ebbsfleet river. There are other developments that blend in with urban canals, and I am sure that the planners can find a sensitive solution to the problem.

As for the road enhancement, I trust that for the process of planning the rail link my right hon. Friend is in close contact with my hon. Friend the Minister for Roads and Traffic to ensure that the plans are compatible with any future developments and land requirements of the A2 road. My constituents cannot go through such upheaval twice.

I support the Ebbsfleet station proposal, which the Conservative Gravesham borough council welcomed. My hon. Friend the Member for Dartford and his Conservative borough council support it. I am sure that the new Labour Gravesham borough council will do a U-turn and support it once the dinosaurs in the Northfleet Labour party have been overcome.

Blue Circle Properties, the principal landowner in the area, is working up a project known as Euro-city which it claims will provide 34,000 jobs through associated developments such as plans for conference centres, an exhibition centre, hotels, and commercial and retail development. That would crown the plans of my right hon. and hon. Friends the Ministers at the Department of the Environment to develop the east Thames corridor, which would restore the derelict districts left behind by decades of chalk quarrying and other industries. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Minister will strongly support Ebbsfleet's bid to become the site of the international station.

There is no doubt that the House wants the rail link —all parties want it. I hope that all hon. Members will remember that it involves a massive impact on the environment of the residents of the garden of England, the county of Kent. I hope that the House and the Government will insist on adequate and sensitive environmental protection for my constituents and those of hon. Members who represent other constituencies in Kent.

3.6 pm

The Minister for Public Transport (Mr. Roger Freeman): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold), not only on the clarity with which he presented his case, but on his careful attention to the interests of all his constituents over many years. As the Minister for Public Transport, I have had dealings with my hon. Friend and others, and I know that he pays close attention to his constituents' needs. I am sure that he will continue to do so, and I congratulate him on that.

My hon. Friend the Member for Medway (Dame P. Fenner) has also expressed a number of concerns over the years, particularly about those who live in Borstal and Strood. I congratulate her on the close attention that she pays to the problems that will result from the construction of the link. I can give an assurance that we shall listen carefully to any representations made and seek to achieve the almost impossible: to balance the cost of the overall project against the environmental protection required, not just by law, but by common sense, if planning permission is to be obtained.

The debate is timely because Union Railways has today submitted its report to the Government on the options for refining further the rail link route and the options for intermediate stations. I congratulate Mr. John Armitt, particularly his predecessor Mr. John Prideaux, who worked for a considerable period and bore a large brunt of

the initial preparatory work. I also congratulate the staff of Union Railways and British Railways for the thoroughness with which they performed their task. They have not pleased everyone; there have been problems, which will continue. I want to record my thanks for the work of Union Railways and British Railways.

It is also appropriate that we should be debating the issue now because earlier today my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport at long last announced the formal approval for the Jubilee line. I understand that the chief executive of London Underground has placed the first orders, which is good news for London and the country. Thousands of jobs will be created by a major transport project which is now under way.

The Government's aim is to reach decisions on the channel tunnel rail link route and stations at the end of the year or soon afterwards. My hon. Friend would not wish to pin me down to a certain day, but I am outlining our target. That will be with a view to safeguarding the route and, parliamentary timetable permitting, introducing a hybrid Bill as soon as possible thereafter. It may be helpful for those wishing to submit their views to my Department if I take this opportunity to explain what needs to be addressed now, and what other matters—generally of detail—can be left for later discussion.

What we need to decide in the next couple of months or so is the land that needs to be safeguarded and then incorporated into the Bill, together with the railway works. The Bill has to specify a single route within reasonable limits of deviation, so we must make a choice between the local route variations that have been identified by Union Railways during the public consultation process. We must specify the arrangements for the terminal, and select an intermediate station, or possibly stations. The Bill cannot present a multiple choice. We must also decide on the maximum extent of other possible land requirements for construction purposes and additional facilities.

The comments that we have sought from local authorities by 12 November should be directed at the basic choice of route, the provision of tunnels and major mitigation measures such as cuttings and the choice of stations. Comments will also be useful on other strategic issues such as commuting, freight, and regeneration, in particular where those affect the land requirements and railway works for the project. Comments from anyone else with a direct interest on strategic issues—I am well aware of the controversy still surrounding many aspects of the preferred route—will also be welcome by 12 November or very soon afterwards. Those should be sent direct to my Department.

It is important to realise that consultation will continue beyond 12 November on a whole range of more detailed matters. Those will include the finer details of route design within the safeguarded area and the selection of mitigation measures such as screens, walls, bunds, planting and track support within tunnels to reduce problems of re-radiated noise. Citing the example of Pepper Hill, information that becomes available from further site investigation will also be taken into account. Consultation will also continue on the details of the construction process, such as construction methods and their impact and mitigation; any honing down of the space requirements within the specified construction sites; and the transport and disposal of surplus spoil. I expect consultation on all those matters of detail to continue until the Bill is introduced and, indeed, afterwards as well.

My hon. Friend has called for a time extension beyond 12 November to allow for final representations on Pepper Hill. Union Railways has in the last couple of days delivered to Gravesham borough council and my hon. Friend a summary of the results from the boreholes drilled recently at Pepper Hill. More detailed information including laboratory work will follow later, and then an interpretation study will need to be commissioned. As I have said, that information can be taken into account later, beyond the deadline of 12 November. I do not wish to extend the consultation period further in general, because that will delay safeguarding and, as a consequence, access to voluntary purchase for those affected. Therefore, I should still like to receive comments by 12 November. However, if some are received later we shall endeavour to take them into account if at all possible, and I am happy to repeat my undertaking to my hon. Friend that I shall discuss with him his views on the particular issue of geological investigations at Pepper Hill before any decisions on safeguarding are taken. I hope that that is a clear undertaking and consistent with what I have said previously.

The rail link in Gravesham will have some unavoidable environmental impact, but there is also the potential for substantial benefits. The challenge is to ensure that the impacts are successfully mitigated and that the most is made of the benefits.

The logic of making use of the existing M2-A2 transport corridor rather than creating a fresh corridor is inescapable, but I recognise that there are environmental concerns along the route in Gravesham, such as at Pepper Hill. Union Railways has studied suggested variations to the project so that proper comparisons can be made. For example, several options have been identified at Pepper Hill, including the one that my hon. Friend refers to a tunnel route 226. In terms of that option, I understand that National Grid's report on the implications of tunnelling beneath its switching station is expected to be delivered to Union Railways later today. This work should enable the Government—with the benefit of comments from hon. Members, local authorities and others—to make a choice on what should be safeguarded and go into the Bill. As I have said, consultation can continue on construction and mitigation. I also appreciate that the impact on Ashenbank wood and Cobham park causes concern because those are sensitive areas. Union Railways has looked at the options for minimising impacts and the Government will consider those, taking account of the comments received from local authorities and others.

I appreciate the points my hon. Friend makes about Ebbsfleet station. The possible station—domestic, international or both—at Ebbsfleet, on the boundary between Gravesham and Dartford, would be of considerable benefit to the area. It would, indeed, foster regeneration. There could also be considerable benefits to commuters from a new station, both in terms of extra capacity and faster journey times. Those are all factors which we shall bear in mind when coming to a decision on the station or stations to be provided on the rail link. I should add that commuters using the north Kent line will also benefit, whether or not Ebbsfleet is selected for a station, as that line will have a connection on to the new rail link.

For the purposes of a complete record of what has occurred during the past few months, I should mention that I have visited the site at Rainham, which is an alternative

[Mr. Roger Freeman]

site for servicing the traffic that will come from the M25 to access the rail link for international traffic. Of course that, too, has advantages as well as disadvantages.

My hon. Friend raised a number of other issues in his speech. First, on freight and the rail link, Union Railways has designed the line primarily as a high-speed passenger railway. It has made only those changes to an optimum high-speed passenger alignment that would serve to keep open the option of using the rail link for freight should demand warrant it. The possible provision of passing loops is part of that. However, it has to be said that present forecasts do not suggest that freight traffic will expand beyond that which the existing rail network would be able to accommodate. My hon. Friend mentioned the crossing of the A227 Wrotham road. I understand that Union Railways has, in fact, looked at two options that would either lower or eliminate the proposed viaduct over the Wrotham road at Tollgate, and both are commented on in its report.

Secondly, on compensation, I appreciate the concern about the exclusion of properties over tunnels from the statutory blight provisions, but the practical evidence of underground railways in use is that their impacts are not sufficiently serious to justify purchase. That is the evidence before the Department. The impacts may, however, qualify for compensation for any loss of value under part I of the Land Compensation Act 1973. There is no reason to treat the rail link any differently from past and current schemes such as the Jubilee line extension and crossrail. To purchase homes over tunnels—apart from being unjustified on environmental impact grounds—would add to the cost of already expensive tunnels to such an extent that probably few would ever be built in urban areas for this or any other project. That would perversely force schemes on to the surface, resulting in increased demolitions.

As my hon. Friend said, compensation under part I of the Land Compensation Act 1973 can be claimed 12 months after the start of use of the railway. That is because time is needed to assess the actual impact of the railway once it is operational. However, exacting design aims have been set for the rail link, not only for noise but for all other areas of potential environmental impacts such as vibration. Our policy paper on compensation explains that the thinking on that is that it is better to limit the environmental intrusion at source, as far as is reasonably practicable, by putting the railway in a cutting or providing mitigation in the form of screens and landscaping, rather than to rely simply on compensation. On the question of surface sections of the route, property seriously affected during construction and operation of the rail link, not just that actually required permanently or temporarily, may also be included within the zone safeguarded once the final route has been announced.

We are consulting on the noise regulations. I have written directly to many hon. Members and placed copies in the Library. I hope that, in due course, the House will consider the proposed noise regulations concerning the construction and use of the rail link.

As to interaction with the A2, I assure my hon. Friend the Member for Gravesham that I am in close touch with my hon. Friend the Minister for Roads and Traffic—in fact, I spoke to him a few minutes before this debate began—about the relationship between the plans for the rail link and possible improvements to the A2. My hon. Friend the Minister and I jointly chaired a meeting with representatives of north Kent local authorities in July to discuss that very issue and the relationship between the rail link and the M2 widening. Union Railways' planners are of course in close contact with my Department's road planners.

I assure my hon. Friends the Members for Gravesham and for Medway that the roads and traffic department within the Department of Transport and my own officials will work not only closely together but with the Department of the Environment. Gone are the days when one could talk about transport planning in isolation from land use planning, let alone plan rail projects without examining the implications for roads. We are now in much safer waters in the planning of major new road and rail projects, which are properly co-ordinated from their inception.

I accept that there are important environmental considerations in my hon. Friend's constituency, which he has drawn to my attention over several years. As I mentioned, I have visited his constituency on a number of occasions, and I look forward to doing so again—and to visiting the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Medway. Union Railways has examined the issues with some care and I look forward to reading its report. We shall reach decisions on the route and stations, taking full account of comments received, as soon as possible. It is important to stress that consultation will continue on matters of finer detail. This is just the beginning of what will be a long process of detailed consideration of the rail link for planning purposes, but at least the process has begun.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty minutes past Three o'clock.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 18 October 1993

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Government Information

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the application of the first objective of the draft code of practice on government information on page 72 of his recent publication "Open Government" (Cm 2290) to the proposals contained in the European Union (Public Information) Bill.

Mr. Waldegrave: The commitments to extend publication and availability of government information in the White Paper on open government, Cm 2290, do not require that information should be sent to every household in the country, which is a central purpose of the European Union (Public Information) Bill.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether the commitment to receipt of information in confidence, set out in paragraph XIV of part II of the draft code of practice on government information published in his White Paper on open government (Cm 2290), refers solely to a commitment entered into in writing.

Mr. Waldegrave: No.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will give examples of the kind of information disclosure of which would increase the likelihood of damage to the environment, which would be exempted from disclosure under the draft code of practice on government information, included in his White Paper on open government (Cm 2290).

Mr. Waldegrave: There is a similar exemption in the Environmental Information Regulations 1992, which is based in turn on article 3 of EC directive 90/313/EC. Guidance notes issues in December 1992 by the Department of the Environment give the following examples of possible harm:

"In some cases the dissemination of environmental information could in fact harm or pollute the environment. For example, information about the location of nesting sites, rare habitats or endangered/protected species should be withheld to avoid the risk of damage. And information about possible Sites of Special Scientific Interest should not be made available until a formal notice is served; making information available prematurely could run the risk of preemptive damage being caused to the site before it was protected. Bodies will need to exercise careful judgement when restricting information in this way."

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the criteria adopted to judge governmental information or records whose sensitivity is such that no date can be put on their potential release, to which reference is made at paragraph 9.23 of his White Paper on open government (Cm 2290).

Mr. Waldegrave: The criteria adopted in respect of records whose sensitivity is such that no date can be put on their potential release are, first, that they are required by the Department either because they are in use or are awaiting review and, secondly, that they fall into one or other of the categories listed in paragraph 9.23 of the White Paper on open government (Cm 2290) for which the Lord Chancellor has given "blanket" approval to retain under section 3(4) of the Public Records Act 1958. Individual records may also be retained under this section if they meet the first criterion for extended closure under section 5(1) —exceptionally sensitive records containing information, the disclosure of which would not be in the public interest —but the date on which the sensitivity is likely to pass is not known.

Although no date can be put on their potential release, such records are subject to regular review—at least every 10 years—and they are subject to the test of actual damage caused by release; when the sensitivity has passed, the records will be released.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster whether the exemption of information under section XV of part II of his draft code of practice on government information contained in his White Paper on open government (Cm 2290) will include information which cannot be sought in a parliamentary question arising from precedent created by Ministers to block acceptance of all questions that fall within certain categories; and how members of the public are to be informed as to which information cannot be sought in a parliamentary question.

Mr. Waldegrave: The code of practice is not intended to make information available to the public which could not normally be obtained by hon. Members. Matters on which Ministers have refused to answer questions will often be covered by a specific exemption, and in some cases difficulties may be avoided by addressing the question correctly—for example, to a public body rather than to a Minister who would not normally answer questions on matters within the day-to-day responsibility of an independent public body. When information is refused under the code of practice, reasons will be given including any exemption considered relevant.

Parliamentary Ombudsman

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what additional resources will be made available to the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration to carry out the new tasks conferred upon the Office of Parliamentary Ombudsman, as set out at paragraph 1.12 of the White Paper on open government (Cm 2290); and what criteria he has used to judge the likely resource demands upon the parliamentary ombudsman arising from the White Paper.

Mr. Waldegrave: The resources available to the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration are determined through the public expenditure survey in the usual way. The commissioner puts proposals directly to the Treasury.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Public Records

Dr. Marek: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will place in the Library a copy of the guidance issued to Departments by the Public Record Office on the appraisal of personal records.

Mr. John M. Taylor: A copy of the guidance will be placed in the Library. In addition the chief executive of the Public Record Office, the Keeper of Public Records, who is best placed to provide specific information about the guidance, will be writing direct.

Dr. Marek: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what documentation is available about the extent and completeness of records transferred from various sources on any particular topic for keeping at the Public Record Office.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The hon. Member's question concerns a specific matter on which the chief executive of the Public Record Office is best placed to provide an answer and I have accordingly asked the chief executive, the Keeper of Public Records, to reply direct.

Dr. Marek: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will place a copy in the Library of the guidelines issued by the Public Record Office on the documentation of the selection and transfer of records to the office.

Mr. John M. Taylor: I have done so today. In addition the chief executive of the Public Record Office, the Keeper of Public Records, will reply direct with comments on the guidelines.

Letter from S. Tyacke to Dr. John Marek, dated 14 October 1993:

As part of his reply to your recent Parliamentary Questions, as set out below, the Parliamentary Secretary at the Lord Chancellor's Department has asked me to write to you direct.

Parliamentary Question: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department, if he will place a copy in the Library of the guidance issued by the Public Record Office to departments on the appraisal of personal records.

Date appeared: 27 July 1993. For written answer: 18 October 1993. PQ Reference No. 132. LCD PQ Reference No. 93/493.

The guidance issued by the Public Record Office to departments on the appraisal of personal records is included in the Manual of Records Administration, issued to departments, and other organisations covered by the Public Records Acts, by our Government Services Department (paragraphs 3.5.18-3.5.21). I am arranging for a copy of the Manual to be placed in the Library of the House of Commons in response to a later question put down by you.

Parliamentary Question: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department, what documentation is available about the extent and completeness of records transferred from various sources on any particular topic for keeping at the Public Record Office.

Date appeared: 27 July 1993. For written answer: 18 October 1993. PQ Reference No. 133. LCD PQ Reference No. 93/494.

When records are transferred to the Public Record Office, they are accompanied by lists, describing the contents of the transfer item by item, and these lists are made available in multiple sets in the reading rooms of the Public Record Office, as the records they describe become open to public inspection. Currently each set of lists of records transferred by modern departments, and made available in the reading rooms at Kew, contains upwards of half a million pages.

The records are arranged in classes, each representing an original series of documents created in relation to a particular activity or function of a department of court of law. The items in each class are described in the sets of lists, which are added to if and when further records are transferred and accessioned to a class. Nearly two thousand new pages of lists are added to each set every year.

The Current Guide to the contents of the Public Record Office forms the central means of reference to its holdings, and describes the individual classes of records in the Office, giving readers the information they need to proceed to the correct class list, so that they can order items described in the lists.

The class lists describe only those records that have been selected for transfer. The processes of selection involve, in the 35 largest departments alone, the file by file inspection of nearly 35 miles of records each year. As I have commented in an answer to a later question put down by you, it is a major current objective of the Public Record Office to improve the documentation of these processes of selection, in order that our own responsibility to co-ordinate and supervise them may be made more effective.

Parliamentary Question: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department, if he will place a copy in the Library of the guidelines issued by the Public Record Office on the documentation of the selection and transfer of records to the Office. Date appeared: 27 July 1993. For written answer: 18 October 1993. PQ Reference No. 135. LCD PQ Reference No. 93/496.

I am arranging for a copy of the Manual of Records Administration, issued to government departments and other organisations covered by the Public Records Acts, by our Government Services Department, to be placed in the Library of the House of Commons. It includes, at paragraph 3.5.18–3.5.21, the guidance on personal records, which is the subject of an earlier question put down by you.

The intention of the Manual is to give guidance to departments on every aspect of work carried out under the Public Records Acts, and to indicate the division of responsibilities between departments and the Public Record Office. Although in this respect it should be a practical tool, it is not possible for it to cover every eventuality, and the need for day to day consultation between departments and the Public Record Office continues.

A completely revised edition of the Manual was issued to departments in March 1993, and further amendments and additions were distributed in July this year. Chapter 5, on access to public records transferred to the Public Record Office, has been revised to take account of the new arrangements set out in Chapter 9 of the White Paper on Open Government (Cm. 2290), which covered the handling of public records. The revised text of Chapter 5, which is in the process of being distributed to departments, is included in the copy of the Manual in the Library.

The Manual contains, in Chapter 3 on Selection and Destruction, in Chapter 6 on Preparation for Transfer and in Part 7.1 on Transfer of Records, guidance from the Public Record Office on the documentation of these activities. It is a major current objective of our Government Services Department to improve the documentation of the processes of appraisal—the determination of the value of records—and of selection.

If you have any further questions please do not hesitate to ask me.

Dr. Marek: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what guarantees were sought relating to standards to be maintained and professional ability available at the Royal Free NHS trust before it was designated as a place of deposit by the Public Record Office.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The hon. Member's question concerns a specific matter on which the chief executive of the Public Record Office is best placed to provide an answer and I have accordingly asked the chief executive, the Keeper of Public Records, to reply direct.

Letter from S. Tyacke to Dr. John Marek, dated 14 October 1993:

As part of his reply to your recent Parliamentary Question, as set out below, the Parliamentary Secretary at the Lord Chancellor's Department has asked me to write to you direct.

Parliamentary Question: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department, what guarantees were sought relating to standards to be maintained and professional ability available at the Royal Free NHS Trust before it was designated as a place of deposit by the Public Record Office. Date appeared: 27 July 1993. For written answer: 18 October 1993. PQ Reference No. 134. LCD PQ Reference No. 93/495.

Places of deposit for public records are appointed under s. 4 (1) of the 1958 Public Records Act by the Keeper of Public Records, acting under powers delegated by the Lord Chancellor. Appointments are effected by an annual Lord Chancellor's (Places of Deposit) Instrument, issued each October, 247 such places of deposit being appointed in 1992.

When an institution, such as the Royal Free NHS Trust, wishes to hold public records, such as hospital records, which have been selected for permanent preservation, and which are over 30 years old, it must apply to the Public Record Office for appointment as a place of deposit. The Public Record Office Liaison Officer is responsible for discussing with the institution the standards of storage and public access (where appropriate) it is expected to reach and to inspect the facilities that are ultimately provided before an appointment may proceed. As respects storage conditions, places of deposit are expected to house records in premises which follow as nearly as possible the recommendations in BS 5454: 1989 Recommendations for storage and exhibition of archival documents (BSI, 1989). The principal requirements are that:

1. The storage accommodation should be large enough to take not only the existing archive collection but also future accruals over a considerable number of years.
2. There must be strict precautions against unauthorised entry, to keep out the potential thief or vandal. The building should, therefore, be protected by an intruder alarm system, any doors should be strongly constructed, with thief proof locks, and ideally there should be no windows in the storage area.
3. Fire precautions should be of a very high standard, because of the unique nature of archives. At least there must be a smoke detection and alarm system, a suitable number of portable fire extinguishers, and appropriate fire resistances.
4. There must be no risk of flooding from internal or external sources.
5. It must be possible to control the atmospheric conditions within the approved ranges of temperature (16 C to 18 C) and relative humidity (55 per cent. to 65 per cent.).

Places of deposit are expected to provide access, under constant supervision, at reasonable hours depending on the nature of the institution. Furthermore, it is expected that the records in places of deposit should be managed by a qualified archivist.

The processes which led to the first appointment in 1992 and subsequent monitoring of the Royal Free Hospital are common to all places of deposit. Officials at the hospital were in close contact with the Liaison Officer through the life of the project to set up the hospital archive, and advice was given on the feasibility of conversion of the Hoo (the actual building which was appointed a place of deposit), on the plans and specifications produced for that conversion and on the future management of the records. This enabled the PRO to ensure that appropriate standards were being adhered to throughout the conversion. As soon as the conversion work was completed, the building was inspected and assessed against the standards appropriate to a place of deposit and was formally appointed in the 1992 Lord Chancellor's Places of Deposit Instrument on the recommendations of the Liaison Officer.

The Instrument is renewed annually and an institution's appointment may be rescinded if standards drop below an acceptable level. The Liaison Officer is responsible for inspecting not only proposed new places of deposit but also existing places of deposit on a regular basis to ensure that standards of professional care for the records are being maintained. Unless circumstances warrant a visit before then, The Hoo will be due for reinspection in 2000.

If you have any further questions please do not hesitate to ask me.

Crown Court Sittings

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department on how many occasions in 1993 scheduled individual sittings of separate courts within the Snaresbrook crown court complex have been unable to sit due to the absence of a judge or recorder; what was the specific reason for each such cancellation; what was the date of the maximum number of cancellations occurring on any single day; and what was the estimated cost to public funds on that day, and the total for the year so far.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The information requested is not readily available; I will reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what method of funding is used to ensure that posts of judge and recorder for crown courts are filled; and what action is being taken to ensure that scheduled court sittings are not cancelled due to absence of a judge or recorder.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Judges in the crown court are paid direct from the Consolidated Fund and not via the departmental vote ensuring that sufficient funds are available to meet their salaries. The departmental vote includes moneys to pay the fees of recorders and assistant recorders. The budget received by the court service is based on the planned number of sitting days for recorders and assistant recorders. Scheduled sittings are based upon the known availability of judges, recorders and assistant recorders. In the event of a judge, recorder or assistant recorder being unavailable for a scheduled sitting every attempt is made to book a member of the part-time judiciary.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Parliamentary Answers (Cost)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the cost of preparation of his answer to the hon. Member for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns) of 22 July 1993, *Official Report,* columns *296-301.*

Mr. Nelson: Preparation of the answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Chelmsford re the report of the Director General of Fair Trading on the marketing and sale of investment-linked insurance products, made under section 122(4) and (5) of the Financial Services Act 1986, was an integral part of the evaluation carried out by officials. It is not possible to isolate the specific costs of its preparation.

Securities and Investments Board

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 8 July 1993, *Official Report,* columns *227-28,* if he will publish details of the proposals for rebalancing the composition of the Securities and Investments Board; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nelson: An announcement of new appointments will be made shortly.

Value Added Tax

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer under which paragraphs of treaty articles and consequential directives obligations are placed on Her Majesty's Government to make VAT charges in respect of *(a)* building repairs, *(b)* items of safety equipment hitherto

exempt and *(c)* non-domestic building and civil engineering projects; in each case what communications he received from the Commission or the European Court in relation to these or similar obligations; and in what manner the purport of each communication was reported to Parliament.

Sir John Cope: Article 99 of the treaty of Rome—treaty establishing the European Economic Community—allows for the EC Council of Ministers to adopt provisions for the harmonisation of legislation concerning VAT and other indirect taxes. The sixth Council VAT directive (77/388/EEC), which was adopted in accordance with this article, provides the framework for the application of VAT in all EC member states, including the United Kingdom's zero rates.

The vires for the retention of the United Kingdom's zero rates of VAT are contained in article 28.2 of the EC sixth VAT directive, which refers to article 17, last indent of the EC second VAT directive (67/228/EEC). This states:

"Such measures may only be taken for clearly defined social reasons and for the benefit of the final consumer".

The European Commission began infraction proceedings against the United Kingdom in 1981 alleging that some of the United Kingdom's zero rates did not comply with these conditions. The European Court of Justice supported the Commission where the supplies were made to businesses, but rejected the Commission's argument where the supplies were made direct to individuals.

Item (a) Building repairs have never been subject to the zero rate, and their taxation was not affected by the result of this judgment.

For items (b) and (c) listed above the correspondence between the Commission/European Court of Justice and the United Kingdom on this matter is as follows:

19 October 1981:
the Commission informed the United Kingdom that its zero rates did not in its opinion conform to the provisions of the EC sixth VAT directive under the provisions of article 169 of the treaty of Rome;
25 February 1982:
the United Kingdom defended its zero rates in a letter to the Commission;
4 September 1984:
the Commission sent a reasoned opinion to the United Kingdom;
2 December 1987:
the Advocate General's opinion was published on the case; and
21 June 1988:
the Court issued its judgment.

Pleadings in infraction proceedings are strictly confidential to the parties in dispute. This point was discussed by the then Secretary of State for Employment, Lord Young of Graffham, in response to a question from Lord Stoddart of Swindon in October 1986, *Official Report, House of Lords,* 16 October 1986, columns *910-13.*

The content of the judgment itself was communicated to Parliament in a speech made by the then Economic Secretary to the Treasury, the right hon. Member for St. Albans (Mr. Lilley), on the date of the judgment, *Official Report,* 21 June 1988, columns *969-87.*

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the guidance which has been given by the Commission of the European Community as to the degree to which current variation in the rate of VAT charged between its member states constitutes an obstruction to the establishment or functioning of the Common Market together with the findings of the European Court of Justice relating to interpretation of this part of the article.

Sir John Cope: The Commission has given no guidance, nor has the European Court of Justice issued any findings about the harmonisation of VAT rates with the Community with regard to the establishment or functioning of the Common Market.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will set out a table showing for each group of commodities for which VAT is, or can be, chargeable by member states of the European Community, the prevailing rates charged by each member state in respect of each group of commodities for a latest practicable date, with footnotes for main variations in the figure or figure range, shown together with a concise statement, with references, of the treaty and consequential directive obligations placed on the United Kingdom to vary, or refrain from varying, such VAT rates *(a)* until 31 December 1996 and *(b)* thereafter;

(2) if he will publish a table for each principal item of commodities for which VAT is charged by any member state of the European Community the amount of which would be raised at rates of *(a)* 8·5 and *(b)* 17 per cent.

Sir John Cope: Rates of VAT applied in member states of the European Community on a range of commodities are set out in a document produced by the Commission of the European Communities which has been placed in the House of Commons Library. The title of the document is "The Evolution of VAT Rates applicable in the Member States of the Community" and the document number is XXI/158/93–EN. It shows the position at 1 May 1993.

Article 99 of the treaty of Rome allows for the EC Council of Ministers to adopt provisions for the harmonisation of legislation concerning VAT and other indirect taxes. EC VAT rates are governed by the sixth VAT directive (77/388/EEC) as amended (91/680/EEC), and the VAT rates and structures directive (92/77/EEC). The directives set out the exemptions from VAT and the rates of VAT which are to apply to taxable goods and services in the EC from 1 January 1993.

For most goods and services a standard rate of at least 15 per cent. is to be applied. Member states may also apply one or two reduced rates of not less than 5 per cent. to a specified list of goods and services. The United Kingdom's right to maintain its existing zero rates is protected by the sixth VAT directive and reinforced by the more recent VAT rates directive, at least until 31 December 1996 and without prejudice to what happens thereafter. The United Kingdom may apply a reduced rate—or the standard rate—to any goods or services that are currently zero-rated. The rates directive makes no provision for higher—luxury—rates of VAT.

The scope and coverage of the reduced rate list will be reviewed before the end of 1994. The minimum VAT standard rate is legally binding until 31 December 1996. If by then the Council has not agreed a new minimum rate to apply from 1 January 1997, the minimum standard rate will lapse on that date.

Table 9 of the tax ready reckoner and tax reliefs published by HM Treasury in July 1993 sets out the cost of applying a zero rather than a standard rate of VAT to the main zero-rated items, in 1993-94. These figures can be adjusted pro rata to arrive at a rough estimate of the

revenue yield from applying a rate of 8·5 per cent. A table showing figures for each principal item for which VAT is charged by any member state of the European Community is not available and could be produced only at disproportionate cost.

Marine Search Equipment

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what was the cost to HM Customs and Excise to charter the Milbrook Surveyor used to attempt to locate bales of cannabis off south Wales;

(2) if the Customs and Excise intend to repeat the operation to attempt to locate cannabis bales on the sea bed off south Wales;

(3) if he will make it his policy to improve co-ordination between HM Customs and Excise, HM Coastguard and the Royal Navy over the sharing of marine equipment.

Sir John Cope: The cost to HM Customs and Excise of chartering the Milbrook Surveyor in the attempt to locate bales of cannabis off south Wales was £17,375·70.

A further recovery operation was mounted by Customs over the period 25 September to 1 October 1993 and another is planned.

Customs is committed to inter-agency co-operation and already works closely with other Government services, including both the Royal Navy and HM Coastguard. Such co-operation includes joint operational activities, together with the use of vessels and other equipment.

Incomes and Food Prices

Sir Ralph Howell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish figures for 1971, 1979, 1984 and each year since 1988 for a married man with two children earning average male annual earnings, showing the length of time, after taking into account income tax, liability and national insurance contributions, necessary to pay for *(a)* one lb of sugar, *(b)* one lb of back bacon, *(c)* one lb of beef sirloin, *(d)* one lb of fresh cod fillets, *(e)* 14 lb of potatoes, *(f)* 800 gm of sliced loaf, *(g)* one lb of butter, *(h)* one pint of fresh milk, *(i)* one dozen eggs, and *(j)* one lb of pork.

Mr. Nelson: The information requested is shown in the table.

Length of time necessary to work[1] to pay for selected food commodities

Minutes

	1971	1979	1984	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
1 lb of sugar	4	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3
1 lb of back bacon	30	33	26	21	20	21	20	20	21
1 lb of beef sirloin[2]	49	56	52	42	41	40	37	33	34
1 lb of fresh cod fillets	23	32	24	27	26	27	28	28	23
14 lb of potatoes	24	25	37	23	22	26	23	23	18
800 gm sliced loaf (white)	9	9	7	6	6	5	5	5	5
1 lb of butter	19	23	15	12	13	12	10	10	11
1 pint of fresh milk	5	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3
1 dozen eggs (55-60 gramme)	23	18	16	13	11	12	10	9	9
1 lb of pork	34	32	24	18	19	19	20	17	15

[1]Married couple with husband only working.
[2]From 1989 this refers to rump steak.

Tax Repayments

Mr. Mandelson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the sum of tax repaid to *(a)* pension funds, *(b)* insurance companies, *(c)* oil companies and *(d)* other companies in each year since 1986-87.

Mr. Dorrell: Available information is as follows:

Income tax repayments and tax credits to: *£ million*

	Pension funds	Insurance companies	Other companies
1986-87	1,187	553	270
1987-88	1,799	803	476
1988-89	1,826	1,021	336
1989-90	2,126	988	403
1990-91	2,294	1,417	437
1991-92	2,199	1,841	529
[1]1992-93	2,000	1,800	650

[1] Provisional.

These estimates are based on a sample survey of income tax repayments and payments of tax credits.

Petroleum revenue tax repayments to oil companies:

	£ million
[1]1986-87	19
1987-88	253
1988-89	666
1989-90	440
1990-91	578
1991-92	1,607
1992-93	941

[1] Includes repayments of advance petroleum revenue tax.

Figures for corporation tax repayments were given in my reply of 28 June 1993 at column *372*. A breakdown in the form requested is not available centrally and could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Investment Income

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what has been *(a)* the total investment income of individuals and *(b)* the tax revenues on investment income in each financial year since 1990-91, together with an estimate for the current year; and what is his estimate of the cost to the Exchequer in each year of the exemption from tax of the investment income of old people.

Mr. Dorrell: Available information is given in the table. Estimates of income are based on information reported to tax offices and collected through the annual survey of personal incomes. It is therefore not possible to provide estimates for all individuals and so the table relates to taxpayers only. Figures for 1992-93 and 1993-94 are

based on projections of the 1991-92 survey and are therefore provisional. For 1990-91, the figures are calculated using the taxpayers' marginal rate and are therefore not directly comparable with receipts data which reflect the application of the composite rate on bank and building society interest. There is no general exemption from tax of the investment income of old people but the third row of the table shows the estimated cost to the Exchequer in terms of liabilities if investment income paid to people aged 65 or over were exempt from income tax.

£ billion

	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93	1993-94
Total investment income of taxpayers	41·9	38·7	35·0	29·0
Tax liability on investment income	11·0	10·7	9·6	7·9
Cost of exempting the investment income of the aged	3·6	3·2	2·8	2·3

Premium Bonds

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what examinations have been made to check that that first issue premium bonds have been winning in ways consistent with the laws of probability; and what has been the result of such examination.

Mr. Nelson: Each month the bond numbers generated by ERNIE, and the results of the prize draw, are subjected to a series of statistical tests by the Government Actuary, who is wholly independent of national savings. These tests have never given any reason to doubt ERNIE's randomness, or that each eligible bond number has an equal chance of being drawn for a prize, regardless of when it was issued.

Older bond numbers, including those of the earliest issue, do not appear as often as newer numbers in the prize lists simply because there are relatively fewer of them as over the years many of these bonds have been cashed in.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list *(a)* the number of valid premium bonds held by members of the public and *(b)* the total number of prizes available for premium bonds in each of the years since the establishment of the premium bond scheme.

Mr. Nelson: The number of eligible bonds and prizes issued in each year since the start of the premium bond scheme are shown below.

	Number of Eligible Bond Units as at 1 December (millions)	Number of Prizes issued in year (thousands)
1957	70·0	62·5
1958	152·9	149·0
1959	214·7	210·2
1960	272·2	257·1
1961	319·6	372·9
1962	359·6	424·3
1963	403·0	476·2
1964	453·4	532·7
1965	500·1	595·3
1966	551·6	657·8
1967	598·3	710·3
1968	646·7	769·6
1969	721·7	863·9
1970	765·7	932·1
1971	845·1	971·9
1972	924·0	1,033·6
1973	987·4	1,117·4
1974	1,016·7	1,158·5
1975	1,070·7	1,203·5
1976	1,145·0	1,276·9
1977	1,210·6	1,309·7
1978	1,294·4	1,405·3
1979	1,374·4	[1]1,125·8
1980	1,404·6	[2]890·5
1981	1,455·7	1,142·2
1982	1,497·7	1,221·2
1983	1,595·8	1,229·4
1984	1,683·6	1,337·7
1985	1,756·0	1,884·3
1986	1,839·1	1,962·2
1987	1,935·8	2,059·4
1988	2,133·9	2,232·5
1989	2,269·2	2,418·7
1990	2,271·5	2,483·5
1991	2,313·2	2,491·1
1992	2,454·0	2,599·1
1993	[3]2,714·0	[4]1,847·2

[1] A temporary truncated prize structure was introduced for the September to December 1979 prize draws, to allow speedier recovery from industrial action.
[2] A new prize structure was introduced from 1 January 1980 when the minimum prize was increased from £25 to £50.
[3] As at 1 October.
[4] Up to 1 October.

Corporation Tax

Sir David Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what he estimates to be the cost to the Exchequer of making the first £50,000 or the first £100,000 of retained profits of small companies free of corporation tax with suitable safeguards to prevent the concession applying to associated companies.

Mr. Dorrell: The Exchequer cost of making the first £50,000, or £100,000, of taxable profits free of corporation tax for companies normally liable at the small company rate would be about £½ billion, or £1 billion, respectively per annum. It is assumed that companies' liability to account for advance corporation tax and the rules for setting it against corporation tax are unaffected.

European Community

Sir Ralph Howell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the net payment made to the European Community by the United Kingdom for each year since 1979; and in each case what was the net payment to European Economic Community institutions as a percentage of gross domestic product.

Mr. Nelson: Details of the United Kingdom's net contribution to European Community institutions both in absolute terms and as a percentage of gross domestic product are given in the following table:

Year	Net contribution to EC institutions £ million	Net contribution as a percentage of GDP Per cent.
1979-80	839	0·40
1980-81	168	0·07
1981-82	117	0·04
1982-83	589	0·21
1983-84	834	0·27
1984-85	977	0·29
1985-86	819	0·22
1986-87	1,074	0·27
1987-88	1,661	0·38
1988-89	1,006	0·21
1989-90	2,316	0·44
1990-91	2,027	0·37
1991-92	705	0·12
[1]1992-93	1,769	0·29

[1] Estimated outturn.

Sources:
Figures for net contribution to EC institutions are as in the Government's expenditure plans, and therefore exclude contributions to the EC budget which are attributed to the aid programme. Figures for 1987-88 to 1992-93 are taken from the departmental report to the Chancellor of the Exchequer's departments (Cm 2217); for earlier years, figures are taken from relevant public expenditure plans or departmental reports.

GDP: CSO Economic Trends.

Personal Equity Plans

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what is the latest estimate of the number of PEPs; and what is the associated cost to the Exchequer;

(2) how many PEPs were taken out during each of the last five years; and what has been the cost to the Exchequer of the consequential tax relief;

(3) how many tax exempt special savings accounts have been opened since the scheme was introduced; and what has been the cost to the Exchequer of the consequential tax reliefs.

Mr. Dorrell: The available information is as follows:

Since PEPs began in 1987, 2,880,000 general plans have been taken out, and since 1 January 1992, 250,000 single company plans have been taken out.

Personal Equity Plans

	Number of plans taken out (thousands)		Estimated total cost of income tax relief (£ million)
	General	Single company	
1988	120	—	15
1989 and first quarter of 1990	580	—	20
1990-91	500	—	45
1991-92	640	110	90
1992-93[1]	770	140	120

[1] Provisional.

TESSAs

There were about 3·75 million live TESSA accounts as at 30 June 1993. The estimated cost of tax relief for TESSAs for 1992-93 was £250 million.

Income Tax Threshold

Sir Ralph Howell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the cost to the Exchequer of raising the income tax threshold to £100 per week for each person liable to pay income tax.

Mr. Dorrell: Compared with statutory indexation of allowances and thresholds by 1·8 per cent, the estimated full year cost of raising the personal allowance to £5,200 at 1994-95 income levels would be about £10 billion.

Sir Ralph Howell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many people had incomes of less than £100 per week at the latest date for which figures are available; how many of these paid income tax; and what proportion of the national average wage is represented by £100 per week.

Mr. Dorrell: The latest estimates for 1993-94 are that about 23·2 million people aged over 16 have incomes below £100 per week, of whom about 2·5 million are taxpayers. The sum of £100 is about 28 per cent. of average earnings for full-time adult males.

Unemployment Costs

Mr. Straw: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has as to the effect of a reduction in unemployment of 1 million people on local expenditure on *(a)* free school meals, *(b)* temporary accommodation for homeless families, *(c)* the element of benefits payments in respect of rents and council tax borne by local authorities and *(d)* the element of mandatory education awards borne by local authorities.

Mr. Portillo: I have no such estimate, and to produce one would require so many assumptions as to render the result almost meaningless.

Ministerial Salary Payments

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what financial arrangements for further salary payments ensue when a Minister resigns or is sacked.

Mr. Dorrell: When a Minister leaves office for whatever reason, he is entitled to a severance payment, the terms of which are governed by the Ministerial and other Pensions and Salaries Act 1991.

Long-term Care Insurance

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy to regulate the development of long-term care insurance and of schemes which use the value of the owner's home to fund long-term care.

Mr. Nelson: I am not aware of any such cases. If the hon. Gentleman is aware of particular difficulties with such insurances and schemes, he should bring them to my attention.

VAT

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer on what items of manufactured or non-manufactured foodstuff VAT is currently chargeable in the United Kingdom; how much was received in tax for each grouping of such items for the financial year 1992-93; and what is his estimate of income for the year 1993-94.

Sir John Cope: Most items of food are relieved from VAT. The exceptions liable to tax at the standard rate include: ice cream and similar frozen products; confectionery; manufactured beverages including alcoholic drinks, soft drinks, fruit juices and bottled waters; potato crisps and similar snack foods. In 1992-93 VAT on these items is estimated to have raised around £1·6 billion and in 1993-94 it is expected to raise around £1·7 billion.

ECOFIN

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the outcome of the latest meeting of European Finance Ministers.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: European Community Finance Ministers and central bank governors held an informal meeting in Genval, Belgium on 8 to 10 October.

There was a general discussion of the economic situation in the Community and the White Book on a medium-term strategy for growth, competitiveness and employment that the Copenhagen European Council invited the Commission to prepare in time for its meeting in December. Against this background, there as a preliminary discussion of the broad guidelines for economic policy which will be established under article 103 of the Maastricht treaty. I agreed with a number of other member states that we should avoid an excessively prescriptive approach. The next step will be for the Commission to prepare a draft recommendation which will be discussed by Finance Ministers before being put to the European Council in December.

Ministers discussed a package of draft Commission proposals designed to ensure that certain treaty provisions relating to stage II of EMU are consistently applied. Discussion will now continue in official working groups before returning to the Council later in the year.

There was also some discussion of the Community's programme of macro-economic assistance for the former Soviet Union and central and eastern Europe. There was general agreement on the importance of linking EC support to a full IMF International Monetary Fund stand-by arrangement and of stimulating private finance.

Finally, Finance Ministers endorsed the political agreement reached in the Foreign Affairs Council the previous week on a new inter-institutional agreement on budget discipline. The European Parliament is still considering whether it can accept the agreement.

Informal meetings cannot take formal decisions or votes.

TRANSPORT

British Rail, London

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the level of investment in British Rail local services in London for each year from 1990-91 to 1993-94; what is the planned figure for 1994-95; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: Figures for BR investment in Network SouthEast are set out in the table. The figures do not include prepayments.

Investment in Network SouthEast

(£ million)

Year	*Number*
1990-91	340
1991-92	396
1992-93	524
1993-94	426

The figure for 1993-94 is subject to revision and should be regarded as indicative only. A figure for 1994-95 has yet to be announced.

Roads (Greenwich Mean Time)

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will estimate the net change in road casualties that is associated with the present winter arrangements of using Greenwich mean time.

Mr. Key: Based on casualty statistics for 1991, the Transport Research Laboratory estimated that putting the clocks back for 22 weeks in the winter resulted in an increase in road casualties of some 100 fatalities, 400 serious casualties and 1,000 slight casualties.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to issue a warning to the public about road risks following the change of the clocks to Greenwich mean time.

Mr. Key: There are no plans to issue a specific warning to the public about road risks following the change of the clocks to Greenwich mean time. The Department does however distribute leaflets on safe winter driving and on pedestrian and cyclist/motor cyclist conspicuity.

Driving Licences

Ms Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many ordinary driving licences are revoked each year on the basis that the holder's mental ill health is, or may become, likely to cause that person to be a source of danger to the public if he or she drives, pursuant to section 93(1) and section 93(2) of the Road Traffic Road Act 1988; and how many individuals each year are granted ordinary driving licences for a limited period of time on the basis that the applicant's mental ill health is, or may become, likely to cause that person to be a source of danger to the public if he or she drives, pursuant to section 99(1)*(b)* of the Road Traffic Act 1988.

Mr. Key: Each year around 600 ordinary driving licences are revoked and about the same number refused on the basis that the mental health of the holders or applicants was or might become likely to cause that person to be a source of danger to the public. Statistics on the number of restricted period licences issued are not broken down into the type of medical condition/disability that the driver suffers from.

Fishing (Submarines)

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what response he made to the proposals delivered to him by the Clyde Fishermen's Association concerning communication of submarine movements to the fishing fleet in inshore waters off Scotland.

Mr. Norris: Arrangements for the broadcasting of information about submarine movements—Subfacts—are still under discussion with the fishing industry and others.

Farm Vehicles

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when the requirement for road tax discs, number plates, lights, and directional indicators to be available and in working order will be applied to all farm vehicles; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: The only mechanically propelled farm vehicles which are exempt from vehicle excise duty are those not used on the public road, or used for distances not exceeding 6 miles in any calendar week when the journey is for travelling between land in the occupation of the registered keeper.

When used on the road, agricultural machines and trailers are required by the Road Vehicles (Registration and Licensing) Regulations 1971—SI 1971/450—to display a registration mark. All agricultural vehicles used on the road must be fitted with front and rear position lamps and rear reflectors. Tractors manufactured since 1 April 1986 must also have dipped headlamps, direction indicators and a hazard warning signal device. Any vehicle with a maximum speed not exceeding 25 mph, including tractors, must also display an amber warning beacon when travelling along an unrestricted dual carriageway. We strongly recommend their use on other roads as well. All lamps and reflectors must be kept clean and in good working order. We have no plans to require additional lighting equipment to be fitted on older vehicles.

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to limit the width of farm vehicles using public roads in the same manner as commercial road transport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: The Road Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulations 1986 and the Motor Vehicles (Authorisation of Special Types) General Order 1979 regulate the dimensions of agricultural vehicles used on public roads. These regulations require notification to be given to the police of the date, time and route of the journey before vehicles over 2·9 m width are used on the road and in the case of vehicles over 3·5 m width an attendant is required to give warning to other road users. Vehicles over 4·3 m width can be used only under individual authorisation and the need for the journey must be justified. I see no need for additional regulation of these vehicles.

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has on the number of accidents caused as a result of farm vehicles leaving dirt on the road in each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: This information is not collected by central Government.

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what measures he has taken to ensure the enforcement of laws relating to dirt on the road without prejudice; how many farmers have been prosecuted in each of the last five years for leaving dirt on roads; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: My Department's highway responsibilities are confined to England. In England, it is for individual highway authorities to take action under the Highways Act 1980, at common law, or under specific local byelaws, to deal with dirt on roads which they consider to be a hazard or obstruction.

Information on the numbers of such prosecutions could be provided only at disproportionate expense.

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to extend the duties of his Department's roadside inspection of commercial vehicles to farm vehicles; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: The Vehicle Inspectorate's examiners have and use the power to make roadside inspections of farm vehicles and to prohibit their use if they are unroadworthy. We have no plans, however, to make farm vehicles a specific priority for roadside inspection. Farm vehicles are also subject to spot checks by the Health and Safety Executive, which has powers to prohibit the use of vehicles if they are in an unsafe or improperly maintained condition.

M25

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received concerning the proposed widening of the M25; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: We have received numerous comments and suggestions in connection with the widening of the M25. These have all been carefully considered and taken into account in reaching our conclusions about the future strategic needs for this motorway. We will of course continue to listen to any further views that are expressed.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what cost-benefit analysis or studies have been made in respect of the M25 duplication or widening schemes *(a)* already authorised, *(b)* under active study and *(c)* currently contemplated; and where such studies are available to the public.

Mr. Key: The following cost-benefit analyses or studies have, are being, or will be undertaken in connection with increasing the capacity of the M25:

Junctions 30(A13)—3 (M20): no information yet. The future requirements are under review following the opening of the Queen Elizabeth II Bridge.

Junctions 3—5(M26)—rapid widening: no information yet. It is anticipated that consultants will be appointed to prepare detailed proposals later this year or early next.

Junctions 5—7(M23)—rapid widening: no information yet. Proposals are being prepared for widening to dual four lanes and information from the cost-benefit analysis, together with studies into air quality, noise, ecology etc will be made available when the environmental statement is published next spring.

Junctions 7—8 (Reigate)—rapid widening: details of the proposal to widen this section to dual four lanes, including the information on the results of the cost-benefit analysis as well as other information from other studies were included in the environmental statements made available at public exhibitions earlier this year.

Junctions 8-10(A3)—rapid widening: no information published yet. Proposals are being prepared for widening this section to dual four lanes. Information from the cost-benefit analysis and other studies will be made available when the environmental statement is published in the near future.

Junctions 10-11(Chertsey)—rapid widening: details of the proposal to widen this section to dual four lanes, including the

information on results of the cost-benefit analysis and other studies was included in the environmental statements made available at public exhibitions earlier this year.

Junctions 10-12(M3)—widening beyond four lanes: no information has been published yet. Consultants have been appointed to investigate the options for increasing capacity beyond four lanes. If it is decided to go ahead the results of the cost-benefit analysis and other studies will be made available at public consultation stage.

Junctions 12-15(M4)—widening beyond four lanes: information from the cost-benefit analysis and other studies undertaken was available to the public during the public consultation exhibitions held in July 1992. A copy of the technical appraisal report for the scheme, which included information on the cost-benefit analysis was placed in the House of Commons Library last autumn. Further information will be made available in the environmental statement when draft orders are published, probably later this year.

Junctions 15-16(M40)—rapid widening: details of the proposal to widen this section to dual four lanes, including information on the results of the cost-benefit analysis and other studies were included in the environmental statement made available at public exhibitions in 1991.

Junctions 15-16—widening beyond four lanes: a public consultation assessment report containing the results of the cost-benefit analysis and other studies, was available at the public exhibitions held in July and September this year.

Junctions 16-19(Watford)—rapid widening: no information yet. Proposals are being prepared for widening to dual four lanes and information from the cost-benefit analysis and other studies will be made available when the environmental statement is published towards the end of the year.

Junctions 19-23(A1)—rapid widening: no information yet. Proposals are being prepared for widening to dual four lanes within the existing highway boundary and information from the cost-benefit analysis and other studies will be made available when the environmental statement is published in 1995.

Junctions 16-21(M1)—widening beyond four lanes: no information yet. It is anticipated that consultations will be appointed later this year or early next.

Junctions 23-26(A121)—rapid widening: no information yet. Proposals are being prepared for widening to dual four lanes and information from the cost-benefit analysis and other studies will be made available when the evironmental statement is published towards the end of the year.

Junctions 26-28(A12)—rapid widening: no information yet. Proposals are being prepared for widening to dual four lanes within the existing highway boundary and information from the cost-benefit analysis and other studies will be made available when the environmental statement is published in 1995.

Junctions 28-30(A13)—widening: no information yet. Consultants will be appointed at some future date.

Traffic, London

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has sought from the City of London Corporation on the changes in traffic speed, congestion and casualties to non-car occupants and to car occupants since 3 July; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: None, but if the City corporation wishes to make permanent its experimental traffic measures it will need to obtain the approval of the Traffic Director for London and to consult adjacent boroughs and other interests. In doing so, the corporation would need to explain the effects of the experimental measures.

Barking to Gospel Oak Line

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what reports he has received on the future investment programme of the Barking to Gospel Oak line: and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: It is for British Rail to decide which projects to take forward and what priority it should be given until our plans for the privatisation of rail services can be implemented. However, I understand that Network SouthEast is looking at ways of improving the service on the north London lines, including that between Gospel Oak and Barking.

British Transport Police

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport who serves on the police committee of the British Transport police; and how often it has met over the past five years.

Mr. Freeman: The members of the British Transport police committee as at 30 September 1993 are:

Chairman:
D. Rayner Esq.

Members:
D. Tunnicliffe Esq.
C. J. D. Driver Esq.
A. P. Watkinson Esq.
Sir Lawrence Byford CBE, OBE, MC, DL
Major-General Lennox Napier CB, OBE, MC, DL
J. G. Nelson Esq.
Mrs. Diana Lamplugh OBE

The committee meets on a quarterly basis.

Mr. Trotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has reached a decision on the future employer of the British Transport police; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The Government have decided that Railtrack should become the employer of the BTP for as long as it remains in the public sector. When Railtrack is transferred to the private sector the British Transport police committee will become the employer. In the interim, until appropriate legislation can be drafted and introduced the BR board will continue as employer of the BTP.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what joint consultation procedure exists between the police committee of the British Transport police, and that force's Police Federation, and the representative bodies of other ranks at which matters relating to police pay and conditions of service are discussed; what is the membership of the joint body; and on how many occasions it has met in the past five years.

Mr. Freeman: In common with Home Department forces, the police committee does not meet with staff representative bodies. A joint consultative committee, comprising the chief and deputy chief constable; assistant chief constable (support services); chairman and secretary of the Superintendents Association; and the chairman and secretary of the British Transport Police Federation, meets twice a year, and as necessary, and any concerns are referred to the police committee for consideration.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport to what extent Home Office police regulations applied to members of the British Transport police.

Mr. Freeman: The chief constable has a statutory duty to control and direct the force, which includes following, wherever possible, any guidance or instructions on police matters given by the Home Secretary and the Director of Public Prosecutions, and their counterparts in Scotland.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if a Minister from his Department will meet

reresentatives of the British Transport Police Federation to discuss the ramifications of *(a)* the Sheehy report, *(b)* the White Paper on police and *(c)* matters of general concern to Police Federation members, which are not operational matters reserved for the chief constable.

Mr. Freeman: Ministers regularly meet representatives of the British Transport Police Federation and their parliamentary representative to discuss a wide range of matters. The last such meeting took place on 8 September.

Skippers' Licences

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to revoke or suspend the master's ticket of skippers of British-registered fishing vessels found guilty of having a secret fish room on board, fishing with undersize mesh nets, landing undersized fish and related offences.

Mr. Norris: No. Certificates of competency for officers on fishing vessels remain valid for as long as the individuals holding them can comply with the appropriate standards and conditions of medical fitness and competence. Infringements of fisheries legislation are matters for my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

Car Parking (Disabled Persons)

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the estimate of car parking spaces currently reserved for orange badge holders.

Mr. Key: The provision of parking spaces reserved for orange badge holders is the responsibility of individual local authorities. Information on the number provided by each authority is not held centrally.

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many representations he has received about the inadequacies of car parking facilities for disabled people in the past 12 months.

Mr. Key: The Department has received representations about the difficulties experienced by orange badge holders where local authorities operate their own local schemes of parking concessions for the disabled and about the fact that the orange badge scheme does not apply in central London. No analysis is available of how many letters mention these points. Of the 2,600 letters on the orange badge scheme received over the last 12 months, most have been requests for general information.

Cycling

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has as to the total length of cycle routes in Greater London in each year since 1990; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: Responsibility for the provision of cycle routes in London rests primarily with the 33 London boroughs. The information requested is not available and can be obtained only at disproportionate cost. We are supporting the 1,000 mile cycle network for London now being developed by the London Cycling Forum. Approximately a third of the network is in existence or in preparation.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many schools in England and Wales have specific instruction on cycle safety; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: No figures are available to show how many schools in England and Wales have specific instruction on cycle safety. There are, however, around 300,000 children who take part in cycle training schemes each year—just over 20 per cent. of children in the eligible age range.

Car Parking (Pavements)

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received regarding parking on pavements; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: I have received numerous representations on this subject, mainly suggesting that there should be a complete ban on pavement parking.

Responses to the consultation document "Curbing An Abuse", which we issued in 1987, showed that a complete ban would not be practical. It would create severe difficulties for many local traffic authorities, and the police do not have the resources that would be necessary to enforce it effectively.

While there is a general ban on parking heavy goods vehicles on the pavement, parking other kinds of vehicles there is illegal only where it is prohibited by a local Act of Parliament, as in London, where it contravenes a traffic order made by the local traffic authority, or if the vehicle is parked in a dangerous or obstructive position. I accept that the current situation is not entirely satisfactory. Last July, I decided to explore with the local authority associations whether the present legislation might be used more effectively and whether it could be improved in any way short of imposing a national ban.

Motorway Driving

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received regarding instruction for motorway driving; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: We have recently issued a consultation paper on measures to reduce accidents involving new drivers. A number of those responding have made representations about motorway instruction. All responses, will be taken into account before any final decisions are reached.

Buses

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) when he intends to publish a response to the results of the recent consultation on the operation of local bus services outside London;

(2) what response he has received to the recent consultation on the operation of local bus services outside London.

Mr. Freeman: Some 160 responses were received from bus operators, local authorities and other interested parties. I am considering these and expect to announce the results shortly.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when the working party on the promotion of the bus will be reconvened.

Mr. Freeman: I have in mind to reconvene the working party in 1994 to take stock of progress.

Parliamentary Television

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the locations of the television sets in his Department which can receive the live television feed from the Chamber of the House; and what is the total cost to his Department of this service.

Mr. Norris: The Department has 13 television sets capable of receiving live television feed from the Chamber of the House. They are all located in the Department's headquarters building in 2 Marsham street.

The cost of this service, which is provided by the Central Office of Information, is £14,900 plus VAT for 1993-94.

Heavy Goods Vehicles

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to ensure that drivers of heavy goods vehicles subject to limitation of driving hours by tachograph examination are not employed on duties prior to driving which are likely to impair their health or public safety.

Mr. Key: The rules on drivers' hours and tachographs are set by EC regulations which prescribe maximum limits on driving time and minimum limits on breaks and rest periods. The regulations are designed to ensure that drivers have adequate rest provisions in the interest of road safety.

The current requirement to take a daily rest period of at least 11 hours, combined with the daily driving limit of nine hours, already effectively limits the number of hours available for work.

The Department's traffic examiners and the police have wide-ranging powers to deal with road haulage companies and drivers who break the law.

East London River Crossing

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the currently expected timetable for the construction of the east London river crossing; what studies he is making of alternatives to that earlier proposal under Oxleas Wood and the construction of new cross Thames railway links east of Wapping.

Mr. Norris: The Department will award a commission early next year for a traffic study into a new east London river crossing which will take into account public transport issues. This will be followed later next year by a design commission to work up alternative proposals. The timetable for construction will depend on the form of the proposals and the statutory procedures required. I am considering separately the interaction of this scheme with other road and rail crossings.

Rail Privatisation (Pricing Policies)

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking, as part of his policy for privatisation of the operation of some railway trains, to avoid duplication of pricing on any one route and associated restrictions of choice of passengers using all operators' trains on those routes offering a standard class of vehicle; and if he will instruct the British Railways Board to eliminate any such practice currently operated by it on any route.

Mr. Freeman: A balance has to be struck between the benefits to customers of interavailable tickets and common fare levels on the one hand and competitive ticket pricing and product offers on the other hand. This was reflected in the draft guidance from the Secretary of State to the franchising director which was made available to the House in February; that guidance is being developed and will be finalised when the Bill completes its passage through Parliament and the franchising director is appointed.

With the introduction this month of shadow running by the InterCity Gatwick Express franchise, Network SouthEast is being allowed to compete over the route. Fares for the slower, NSE stopping service from Victoria to Gatwick will be reduced and the availability of this choice of alternative services will be advertised to passengers. Hitherto, only the Gatwick Express service has been promoted by BR. Gatwick Express tickets will be valid on NSE trains; as will NSE tickets on Gatwick Express, subject only to supplementary payment of the difference in price—£1·10 for a single journey.

I believe that passengers will welcome these changes. They offer greater choice of service without loss of flexibility or convenience, and the opportunity of purchasing a cheaper ticket than was available before.

Heathrow-Paddington Rail Link

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what estimate has been made of the capital cost, at 1993 prices, of each main element in the construction of the Heathrow-Paddington rail link, and its rolling stock and depot cost; what proportion of the total is being borne by *(a)* British Rail, *(b)* other United Kingdom public funds, *(c)* private capital from the United Kingdom and *(d)* capital from abroad, respectively; and what are the amounts of and details of each respective source of funds.

Mr. Freeman: The overall cost of the project has been estimated at around £300 million at 1993 prices. Details of the cost estimates and of the funding arrangements are a matter for the joint venture partners.

Roads (Expenditure)

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will state the amount and percentage of his expenditure on roads that are the responsibility of his Department on *(a)* maintenance, *(b)* cleansing, *(c)*improvements to existing routes, including bridge rebuilding, *(d)* bypasses around urban or residential areas, *(e)* capital expenditure on new motorways, *(f)* new construction of other roads and *(g)* other expenditure.

Mr. Key: The information is not readily available in the form requested. The table shows the information that is available.

Planned expenditure on National Roads, England: 1993-94
(rounded to nearest £ million)

	£ million	Per cent.
Renewal of roads	400	16·5
Renewal of bridges	150	6·2
New construction	1,509	62·4
Current maintenance of roads and bridges[1]	183	7·6
Other	178	7·4
Total gross expenditure	2,420	100

[1] Includes cleansing.

Further details can be found on pages 7 to 11 of the "Supply Estimates, 1993-94", class VI, Department of Transport, 495-VI—March 1993.

Heavy Commercial Vehicles

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the number of staff in his Department, or under contract to them, engaged in the random checking of weights of heavy commercial vehicles *(a)* at the latest date for which figures are available and *(b)* 10 years previously.

Mr. Key: The Vehicle Inspectorate is responsible for the weighing of heavy commercial vehicles. This work is

carried out by traffic examiners—TEs—responsibility for whom was transferred to the inspectorate from the Department in April 1991. The inspectorate currently employs 168 full-time TEs; on 1 November 1983 the figure was 157.

London Crossrail Link

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the impact of the proposed London crossrail link on the growth of road traffic in Greater London.

Mr. Norris: Our assessment shows that, over a 30-year period, crossrail would generate road decongestion benefits with a present value worth over £500 million in March 1990 prices.

Derailment, Maidstone East

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information has been made available to his Department by British Rail on the content of the containers on the train involved in the derailment accident at Maidstone East station on 6 September; and if he will make a statement on the outcome of the investigation into the accident.

Mr. Freeman: The train involved in the accident was formed entirely of air-braked ferry wagons. The first was a bogie van containing chipboard, the following six wagons were carrying metal products. The remaining eight wagons were a mix of four-wheel flats and bogie vans, all of which were empty.

Her Majesty's railway inspectorate is continuing its investigation into the accident. I understand that the British Transport police has instituted criminal proceedings. The hearing commenced on 15 October at Maidstone magistrates court.

HEALTH

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance her Department has given to general practitioners involved in appointments procedures to draw their attention to their responsibilities under the Race Relations Act 1965, the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 and her Department's initiatives; and what is being done to require general practitioners involved in such procedures to undergo equal opportunities training in selection and recruitment.

Mr. Sackville: General practitioners are independent self-employed contractors to the national health service and are themselves responsible for the appointment of their staff. As with any employers, it is their duty to inform themselves of, and have regard to, their responsibilities under employment law and equal opportunities legislation. Advice on such matters is available to general practitioners through their family health service authority.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what is being done to ensure that managers involved in appointments procedures receive the full support of their own management in respect of their obligations towards equal opportunities;

(2) what is being done to ensure that managers from health authorities and self-governing trusts involved in appointments procedures are aware of their obligations with respect to equal opportunities; what steps are taken to report any refusal by general practitioners to observe their obligations with respect to equal opportunities in appointments procedures *(a)* to their own manager and *(b)* to any applicant seeking the reasons for failure to obtain a post sought;

(3) what guidance has been given to ensure that equal opportunities policies are monitored.

Mr. Sackville: All national health service managers are expected to comply with national legislation on sex and race discrimination and to implement their health authority's or trust's equal opportunities policy, which should include appointments procedures.

General practitioners are independent contractors.

Current guidance to the NHS on priorities and planning includes a requirement that corporate contracts and business plans specify targets to improve equal opportunities for ethnic minority and disabled staff. Current guidance on monitoring gender issues is contained in "Women in the NHS: an implementation guide to Opportunity 2000", a copy of which is available in the Library. In addition, there is detailed guidance on operating fair recruitment and selection procedures for doctors and dentists in the hospital and community health service.

Medical Students

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer, to the hon. Member for Westbury (Mr. Faber) of 21 April 1993, *Official Report*, column *126*, what will be the cost of training the additional medical students; and what will be their impact on national health service costs when they become (i) trainees and (ii) consultants/general practitioner principals.

Mr. Sackville: The United Kingdom medical student target intake has been increased by 240 places each year in order to meet the forecast service needs of the national health service.

The first report of the Medical Manpower Standing Advisory Committee (MMSAC), a copy of which is available in the Library, indicated that the total recurrent funding from the Department of Education and the NHS was some £180,000 per medical student over five years at 1992-93 levels. Funding for the new intake targets will be determined by the Higher Education Funding Council for England and the NHS as part of their 1994-95 funding allocations in due course. It is unlikely that the marginal cost of increasing medical school intake will be as high as the current average costs of training.

The subsequent impact of the additional medical graduates on NHS costs will depend on a wide range of factors, including future service development priorities, salary levels and the career choices of the doctors themselves. In the hospital and community health services the demand for doctors depends on the decisions made by purchasers and providers on how best to use the funding allocated to them to meet local health care needs; an increase in the available supply of doctors will not in itself add to costs. In the general medical services, admission to practice reflects decisions of the Medical Practices Committee which will among other things take into

account the available supply of potential general practitioners, but there is no automatic linkage between additional supply and additional NHS costs.

Dentistry

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what guidelines her Department issued to national health service dentists on the sterilisation of all dental equipment;

(2) what regulations cover the sterilisation of national health service dental equipment.

Mr. Sackville: The Department has issued guidance to dentists by means of circulars, booklets and letters from the Chief Dental Officer, in 1986, 1988, 1990 and most recently in July 1993, advising them of the need to sterilise equipment adequately. It was made clear in 1988 that dental handpieces should be sterilised in an autoclave. There are no regulations which specifically cover the sterilisation of dental equipment. Copies of the guidance are available in the Library.

Broadmoor Hospital

Ms Mowlam: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when the report of the inquiry into the death of Orville Blackwood in Broadmoor hospital was delivered to the Special Hospitals Service Authority; and when it will be published.

Mr. Bowis: The report was published on 31 August and copies have been placed in the Library.

Optical Services

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what were (i) the average waiting times and (ii) the year end waiting list for *(a)* in-patient and *(b)* out-patient treatment in ophthalmology for each district health authority and for England in each year since 1985.

Mr. Sackville: Information on waiting times for in-patient treatment in ophthalmology for each district health authority in England is given in "Hospital Waiting List Statistics: England". This has been published twice yearly since September 1987 and copies are available in the Library. Information on the number of people waiting for out-patient appointments is not available centrally.

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the average value of help received through NHS vouchers for glasses, by adults requiring new frames and lenses, in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Sackville: The estimated value of the average adult voucher fully paid for by family health services authorities in 1992-93 was £31·90[1].

[1] The average value quoted is based on vouchers paid for by FHSAs in 1992-93, excluding those vouchers paid for in 1992-93 at 1991-92 values. It also excludes supplements in respect of prisms and tints, small frame supplements, and vouchers in respect of repairs to and replacements of optical appliances.

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what surveys her Department has carried out or commissioned on the amount of contribution which individuals make to supplement the help they receive through NHS vouchers for glasses; and what is the average amount of the customer contribution towards the cost of glasses which is made in addition to the value of the voucher, in each voucher band.

Mr. Sackville: None. The average amount of the customer contribution towards the cost of glasses which is made in addition to the value of the voucher band, in each voucher band is not available centrally.

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total amount of financial help for glasses including lenses given through the voucher system in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Sackville: The cost of national health service vouchers for glasses and lenses, including help with the cost of repairs, was £99·9 million in 1992-93.

Grading

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many nurses, midwives and health visitors have accepted "buy-outs" for clinical grading appeals by *(a)* each professional and *(b)* each region;

(2) how many nurses, midwives and health visitors have agreed to forgo their clinical grading appeal to date, as a result of the clinical grading "buy-out" scheme;

(3) what the cost of "buy-outs" for clinical grading appeals has been to date.

Mr. Sackville: The number of appeals which has been "bought out" by 30 September 1993 in England is shown in the table.

Information on the number of appeals bought out by profession and the cost is not available centrally.

Buy-outs of Nurse Clinical Grading Appeals: Situation as at 30 September 1993

Region	*Appeals bought out*
North Western	2,580
Mersey	1,708
West Midlands	2,032
Trent	1,358
South Western	505
North West Thames	523
Yorkshire	855
North East Thames	381
Wessex	429
South West Thames	—
South East Thames	600
Oxford	—
East Anglian	299
Northern	1,824
Total	13,094

Source: Regional health authority reports. Data for some regions have still to be validated.

Psychiatric Care

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many admissions for acute psychiatric treatment were made to hospitals in London during each year since 1989;

(2) how many acute psychiatric beds were available in London in each year since 1989.

Mr. Bowis: The information is shown in the table:

Mental illness—finished consultant episodes and average daily number of available short stay beds (acute psychiatric) in London

	Ordinary admissions	*Day cases*	*Average daily number of beds*
1988-89	37,586	47	4,030
1989-90	36,401	25	4,206
1990-91	36,912	29	4,047

	Ordinary admissions	Day cases	Average daily number of beds
1991-92	37,903	123	3,983
1992-93	39,002	401	3,931

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the future of mental illness specific supplementary credit approvals.

Mr. Bowis: It is our intention that both the mental illness specific grant and the supplementary credit approvals will continue, in order to support the improvement of social care services which local authorities provide for mentally ill people in the community.

Smoking

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action has been taken by her Department over the last year towards the objectives stated in the Government White Paper "The Health of the Nation" to reduce smoking prevalence among British adults to 20 per cent. by the year 2000 and the level of smoking among 11 to 15-year-olds by 33 per cent. by 1994; and what further action her Department intends taking.

Mr. Sackville: Action to reduce smoking prevalence in adults and young people is tackled through a cross governmental approach. Measures taken this year include: a real increase of 4·7 per cent. in the total tax on cigarettes in the March 1993 Budget; the strengthening of laws on the labelling of tobacco products; full implementation of the new legislation on illegal sales of tobacco products to children; the continued development of anti-smoking health education campaigns; continuing progress to be made through voluntary means to encourage the introduction of policies on smoking in public places and workplaces; and the introduction of new arrangements so that all general practitioners wishing to receive payments for health promotion will need to provide advice and support to smokers.

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of 11 to 15-year-olds who currently smoke in the United Kingdom are girls.

Mr. Sackville: The 1992 Office of Population Censuses and Surveys survey of smoking among secondary schoolchildren shows that for England, Wales and Scotland the following percentages of 11 to 15-year-olds who smoke on a regular basis are girls:

England—53 per cent.
Wales—51 per cent.
Scotland—56 per cent.

A separate survey has been carried out in Northern Ireland entitled "Smoking and Drinking Amongst 11-15 year olds in Northern Ireland". The latest survey, which was carried out in 1990, found that 53 per cent. of 11 to 15-year-olds who smoke on a regular basis are girls.

Copies of both reports are available in the Library.

Notes:

1. Caution is needed in interpreting these percentages as they are based on a relatively small sample.
2. "Regular smokers" are defined as usually smoking at least one cigarette a week.
3. The data are in respect of secondary schoolchildren aged 11 to 15—in the first to fifth form—in England and Wales and Northern Ireland, and aged 12 to 15—in the first to fourth form—in Scotland.

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women died in the United Kingdom from smoking-related diseases, in each year from 1980.

Mr. Sackville: The statistics available are those for 1988, published in the Health Education Authority's report "The Smoking Epidemic", a copy of which is available in the Library. This estimated that in the United Kingdom about 79,000 men and 32,000 women died from smoking-related diseases.

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of 11 to 15-year-olds in the United Kingdom currently smoke; and what was the percentage of 11 to 15-year-olds who smoked in each year since 1980.

Mr. Sackville: The 1992 Office of Population Censuses and Surveys survey of smoking among secondary schoolchildren provides the following figures for 11 to 15-year-olds who currently smoke in England, Wales and Scotland:

England—10 per cent.
Wales—9 per cent.
Scotland—11 per cent.

A separate survey has been carried out in Northern Ireland entitled "Smoking and Drinking Amongst 11-15 year olds in Northern Ireland". The latest survey which was carried out in 1990, found that 12 per cent. of 11 to 15-year-olds in Northern Ireland were regular smokers.

Copies of both reports are available in the Library.

The following data show the percentage of 11 to 15-year-olds who smoke since 1982—when the biennial OPCS survey began. The Northern Ireland survey began in 1983 and a further survey took place three years later. Since 1986 the surveys have been carried out every four years.

Percentage of regular smokers[1] aged 11-15 for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland[4]

	1982	1984	1986	1988	1990	1992
England	11	13	10	8	10	10
Wales	[2]11	11	8	[5]—	10	9
Scotland	15	16	12	[5]—	12	11
Northern Ireland	[5]—	[3]14	11	[5]—	12	[5]—

Notes:

[1] "Regular Smokers" is defined as usually smoking at least one cigarette a week.
[2] Data are only available for England and Wales combined.
[3] Northern Ireland survey first carried out in 1983.
[4] The data are in respect of secondary schoolchildren aged 11 to 15—in the first to fifth form—in England and Wales and Northern Ireland, and aged 12 to 15—in the first to fourth form—in Scotland.
[5] not available.

Operation Vacancy Schemes

Mr. Etherington: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which health authorities ran media or press advertising schemes for vacant operation slots at the latest date for which figures are available; which ran such schemes *(a)* six and *(b)* 12 months previous to that; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally. However, Sunderland district health authority is to be congratulated for developing an innovative local scheme to maximise the number of patients treated for minor surgery.

Counselling Services

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what measures have been taken since the publication of "Disasters: Planning for a Caring Society" to improve the counselling service to those affected by large-scale disasters and terrorism.

Mr. Bowis: Post-traumatic stress disorder is a recognised psychiatric condition. General practitioner services are increasingly able to respond to this condition and provide counselling or drug therapy as necessary. Cases may also be referred to the specialist psychiatric services. The Department is supporting from central funds the creation of a new unit at the Bethlem Royal and Maudsley Group specialising in post-traumatic stress, including research. We are also funding continuing work at the traumatic stress unit at the Middlesex hospital. These centres constitute an additional national source of expertise in this condition. The role of local authorities in providing social and psychological support for disaster victims is addressed in the report "Planning for a Caring Response" and associated "Guidelines for an Action Plan", copies of which are available in the Library.

Parliamentary Television

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the locations of the television sets in her Department which can receive the live television feed from the Chamber of the House; and what is the total cost to her Department of this service.

Mr. Sackville: There are 12 sets in the Department which can receive live television broadcasts from the Chamber. They are situated in ministerial and press offices in Richmond house, Whitehall and cost approximately £14,000 a year.

Health Costs (Assistance)

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what is her best estimate of the average number of prescription items issued each year to people over state pension age;

(2) how many people received help with health costs through certificate AG2 in the last year for which figures are available; and what proportion of these were over state pension age.

Mr. Sackville: The available information is shown in the table.

Average number of prescribed items per head of population for women aged 60 and over and men aged 65 or over dispensed by community pharmacists and appliance contractors in England in 1992; number of courses of adult dental treatment obtained free of charge by people entitled to full remission of charges under the national health service low income scheme[1], number of free sight tests obtained by people covered by AG2 certificates and numbers of optical vouchers used by people covered by AG2 or AG3 certificates in England in 1992-93.

	Number
Prescribed items	[2]18·9
Courses of adult dental treatment[3]	4,356,963
Sight tests[3]	278,000
Optical vouchers[3]	[4]317,910

[1] People receiving income support or family credit or covered by AG2 certificates.

[2] People over state retirement pension age are exempt from NHS prescription charges. A total of 167·8 million prescribed items were dispensed free of charge to this group by community pharmacists and appliance contractors in 1992.

[3] Includes people over state pension age but data for these age groups are not collected separately.

[4] Figure derived from 2 per cent. sample of all vouchers reimbursed by family health services authorities.

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people benefited from the help with health costs scheme for *(a)* glasses, *(b)* dentistry and *(c)* the cost of eye tests, in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Sackville: Information on the number of people who benefited from help with the costs of glasses, dentistry and eye tests is not available. The number of sight tests and vouchers paid for by family health services authorities in 1992-93 is as follows:

	Number
Vouchers[1]	3,184,970
National Health Service Sight Tests	5,527,590
Domiciliary Visits	152,260
Private sight tests where partial help was given	56,020
Private Domiciliary Visits where partial help was given	2,090

[1] It is not possible to distinguish between those who have had partial help towards the cost of glasses and those who have had full help.

The number of courses of dental treatment for adults provided with full or partial remission of charges in 1992-93 was 4,492,979. This represents approximately 18 per cent. of adult courses of treatment. A further 5 per cent. of courses of treatment were provided to exempt adults.

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the average value of help received with the cost of glasses including lenses through NHS vouchers, full or partial value, in each voucher band in the last two years for which figures are available.

Mr. Sackville: Information is not available in the form requested, since the Department does not hold figures on the number of people who get partial help with spectacle costs, or how much they get. The value of each type of voucher is shown in the table.

	£
1991-92	
Voucher A	19·70
Voucher B	31·15
Voucher C	49·00
Voucher D	37·80
Voucher E	62·30

	£
1992-93	
Voucher A	23·70
Voucher B	37·40
Voucher C	51·00
Voucher D	100·00
Voucher E	41·00
Voucher F	54·00
Voucher G	65·00
Voucher H	110·00

Workplace Health Promotion Programmes

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps she is taking to promote health promotion programmes in the workplace; and whether there are any particular initiatives aimed specifically at older workers.

Mr. Sackville: We have recently embarked on a programme of initiatives in response to the recommendations of a "Health of the Nation" task force, whose report will be placed in the Library. The aim is to build on the great amount of workplace health promotion that already exists, and to encourage it further, by giving advice to employers, by encouraging evaluation to demonstrate the benefits to employers and employees alike, and by promoting contact locally between the various organisations and professions concerned. The programme will be overseen by a small steering group comprising key Departments, agencies, including the Health Education Authority, and organisations at national level.

In addition, the Department, in consultation with the Department of Social Security, is responsible for the management in the United Kingdom of the European Year of Older People and Solidarity Between Generations which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State launched last December. Health promotion needs of older people in the workplace and elsewhere has been one of the many themes and issues upon which the year has concentrated.

Infertility Treatment

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary for State for Health if she will publish a list of all district health authorities in England indicating which authorities provided for NHS patients *(a)* in vitro fertilisation treatment and *(b)* other treatments to assist conception (i) before the introduction of the NHS internal market and (ii) currently.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally. It is the responsibility of the purchasers and providers of health services to determine the services to be provided in the light of their knowledge of local needs and the availability of resources.

Quality Initiatives Guide

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the cost of producing 25,000 copies of "The A-Z of Quality: a Guide to Quality Initiatives in the NHS".

Mr. Sackville: The total estimated cost of producing 25,000 copies of "The A-Z of Quality" is £368,000. This cost represents £1 for every £100,000 spent on the national health service.

Schizophrenia

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for health how many schizophrenics have killed during the past five years.

Mr. Bowis: This information is not held centrally.

Dreadnought Seamen's Hospital

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the cost to the NHS of maintaining the Dreadnought seamen's hospital in Greenwich for each year since 1986.

Mr. Sackville: There are legal constraints on the use of the Dreadnought seamen's hospital site in Greenwich, for which South East Thames regional health authority have responsibility. The hon. Member may wish to contact Mr. Peter Barker, chairman of the South East Thames regional health authority for details.

Casualty Beds

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the availability of casualty beds, in each London health district for each year since 1990-91; what she expects the figure to be for the current year and planned for 1994-95 and subsequent years; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: Information collected centrally on bed availability is classified according to broad speciality groups. Casualty beds are not identified separately. Each authority or trust decides whether to designate beds as casualty beds in the light of local needs and experience. The hon. Member may wish to contact the chairmen of the four Thames regional health authorities for detailed information.

Social Security Medical Reports

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will set out the charter provisions which ensure consultants and other doctors respond to requests for medical reports by DSS agencies for awarding benefits and deciding appeals within a reasonable time.

Mr. Sackville: There are no provisions in the patients charter relating to the time taken by consultants and doctors to respond to such requests.

Ambulance Service

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will set out, for each ambulance service in England and Wales for either a one or a three-month period in 1993, the number and percentage of responses to emergency incidents which were made within *(a)* eight minutes, *(b)* 14 minutes and *(c)* more than 25 minutes; what targets were set out under the patients charter; and what steps she is taking to ensure that the terms of the charter are complied with in 1994.

Mr. Sackville: The information requested on the number and percentage of responses to emergency incidents is available only on an annual basis, figures for 1992-93 will be available shortly and these will be placed in the Library. The patients charter requires 95 per cent. of

emergency calls to be answered within 14 minutes in urban areas and 19 minutes in rural areas. Within the national health service internal market it is for purchasers of services to set the standards required of service providers and to ensure that the standards are met. Information relating to Wales is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Maternity Services

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what consultations she has had with professional bodies representative of gynaecologists, midwives and health visitors concerning proposals for division of responsibilities between bodies in the health service for pre-natal, maternity and post-natal care.

Mr. Sackville: A comprehensive review of national health service maternity care has recently been completed by the Expert Maternity Group. Professional and other organisations were consulted as part of that exercise. All those with an interest, including general practitioners, midwives and obstetricians, have been invited to give written comments on the group's report "Changing Childbirth" by 29 October. Ministers will study carefully all comments received and then decide on future action.

"Changing Childbirth" is available in the Library.

Nurses

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many *(a)* district nurses and *(b)* community midwives were employed in the NHS in each of the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Sackville *[pursuant to his reply, 7 June 1993, c. 59]:* I regret that there was an error in my previous answer. The correct figure for community midwifery staff for England at 30 September 1991—whole-time equivalents —is 4,100.

SCOTLAND

Smoke Alarms

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received, and from whom, concerning Government financial assistance for hearing-impaired individuals in the purchase of special smoke alarms for the home.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. Friend received one representation from Mr. Colin Collie, Strathblane, Glasgow about the cost of smoke alarms for the deaf and hard of hearing. Several hon. Members also brought the points made by Mr. Collie to my right hon. Friend's attention. The Scottish Office Home and Health Department advised Mr. Collie and the hon. Members concerned that local authority powers in the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 could extend to the provision of smoke detection systems subject to assessment being made of an individual's needs, and to the authority determining its own priorities and allocating the resources available as it sees fit.

Environmental Charters

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many Scottish local authorities have adopted environmental charters; if he will list them; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro: This information is not held centrally. However, we are aware that a growing number of authorities are publishing charters covering environmental services. I hope that the model local environment charter for Scotland which I launched on 5 October will encourage more authorities to follow suit.

Salmon Farms

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to make representations to the Crown Estate Commissioners to charge similar rents to Scottish salmon farms as are charged in other producer countries; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro: My right hon. Friend has no plans to make representations to the Crown Estate Commissioners on the question of rents for salmon farms. Rentals payable for marine fish farms in Scotland were reviewed with effect from 1 January 1992 by the Valuation Office acting in an independent and impartial capacity. In making its determination, the Valuation Office considered the extensive written and oral representations made on behalf of the fish farming industry. Rental arrangements are a management issue for the Crown Estate and not one where it would be appropriate for Ministers to intervene.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what research aimed at improving anti-predator devices and structure of salmon farm cages is being supported by the Department; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro: In the past the Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department's marine laboratory has been involved in research into anti-predator devices. It is not currently doing research in this area, or into the structure of salmon farm cages, as there is already a wide range of equipment on the market.

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish details of the salmon farming rents charged per annum by the Crown Estate Commissioners for salmon farms producing 500 tonnes annually; and what information he has on annual rent charges for salmon farms with similar production levels in *(a)* Norway, *(b)* Ireland, *(c)* the Faroes, *(d)* eastern Canada, *(e)* western Canada and *(f)* New Zealand.

Sir Hector Monro: The rents payable to the crown estate for marine salmon farms are linked annually to salmon price movements at Billingsgate market. The rental payable for salmon farms producing 500 tonnes from 1 January 1993 is £16,500 for mainland Scotland and £14,850 for the Western Isles, Orkney and Shetland. These charges will be adjusted to take account of price movements between 1 December 1992 and 1 December 1993 in accordance with the established rent formula.

The arrangements for charges in other countries are not made in a directly comparable way and they reflect the different constitutional and fiscal circumstances applying in each country.

Waste Recycling

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of household waste in Scotland is recycled; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro: Returns made by Scottish waste regulation authorities suggest that 2·9 per cent. of reported household waste arisings were collected for recycling in 1991. Recycling plans so far received from Scottish waste collection authorities indicate that it is the intention of many of these authorities to achieve significant increases in the quantities of household waste collected for recycling in their area.

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland which Scottish local authorities currently operate recycling schemes; if he will provide details of the kind of recycling programmes in operation in each local authority; how much central funding is available to assist with the financing of these recycling projects; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro: The following 55 authorities have reported to the Department that they were participating in public sector recycling operations.

Authorities

*Aberdeen	*East Kilbride	Moray
Angus	*East Lothian	Motherwell
Annandale and Eskdale	Eastwood	*Nithsdale
*Argyll and Bute	*Edinburgh	*North East Fife
*Badenoch and Strathspey	*Ettrick and Lauderdale	*Orkney Islands
*Banff and Buchan	*Falkirk	*Perth and Kinross
*Bearsden and Milngavie	*Glasgow	*Renfrew
*Berwickshire	*Gordon	*Ross and Cromarty
Caithness	*Hamilton	*Roxburgh
*Clackmannan	*Inverclyde	*Shetland Islands
*Clydebank	Inverness	*Skye and Lochalsh
*Clydesdale	*Kilmarnock and Loudoun	*Stewartry
*Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	Kincardine and Deeside	*Stirling
*Cumnock and Doon Valley	*Kirkcaldy	*Strathkelvin
*Cunninghame	*Kyle and Carrick	Sutherland
*Dumbarton	Lochaber	*Tweeddale
*Dundee	*Midlothian	Western Isles
Dunfermline	*Monklands	*West Lothian
		Wigtown

Forty-two of the above authorities (*) have completed draft waste recycling plans. These plans give details of recycling initiatives designed to fit the geographic and financial circumstances that apply in particular local authority areas. They provide for either bring systems or kerbside collection systems as appropriate and between them the plans provide for the collection for recycling of newspapers, magazines, packaging paper, office paper, computer paper, cardboard, plastic bottles, glass, aluminium and steel cans, scrap metal, textiles and old clothes, used furniture, chlorofluoro carbons; batteries, used cars, garden waste, vegetable waste from kitchens and vegetable and mineral oils. Authorities are required to make waste recycling plans available for public inspection and to supply a copy to anyone who requests one on payment by that person of a reasonable charge.

Scottish local authorities were allocated close to £3·6 billion in revenue support grant in 1993-94 to be used to finance the provision of all local services including the collection of waste for recycling.

Local Government Reorganisation

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what financial provisions have been made in his Department's estimate of the cost of local government reorganisation for staff relocation and additional travel expenses as a result of transfer to one of the new authorities.

Mr. Stewart: Costs and travel expenses were both taken into account in the preparation of the costs estimates included in the White Paper "Shaping the Future—The New Councils". In preparing these estimates the Government had regard to the evidence of the Touche Ross report on the costs and savings of reform and of other commentators on that report. The exact level of these costs will, however, ultimately depend upon decisions taken by individual local authorities.

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will list the names of those respondents who referred to joint arrangements in their submissions to "The Structure of Local Government in Scotland: Shaping the New Councils" *(a)* in total and *(b)* who were (i) in favour of them and (ii) opposed to them; and if he will provide a geographical breakdown of this information by regional, district and island authority area;

(2) if he will list the names of those organisations whose submissions to the consultation paper "The Structure of Local Government in Scotland: Shaping the New Councils" whose preferred local government structure for Scotland as a whole was *(a)* 15, *(b)* 24, *(c)* 35 and *(d)* 51 units; and if he will provide a breakdown of this information by regional, district and island authority area;

(3) if he will list the names of those respondents who referred to *(a)* local loyalties or community links, *(b)* local authority functions and *(c)* links with other bodies in their submissions to the consultation paper "The Structure of Local Government in Scotland: Shaping the New Councils"; and if he will provide a geographical breakdown of this information by regional, district and island authority area;

(4) if he will publish a list of the *(a)* voluntary organisations, *(b)* community councils, *(c)* local authorities, *(d)* business interests, *(e)* political associations, *(f)*

trade unions and *(g)* individuals who submitted responses to the consultation paper "The Structure of Local Government in Scotland: Shaping the New Councils"; and if he will provide a geographical breakdown of this information by regional, district and island authority of origin;

(5) if he will list the names of those respondents to the consultation paper "The Structure of Local Government in Scotland: Shaping the New Councils" who were supportive of the proposal to reorganise Scottish local government into unitary authorities *(a)* at this time and *(b)* only in the context of a Scottish parliament; and if he will provide a geographical breakdown of this information by regional, district and island authority area.

Mr. Stewart: I shall write to the hon. Member and arrange for a copy of the letter to be placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what time scale he envisages for the publication of guidance of local authorities on the requirement by them to devise plans showing how they will devolve responsibility within their organisations as part of the reorganisation of Scottish local government; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what plans he has to consult *(a)* local authorities, *(b)* trade unions, *(c)* community groups, *(d)* tenants' organisations and *(e)* the general public prior to the publication of guidance to local authorities on the requirement by them to devise plans showing how they intend to devolve responsibility within their organisations as a consequence of the reorganisation of Scottish local government.

Mr. Stewart: No final decisions have yet been taken on the timetable for the publication of guidance on decentralisation schemes. I propose to consult interested groups prior to issuing such guidance and I intend also that the legislation will require the new councils to consult widely during the preparation of their schemes.

Inverclyde Enterprise Zone

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his role in regard to the granting of planning consent for the proposed development of the Parklea site in the Inverclyde enterprise zone; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart: The planning application for the proposed development at Parklea has been notified to my right hon. Friend to consider whether he should call it in for his own decision. In view of his possible future involvement, I am unable to comment further.

Environmental Education

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the provision for environmental education in Scottish primary and secondary schools.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Education has an essential part to play in ensuring public awareness of the environment and environmental issues which are at stake. The 5-14 programme, which covers primary and early secondary schooling in Scotland, gives specific recognition to environmental education, both as a permeating influence throughout the curriculum and more specifically within the environmental studies area of the curriculum. The national guidelines 5-14 seek to develop informed attitudes and values relating to the care and conservation of the environment.

In the later years of secondary education, opportunities for environmental education occur in standard grade subjects and there is also a range of SCOTVEC units and modules related to environmental education.

As with other areas of the curriculum, inspections by Her Majesty's inspectors of schools address the level and quality of environmental education.

The report "Learning for Life", produced by the Secretary of State's working group on environmental education in Scotland, is being carefully considered, alongside the responses made to the report during the recent public consultation exercise.

Ophthalmology

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what were (i) the average waiting times and (ii) the year end waiting list for *(a)* in-patient and *(b)* out-patient treatment in ophthalmology for each health board and for Scotland in each year since 1985.

Mr. Stewart: The information is set out in the tables. The mean waiting times information relates to those admitted from both in-patient and day case waiting lists.

The out-patient waiting times figures shown relate to the nine-month period ending June 1993, the first period for which out-patient waiting times information has been collected.

Ophthalmology—Mean waiting time (Days)

	In-patient/Day cases, discharges[1]								*Out-patients*[2]
Health board treatment	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*
Scotland	96·7	93·9	103·5	114·7	101·9	101·5	104·2	110·7	56·8
Argyll and Clyde	111·7	124·6	136·2	148·9	100·2	108·0	114·3	75·6	38·0
Ayrshire and Arran	64·1	70·2	68·2	88·3	117·7	162·2	183·8	203·3	58·8
Borders	—	—	—	—	159·8	176·8	206·5	136·9	110·2
Dumfries and Galloway	93·5	63·9	88·2	87·7	102·3	111·6	151·3	160·8	38·0
Fife	67·4	67·0	72·1	42·8	60·0	59·9	73·2	87·5	50·2
Forth Valley	55·0	58·8	59·9	76·5	74·1	54·1	63·3	80·5	51·7
Grampian	195·4	135·7	138·2	107·5	65·3	58·6	47·6	53·3	45·0
Greater Glasgow	91·9	90·6	98·8	120·6	122·6	136·7	123·8	119·7	79·2
Highland	106·4	135·2	100·7	91·4	88·1	105·3	86·3	96·4	56·7
Lanarkshire	59·4	62·0	68·5	83·8	91·0	99·0	110·8	130·5	45·3
Lothian	101·4	134·0	173·0	193·2	142·0	95·2	101·5	157·5	91·6
Orkney	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	28·0
Shetland	—	—	—	—	—	—	83·4	122·1	76·0

Health board treatment	In-patient/Day cases, discharges[1] 1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	Out-patients[2] 1993
Tayside	97·5	69·6	82·1	85·9	93·0	82·6	74·1	68·9	28·7
Western Isles	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	41·3

Source: SMR0, SMR1.
[1]Admitted from waiting list during calendar years shown.
[2]Based on referrals seen at out-patient clinics during nine months ending June 1993.

NHSIS—Ophthalmology list[1] by health board area of treatment; from 31 March 1985 to 31 December 1992
Health Board of Treatment

	Scotland	Argyll and Clyde	Ayrshire and Arran	Borders	Dumfries and Galloway	Fife	Forth Valley	Grampian	Greater Glasgow	Highland	Lanarkshire	Lothian	Orkney	Shetland	Tayside	Western Isles
'Old basis' waiting list																
31 March 1985	4,676	474	203	—	51	115	73	1,111	1,142	154	85	826	—	—	442	—
31 March 1986	4,922	574	206	—	61	131	100	1,084	1,046	246	54	1,206	—	—	214	—
31 March 1987	5,500	703	259	—	88	180	112	925	1,205	166	100	1,419	—	—	343	—
In-patients																
31 March 1988	5,207	629	214	—	80	72	155	621	1,527	172	104	1,313	—	—	320	—
31 March 1989	4,745	360	446	—	116	155	204	267	1,590	179	141	938	—	—	349	—
31 December 1989	5,796	471	609	202	145	159	102	349	1,936	235	234	977	—	—	377	—
31 December 1990	5,949	577	671	301	220	210	87	244	1,798	192	200	1,101	—	—	348	—
31 December 1991	6,903	422	812	279	240	308	99	331	1,872	212	459	1,552	—	—	317	—
31 December 1992	6,527	449	820	94	251	263	186	316	1,386	276	489	1,601	—	18	379	—
Day cases																
31 March 1988	290	21	15	—	—	11	—	58	22	—	14	125	—	—	24	—
31 March 1989	390	28	30	—	4	8	18	52	86	—	38	111	—	—	15	—
31 December 1989	505	42	34	—	5	19	6	63	126	47	32	122	—	—	9	—
31 December 1990	514	36	24	1	4	21	1	47	110	21	28	220	—	—	1	—
31 December 1991	548	98	73	2	14	22	18	61	83	41	36	99	—	—	1	—
31 December 1992	811	133	31	1	7	36	43	45	174	30	35	266	—	2	8	—

[1]From 1988 figures relate to true waiting list. Waiting list figures prior to 1988 (known as the 'old basis' waiting list) are not strictly comparable with the in-patient true waiting list because of changes in definition and recording practice. Day case waiting lists were not separately identified prior to 1988.
Source: ISD(S)1, SMR3.

Historic Gardens

Mr. Welsh: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list *(a)* the Scottish applicants for European Commission financial assistance under this year's awards for the conservation of gardens of historic value and *(b)* details of the reasons for their failure to secure such funding; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro: A list of Scottish applicants for European Commission financial assistance under the 1993 pilot projects scheme to conserve European architectural heritage, is set out in the table below.

Decisions as to whether to provide financial support or not are taken by the Commission on the advice of an international panel of experts. Historic Scotland advised the Commission about the merit of each Scottish application for the 1993 competition; it is not the Commission's practice, however, to comment on why any of the applications failed to receive an award.

Applicant and Garden
The Earl of Morton—Aberdour Castle Garden
The Ellar Christie Trust—Cowden Japanese Garden, Dollar
Ross Associates—Bystone House Garden, Thorntonhall
Scottish Woodlands Ltd.—Crarae Forest Garden, Inveraray
National Trust for Scotland—Culross Palace Garden
Dinanean Estate—Dirnanean Estate Garden, Moulin
Formakin Estate Trustees—Formakin Estate Garden, Bishopton
City of Edinburgh District Council—Hopetoun Crescent Gardens, Edinburgh
Mr. Thomas Christie—Kellas Garden, by Elgin
A. G. Laing's 1961 Discretionary Settlement—Logie House Gardens, Forres
The Mellerstain Trust—Mellerstain House Garden, by Gordon
The Mount Stuart Trust—The policies (Grounds) of Mount Stuart, by Rothesay
Strathclyde Regional Council—Overtoun Estate Gardens, Dumbarton
Sir Islay Campbell—Poltalloch Garden, Inveraray
City of Edinburgh District Council—Princes Street Gardens, Edinburgh
Mr. George Gray—Smeaton-Hepburn Policies and Gardens, Inveresk
Dunbartonshire Enterprise—Strathleven House Garden, Balloch
P. A. and J. J. Kidston—Westerton Gardens, Elgin
Royal Botanic Garden—Younger Botanic Garden, Benmore

Children's Panels

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much was spent by his Department on *(a)* advertising for members of children's panels or *(b)* on other aspects of the panels, in each year since 1979; what advertising agencies were involved in each case; and how decisions are arrived at regarding the strategy for advertising.

Mr. Stewart: Since 1982 the Scottish Office has commissioned advertising agencies to assist with national campaigns to recruit members for children's panels. Expenditure is as follows:

Agency	Year	Cost (£)
Hall Advertising	1982	24,000
Hall Advertising	1983	22,000
	1984	[2]—
Ogilvie and Mather	1985	21,900
Ogilvie and Mather	1986	18,700
Faulds Advertising	1987	26,000
Faulds Advertising	1988	30,000
Faulds Advertising	1989	45,000
Faulds Advertising	1990	46,900
Faulds Advertising	1991	65,800
Faulds Advertising	1992	81,400
Faulds Advertising	1993	[1]81,000

[1]Estimate.
[2]No campaign.

The agencies were selected by the Scottish Office information directorate on the basis of tendered bids.

Faulds Agency won the 1993 "Best Recruitment Advertisement" award in the Scottish advertising competition organised by the "Scotmedia" campaign.

A small planning group comprising representatives of local children's panel advisory committees—who have statutory responsibility for selecting persons suitable to be panel members—advises the agency on the form of advertisement to be used. Decisions about which newspapers and magazines should carry advertisements are taken on the advice of the advisory committees and the agency taking account of the circulation of publications in the various regions.

The other main expenditure incurred by the Scottish Office on the children's hearings system relates to the training of children's panel members and related agencies. This work is underpinned by tutor-organisers based at four Scottish universities and the Scottish Office has funded their salaries and associated expenses since 1979. Total Scottish Office expenditure on training is as follows:

Year	*Cost £*
1979-80	41,000
1980-81	48,500
1981-82	51,000
1982-83	59,000
1983-84	81,000
1984-85	99,000
1985-86	90,000
1986-87	109,000
1987-88	131,000
1988-89	152,000
1989-90	178,000
1990-91	218,000
1991-92	245,000
1992-93	275,000
1993-94	[1]300,000

[1] Estimate

Development Agencies

Mr. Hood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the development agencies in Scotland, together with their directors; and how much has been paid to each director, including expenses in each of the past five years.

Mr. Stewart: The following tables set out the names and periods of appointment of the chairmen and board members of Scottish Enterprise and of Highlands and Islands Enterprise and of their predecessor bodies, the Scottish Development Agency and the Highlands and Islands Development Board. The salaries payable at 1 April in each of the last five years are set out in the tables. Details of precise payments made including expenses are not readily available.

There are no other economic development agencies in respect of which my right hon. Friend is responsible for the appointment and remuneration of board members. In particular, the Scottish Office does not keep systematic records of the board membership of local enterprise companies. The board members of local enterprise companies receive no remuneration in respect of their membership. Reimbursement of expenses incurred by board members in connection with their membership is a matter for the companies themselves.

Scottish Enterprise

Name	*Period of appointment*	*Salary from* 1 October 1990 £	1 April 1991 £	1 April 1992 £	1 April 1993 £
Sir David Nickson, KBE, DL, *Chairman*	1 October 1990—17 January 1993	43,000	46,440	48,483	—
Professor Donald MacKay, *Chairman*	18 January 1993—to date	—	—	47,552	47,552
Ronald Garrick, *Member*	1 October 1990—7 May 1991	6,000	6,450	—	—
Deputy Chairman	8 May 1991—to date	—	9,855	10,250	10,545
Crawford Beveridge, *Chief Executive and ex-officio Member*	7 January 1991—to date	Paid as Chief Executive (not paid as Board Member)			
Professor Andrew Bain	11 April 1991—to date	—	6,450	6,833	7,030
Tom Farmer, CBE	1 October 1990—to date	6,000	6,450	6,833	7,030
Ann Gloag	1 October 1990—30 October 1990	6,000	—	—	—
Charles Gray, JP	1 October 1990—to date	6,000	6,450	6,833	7,030
Sir Graham Hills	1 October 1990—to date	6,000	6,450	6,833	7,030
Glenda Hogarth-Coull, MBE	1 October 1990—to date	6,000	6,450	6,833	7,030
Barbara Kelly, CBE	1 October 1990—to date	6,000	6,450	6,833	7,030
Gavin Laird, CBE	1 October 1990—6 February 1992	6,000	6,450	—	—
Cameron McLatchie, OBE	1 October 1990—to date	6,000	6,450	6,833	7,030
Professor John C. Shaw, CBE	1 October 1990—to date	6,000	6,450	6,833	7,030

Name	Period of appointment	Salary from 1 October 1990 £	1 April 1991 £	1 April 1992 £	1 April 1993 £
Yvonne Strachan	7 February 1992—to date	—	6,450	6,833	7,030

Highlands and Islands Enterprise

Name	Period of appointment	Salary from 1 October 1990 £	1 April 1991 £	1 April 1992 £	1 April 1993 £
Sir Robert Cowan	1 October 1990—31 August 1992[1]	57,105	61,390	65,030	—
A. Fraser Morrison, CBE, *Member*	1 October 1990—31 August 1992	6,000	6,430	6,830	—
Chairman	1 September 1992—to date	—	—	26,012	26,762
Iain A. Robertson, *Chief Executive (ex-officio Member)*	1 October 1990—to date	50,000	53,750	56,940	58,580
Philip Hamilton Grierson	1 October 1990—30 April 1993[1]	52,650	56,600	59,960	—
Mrs. Patricia Grant, OBE	1 October 1990—2 March 1993[2]	6,000	6,450	6,830	—
John A. D. Harrison, OBE	1 October 1990—to date	6,000	6,450	6,830	7,030
Dr. James Hunter	1 October 1990—to date	6,000	6,450	6,830	7,030
Angus S. MacDonald, CBE	1 October 1990—to date	6,000	6,450	6,830	7,030
Mrs. Valerie MacIver	1 October 1990—to date	6,000	6,450	6,830	7,030
John D. M. Robertson, OBE	1 October 1990—to date	6,000	6,450	6,830	7,030
Peter Timms, MBE	1 October 1990—to date	6,000	6,450	6,830	7,030
John Angus Mackay	1 April 1991—to date	—	6,450	6,830	7,030

[1] Retired.
[2] Resigned.

Scottish Development Agency

Name	Period of appointment	Salary from 1 April 1989 £	1 April 1990 £
Sir David Nickson, KBE, DL *Member*	1 January 1988—31 December 1988		
Chairman	1 January 1989—31 March 1991	35,870	40,602
Sir Douglas Hardie, CBE, JP *Member*	15 December 1978—2 February 1981		
Deputy Chairman	3 February 1981—31 March 1991	18,550	19,665
Iain Robertson, *Chief Executive and ex-officio Member*	1 September 1987—16 April 1990	Paid as Chief Executive (not paid as Board Member)	
James Scott, CB, LVO *Chief Executive and ex-officio Member*	15 April 1990—31 March 1991	Paid as Chief Executive (not paid as Board Member)	
Sir Graham Hills	1 January 1988—31 March 1991	5,065	5,370
Gavin Laird, CBE	1 January 1987—31 March 1991	5,065	5,370
Sir Robert Cowan	1 February 1982—31 March 1991	Paid as Chairman of HIDB (not paid as Board Member)	
Sir Peter Main	1 January 1986—31 March 1991	5,065	5,370
Councillor Jean McFadden	1 January 1989—31 March 1991	5,065	5,370

Name	Period of appointment	Salary from 1 April 1989 £	Salary from 1 April 1990 £
George Robertson, FRICS	1 January 1987—31 March 1991	5,065	5,370
Ian Wood, CBE	1 April 1984—30 June 1990	5,065	5,370
James F. Gordon, CBE	1 January 1981—30 June 1990	5,065	5,370

Note: Individuals who held overlapping appointments on the Scottish Development Agency and the Scottish Enterprise boards between 1 October 1990 and 1 April 1991 received one salary only in respect of both appointments.

Highlands and Islands Development Board

Name	Period of appointment	Salary from 1 April 1989 £	Salary from 1 April 1990 £
Full-time Members			
Sir Robert Cowan, *Chairman*	1 February 1982—continued as Chairman of Highlands and Islands Enterprise	53,340	56,540
Philip Hamilton-Grierson	1 May 1988—continued as Member of Highlands and Islands Enterprise	49,180	52,130
Robin A. Lingard	1 January 1988—31 March 1991	44,054	46,695
J. A. MacAskill	1 January 1990—31 March 1991	39,149	41,500
Part-time Members			
Angus S. MacDonald, CBE	1 November 1988—continued as a Member of Highlands and Islands Enterprise	7,663	8,123
Calum A. MacLeod	1 December 1983—31 March 1991	7,663	8,123
Colin D. R. Whittle	1 January 1988—31 March 1991	7,663	8,123

Note: Individuals who held overlapping appointments on the Highlands and Islands Development Board and the Highlands and Islands Enterprise boards between 1 October 1990 and 1 April 1991 received one salary only in respect of both appointments.

DEFENCE

Foreign Aircraft (Accidents)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list those accidents to foreign military aircraft in the United Kingdom in the last 10 years for which summaries of the official accident report have been released by his Department.

Mr. Hanley: Such summaries are not published by the Ministry of Defence. The responsibility for the publication of any such reports or summaries lies with the parent air force or Government.

Low Flying

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the number of low-flying sorties over the United Kingdom by each type of aircraft in each month since May 1992.

Mr. Hanley: The numbers of low-flying sorties by aircraft type carried out in the United Kingdom for the period May 1992 to June 1993, the most recent month for which figures are available, are as follows:

Number of Aircraft Sorties by type
May 1992 to December 1992

Aircraft type	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	Total
Buccaneer	118	130	197	171	177	116	118	74	1,101
F4	67	184	187	66	63	29	1	0	597
Harrier	803	723	936	355	501	611	514	389	4,832
Hawk	1,802	1,515	1,826	1,536	1,443	1,610	1,198	648	11,578
Jaguar	347	549	594	401	485	674	543	311	3,904
Jet Provost	665	526	795	611	387	758	442	254	4,438
Tornado	2,215	2,247	2,409	1,849	1,687	2,375	1,676	1,079	15,537
Tucano	354	324	462	407	315	697	403	254	3,216
A10	635	424	336	255	170	133	124	98	2,175
F15	9	18	54	73	123	168	161	92	698
F111	749	612	638	584	361	510	324	227	4,005

Aircraft type	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	Total
Other aircraft (including helicopters)	4,512	4,853	4,671	3,695	5,579	3,377	4,180	2,446	33,329
Monthly total sorties	12,276	12,105	13,105	10,003	11,291	11,058	9,684	5,872	85,394

Number of Aircraft Sorties by type
January 1993 to June 1993

Aircraft type	January	February	March	April	May	June	Total
Buccaneer	105	165	198	129	56	166	819
Harrier	591	750	1,114	255	533	649	3,892
Hawk	954	1,399	1,364	916	1,862	1,467	7,962
Jaguar	458	458	653	609	328	469	2,975
Jet Provost	356	347	458	381	320	183	2,045
Tornado	1,850	1,748	2,169	1,458	1,674	2,192	11,091
Tucano	430	428	714	508	625	876	3,581
A10	155	46	0	0	0	0	201
F15	206	280	349	286	263	367	1,751
F111	283	338	332	342	294	321	1,910
Other aircraft (including helicopters)	2,744	4,162	5,658	3,755	4,639	5,140	26,098
Monthly total sorties	8,132	10,121	13,009	8,639	10,594	11,830	62,325

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the current and projected requirements for night low-flying training by Harrier GR7 aircraft, in terms of numbers of sorties per year; in what months of the year this training will take place; what proportion of this training will take place *(a)* in Germany, *(b)* in the United Kingdom and *(c)* from Goose Bay, Canada; and if he will list the other countries where this training will take place with the proportion in each case.

Mr. Hanley: Night low-flying is usually conducted between September and April. It is estimated that the Harrier night flight will conduct around 500 night low-flying sorties in 1993-94. The figure is expected to rise to some 750 sorties by the end of the 1995-96 night low-flying season as further squadrons commence training. In 1993-94 it is planned that some 77 per cent. of Harrier GR7 night flying will be conducted in the United Kingdom night low-flying system, and some 16 per cent. in the United States of America and some 7 per cent. in Norway. At present, the Harrier GR7 does not conduct night low-flying training in Germany or Goose Bay.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what measures are taken to ensure that fixed low-flying routes in the United Kingdom low-flying system in use by different units do not follow similar routes or use the same turning points.

Mr. Hanley: No specific measures are required as the only fixed low-flying routes flown in the United Kingdom are the small number needed for training units to ensure common training standards. These routes are used as little as possible and replaced at regular intervals in accordance with low-flying regulations.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what monitoring is undertaken of the frequency of use, and frequency of alteration or amendment, of fixed low-flying routes in the United Kingdom which are in use by *(a)* Royal Air Force units and *(b)* United States air force units.

Mr. Hanley: Fixed low-flying routes are not flown by Royal Air Force operational squadrons as aircrew are required to plan their sorties individually. A small number of fixed low-level routes are however, needed for training units to ensure common training standards. These routes are monitored locally as a normal low-flying management function; they are varied as much as possible and are in any case replaced at regular intervals. United States air force units do not fly fixed routes in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many complaints have been received by each of the Royal Air Force community relations officers responsible for low-flying complaints in each year since their establishment; and what proportion of these complaints have been referred to the Secretariat (Air Staff) in London.

Mr. Hanley: Regional community relations officers (RCRO) for Cumbria and the Borders were established in January 1992 and for Wales in August 1993. RCRO Wales received four complaints during that month, three of which were referred to the Secretariat (Air Staff) for further action.

	RCRO Cumbria		RCRO Borders	
	1992	[1]1993	1992	[1]1993
Number of complaints received	478	342	281	266
Number of complaints referred to the Secretariat (Air Staff) for further action	154	230	101	177

[1] To the end of August 1993, the latest month for which figures are available.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the required horizontal avoidance distances by military fast jet aircraft of *(a)* helicopter lifting operations, *(b)* helicopter crop spraying operations, *(c)* fixed-wing crop spraying operations and *(d)* aerial photo survey work, which have been notified under the civil aircraft notification procedure.

Mr. Hanley: Civil pilots notifying these types of low-level aerial activity under the civil aircraft notification procedure must specify the location and horizontal dimensions of the area in which they will be operating together with the maximum height of their activities. The horizontal dimensions of the temporary avoidance area notified to pilots of military fixed wing aircraft flying in excess of 140 knots coincide with those specified by the civil pilot.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current minimum altitude flown by United States air force *(a)* F15E and *(b)* F111 aircraft in the Highlands restricted area (i) during automatic terrain-following radar flights in instrument meteorological conditions and (ii) during automatic terrain-following radar flights at night.

Mr. Hanley: The minimum altitude flown by the F111 in the Highlands restricted area (HRA) at all times is 1,000 ft. The F15E has not flown in the HRA.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what types of aircraft are currently permitted to use the Highlands restricted area for night or instrument low-flying training.

Mr. Hanley: Aircraft fitted with a terrain-following radar suite may be permitted to fly in the Highlands restricted area (HRA). Aircraft that currently use the HRA are Tornado GR1 and USAF F111 and C130s.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the number of low-flying sorties carried out over the United Kingdom by *(a)* Dominie aircraft, *(b)* Hercules aircraft and *(c)* all types of helicopter in each year since 1985.

Mr. Hanley: The number of low-flying sorties carried out in the United Kingdom by Hercules aircraft and helicopters in each year since 1985 is as follows:

	Hercules	*Helicopters*
1985	3,501	35,345
1986	2,724	38,847
1987	3,106	40,457
1988	2,787	44,608
1989	3,105	40,353
1990	2,052	38,844
1991	1,733	37,750
1992	2,357	41,859

Central records are not kept separately of the number of low-flying sorties carried out by Dominie aircraft.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many *(a)* new simulated targets have been added to and *(b)* existing simulated targets have been withdrawn from, the Strike command list of simulated targets for dive or toss attack, since 1990.

Mr. Hanley: A list of changes is not held. Once a new list is issued, approximately every six months, the old one is destroyed.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the dates, locations, type of aircraft and circumstances of all incidents since November 1990 in which military aircraft have made unintentional contact with the ground or with ground features such as trees or power lines.

Mr. Hanley: The information requested is as follows:

Date	*Location*	*Type*	*Circumstances*
26 November 1990	Scotland	RAF Tornado	Wirestrike
1 February 1991	Northern Ireland	RAF Wessex	Wirestrike
18 February 1991	Norway	AAC Lynx	Blades struck power cables
25 May 1991	Northern Ireland	RAF Puma	Wirestrike
28 June 1991	Northern Ireland	RAF Puma	Possible wirestrike
9 January 1992	Middle Wallop	AAC Gazelle	Tail struck ground during hover
25 March 1992	Germany	AAC Gazelle	Rotor struck tree foliage while low-flying
1 June 1992	Germany	AAC Lynx	Tail rotor blades contacted tree foliage
1 July 1992	7nm SE of Flambrough Head	RAF Sea King	Winch cable struck yacht boom
8 August 1992	Salisbury Plain	AAC Gazelle	Hover blades struck tree branches
21 October 1992	Germany	AAC Gazelle	While low-flying, blades struck power cables
13 November 1992	Netheravon	AAC Gazelle	Hit ground
8 March 1993	Canada	AAC Gazelle	Strong crosswind caused tail flange to hit ground
16 March 1993	Germany	AAC Gazelle	Hover blades struck tree branches
31 March 1993	Germany	AAC Gazelle	Forward aerials struck ground during hover
7 May 1993	Salisbury Plain	AAC Gazelle	Tail flange struck ground in deceleration
24 May 1993	Norfolk	AAC Lynx	While hovering near trees, recirculation encountered. No indication of blade strike although blade tips found damaged on landing
21 June 1993	Germany	AAC Gazelle	Blades struck tree branches

Note: Records of Royal Navy aircraft incidents are not held and therefore the list only covers Royal Air Force and the Army Air Corps.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many sorties are required to maintain the currency of night low-flying qualifications for Tornado GR1 and GR1A aircrew.

Mr. Hanley: To maintain currency of night low-flying qualifications Tornado GR1 and GR1A aircrew are required to fly a minimum of eight night low-flying sorties per year.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the minimum requirements in terms of *(a)* number of flying hours experience on the aircraft type concerned, *(b)* number of flying hours experience on fast jet aircraft as a whole, *(c)* length of service and *(d)* current minimum altitude qualifications, for Royal Air Force aircrew to commence training at 100 ft minimum separation distance on (i) the Harrier, (ii) the Jaguar and (iii) the Tornado; and what changes have been made to these requirements since 1979.

Mr Hanley: The minimum number of flying hours experience required on fast jet aircraft before RAF aircrew can commence training below 250 ft down to a height of 100 ft minimum separation distance on Harrier, Jaguar and Tornado aircraft is 300 hours of which 250 hours must have been conducted on the aircraft type concerned. In 1979 the minimum requirement was 275 hours on fast jet of which 200 hours had to be flown on the aircraft type concerned. Aircrew must be qualified to fly at 250 ft

minimum separation distance before they commence training below that height. The criteria for personnel engaged on flying below 250 ft do not include a qualifying length of service.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will place in the Library a copy of the report on the night low-flying activity survey carried out in the north east of England in 1990.

Mr. Hanley: My Department is unaware of any such survey and report.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the current minimum altitude flown by Royal Air Force Tornados in the Highlands restricted area *(a)* during automatic terrain-following radar flights in instrument meteorological conditions and *(b)* during automatic terrain-following radar flights at night.

Mr. Hanley: Five hundred feet in both cases.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many night low-flying sorties were carried out over the United Kingdom by USAF F15E aircraft in 1992; and what changes in this activity are projected for 1993 and 1994.

Mr. Hanley: Figures for night low-flying sorties by aircraft type are not available. Figures are, however, held for the number of night low-flying movements conducted by aircraft type over the United Kingdom. During 1992 the USAF F15E aircraft, which commenced night low-flying in October of that year, carried out 252 night low-level movements. It is estimated that in 1993 the F15E will conduct around 1,900 night low-level movements. The USAF requirement for night low-flying in 1994 has not yet been determined.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the addresses and telephone numbers of those Royal Air Force community relations officers whose principal role is to act as a local point of contact for complaints about low-flying.

Mr. Hanley: The addresses and telephone numbers of the RAF regional community relations officers, who act as a focal point for complaints about low-flying in areas remote from RAF stations, are as follows:

Ministry of Defence
RAF Regional Community Relations Officer (Cumbria)
Inglewood Road
Penrith
Cumbria
CA11 8QN

Telephone: 0768-891391

Ministry of Defence
RAF Regional Community Relations Officer (Borders)
Tormore House
Nithbank
St Michael Street
Dumfries

Telephone: 0387-57512

Ministry of Defence
RAF Regional Community Relations Officer (Wales)
New Dolanog House
Severn Road
Welshpool
Powys
SY21 7DA

Telephone: 0938-556363

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the total number of low-flying movements recorded in the United Kingdom low-flying system in each year since 1989.

Mr. Hanley: The information requested is as follows:

Year	*Number of movements*
1989	302,721
1990	313,026
1991	256,149
1992	288,933

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the minimum equipment requirements for aircraft carrying out night or instrument low-flying in the Highlands restricted area.

Mr. Hanley: Aircraft conducting manual terrain-following training in the Highlands restricted area must have a fully serviceable terrain-following radar suite which, as a minimum equipment requirement, includes a terrain-following radar, a radar altimeter and a position-fixing aid. For automatic terrain following, the suite must also include a coupled autopilot.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what were the dates, locations, and type and nationality of aircraft involved in each of the breaches of low-flying regulations detected by Skyguard radar during covert monitoring of the United Kingdom low-flying system since June 1989; and what disciplinary action was taken in respect of each incident.

Mr. Hanley: Details of the apparent breaches of low-flying regulations detected by Skyguard during covert monitoring of the United Kingdom low-flying system are as follows:

Date	*Location*	*Type*	*Aircraft Nationality*
28 June 1989	Knaresborough	Jaguar	RAF
29 June 1989	Knaresborough	Harrier	RAF
29 June 1989	Knaresborough	Tornado	RAF
29 June 1989	Knaresborough	Jaguar	RAF
2 October 1990	East Leyton, Richmond	Tornado	RAF
16 July 1991	Eshott, Northumberland Airfield	F4	German Air Force
16 July 1991	Eshott, Northumberland Airfield	F4	German Air Force
16 July 1991	Eshott, Northumberland Airfield	F4	German Air Force
2 July 1992	Beverly/Linley Hill Aerodrome	Tornado	RAF

These apparent breaches of low-flying regulations were not the subject of court martial or summary disposal proceedings under the service discipline Acts. Any other action lies with the commanding officer of the RAF station concerned. It is not our policy to release details of action taken by commanding officers in such cases.

Breaches of low-flying regulations by non-United Kingdom-based foreign aircrew are notified to the air attaché of the country concerned for appropriate action.

RAF Training

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the number and type of aircraft involved, and the dates, of Royal Air Force training deployments to *(a)* Morocco and *(b)* Egypt, since 1984.

Mr. Hanley: Although records are not held centrally to cover the period in question, the following RAF aircraft are known to have been involved in deployments to Morocco and Egypt since 1989:

(a) Morocco:

(i) May 1989: Four Tornado GR1s and four Chinooks plus Hercules and tanker support.

(ii) June 1989: Two Jaguars.

(iii) April 1990: Two Tornado GR1As.

(b) Egypt:

(i) April 1990: Four Tornado F3s and five Buccaneers based at RAF Akrotiri in Cyprus flew a number of sorties in Egyptian airspace.

(ii) October 1991: Ten Tornado F3s, six Buccaneers, one Nimrod and one VC10 tanker based at RAF Akrotiri in Cyprus flew a number of sorties in Egyptian airspace.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on his plans for future tactical training developments by Royal Air Force aircraft to Eielson air force base, Alaska; and what effect such training provision will have on the nature and frequency of RAF training deployments to Goose Bay.

Mr. Hanley: There are no plans to change the nature of the RAF's training deployments to Alaska from the two to three exercises in which they currently participate each year. This commitment has no effect on either the nature or the frequency of deployments to Goose Bay, as the two types of training are complementary.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what were the dates of the Royal Air Force distant frontier training deployment to Alaska in 1993; how many aircraft, and of what types, took part; how many low-level sorties were flown by each type of aircraft; and how many squadrons sent crews for training on this deployment.

Mr. Hanley: Details of RAF participation in 1993 distant frontier exercises are as follows:

Dates	*Number and type of aircraft*	*Low-level sorties*		*Squadrons deployed*	
1 May to 14 May	7 Tornado GR1	GR1/1A	114	GR1/1A	27 Squadron
	2 GR1A	F3	115	F3	5 Squadron
	8 Tornado F3				
14 to 28 May	7 Tornado GR1	GR1/1A	110	GR1/1A	31 Squadron
	2 GR1A	F3	115	F3	43 Squadron
	8 Tornado F3				

In addition, the RAF also took part in exercise Cope Thunder in Alaska. The details are:

Dates	*Number and type of aircraft*	*Low-level sorties*		*Squadrons deployed*	
17 April to 1 May	7 Tornado GR1	GR1/1A	99	GR1/1A	13 Squadron
	2 GR1A	F3	99	F3	29 Squadron
	8 Tornado F3	C-130	18	C-130	47 Squadron
	1 C-130				

Only crews from the squadrons indicated deployed on these exercises.

Tornado

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the factors determining whether a Tornado GR1/GR1A squadron deploys to Goose Bay for training for two weeks or for three weeks.

Mr. Hanley: There are no specific reasons which determine whether a Tornado squadron deploys to Goose Bay for two weeks or three. Two-week deployments are generally the norm, as this is the usual period between the other north American exercises for which the aircraft are working up. If any further weeks become available however, they will be allocated, subject to other commitments, to whichever squadrons are considered likely to derive most benefit from them.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the total number of hours flown by Tornado GR1 and GR1A aircraft in each year since 1980.

Mr. Hanley: The information requested is as follows:

Year	*Flying Hours*
1980	135
1981	2,623
1982	8,377
1983	16,481
1984	27,104
1985	35,199
1986	44,570
1987	42,859
1988	48,035
1989	46,561
1990	48,954
1991	41,700
1992	39,392

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what changes have been made to the provisions for quick reaction alert of Royal Air Force Tornado GR1 aircraft based in Germany since 1990.

Mr. Hanley: The NATO requirement for quick reaction alert of Tornado GR1 in Germany ceased in November 1986.

Dive/Toss Attack

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list those units still using the Strike Command list of simulated targets for dive/toss attack.

Mr. Hanley: The units continuing to use this list for training purposes are:

RNAS Yeovilton
RAF Alconbury
RAF Bruggen
RAF Chivenor
RAF Coltishall
RAF Cottesmore
RAF Finningley
RAF Honington
RAF Laarbruch
RAF Lakenheath
RAF Lossiemouth
RAF Marham
RAF Scampton
RAF Upper Heyford
RAF Valley
RAF Wittering
RAF Wyton
T and EE Boscombe Down
T and EE Farnborough

Note:
RNAS—Royal Naval Air Station.
T and EE—Test and Evaluation Establishment.

Quick Reaction Forces

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what changes have been made to the provisions for quick reaction alert air defence forces in the United Kingdom since 1990.

Mr. Hanley: Since 1990, as a result of the reduced number of Soviet/Russian aircraft movements, the number of stations involved in quick reaction alert has been reduced from two to one and the number of aircraft reduced from four to two Tornado F3s. In addition, the reaction time has been extended.

Unidentified Aircraft

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the average weekly number of interceptions of unidentified or unauthorised aircraft in the United Kingdom air defence region by British military aircraft in each year since 1987.

Mr. Hanley: The information requested is given in the table:

Year	*Weekly average*
1987	3-4
1988	2-3
1989	1-2
1990	0-1
1991	0-1
1992	0
1993	0

Foreign Air (Accidents)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all accidents to foreign military aircraft on British territory for which a safety investigation committee has been established under the terms of NATO STANAG 3531, paragraph 11.

Mr. Hanley: Although NATO STANAG 3531 allows both the operating nation and host nation to participate in the joint investigation of an accident, in practice, if an accident occurred in the United Kingdom, we would normally permit the operating nation to investigate its own accident unless United Kingdom agencies had been involved. If requested by the operating nation, the United Kingdom would provide assistance. As a result, a complete record of such accidents is not maintained by the Ministry of Defence.

RAF Inspectorate of Flight Safety

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the titles and names of contractors for all externally commissioned research work on behalf of the Royal Air Force inspectorate of flight safety since 1985.

Mr. Hanley: The information requested is as follows:

Contractor and Study Title

Plessey Avionics
Feasibility study into retrofitting Accident Data Recorders to certain in-service aircraft.

Normalair-Garrett
Feasibility and costing study into the visual display of Accident Data Recorder information.

British Aerospace RAE Bedford
Trial of a Ground Proximity Warning System.

SD-Sicon EASAMS
Electronic Collision Warning System:
Study of Technologies
Proof and Demonstration of Concept

ICL (TOPIX)
Study to replace the IFS(RAF) Accident/Incident Statistical and Associated Databases.

ALFENS

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are his current estimated dates for the *(a)* initial and *(b)* full operating capability of the automated low-flying flight planning inquiry and notification system; what period of delay these dates represent over the original completion date agreed in the production contract; and what are the causes of the delays.

Mr. Hanley: The programme for completion of the ALFENS project is under review. It is likely that there will be some delay beyond the date specified in the production contract. We are not yet in a position to provide a revised completion date.

RAF East Camp, Hendon

Mr. Gorst: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the value of the 36 acre site at RAF East Camp in Hendon; what was its estimated value six years ago; and what effect his Department expects further delays in its disposal to have on the return on the sale of the site.

Mr. Hanley: This information is commercial in confidence and it would be prejudicial to current and future negotiations for the sale of the site to release it. The effect of further delays in the disposal of the site on the financial return from sale is dependent on the movement of property values in general.

Mr. Gorst: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence to what extent listed buildings of a national heritage calibre are being vandalised and are falling into disrepair at the 36 acre site at RAF East Camp in Hendon; and when he estimates that work to develop this section set aside for the RAF museum will be started.

Mr. Hanley: The listed buildings at the former East Camp of RAF Hendon are being protected against vandalism and the weather as far as possible, but as the buildings are not in use, they can be expected to deteriorate. Negotiations over the area set aside for the RAF museum continue and we aim to conclude them as quickly as possible.

Mr. Gorst: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence for how long the 36 acre site at RAF East Camp in Hendon has been vacant; and if he will make a statement on the reasons for the delay in disposal of the site.

Mr. Hanley: The former East Camp of RAF Hendon has been vacant for 5·5 years. A downturn in the property market, inadequate infrastructure for alternative uses, listed building constraints and an inability to reconcile local planning aspirations with developer demand have contributed to the delay in disposal of the site.

Mr. Gorst: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to develop the 36 acre site at RAF East Camp in Hendon; when he estimates that they will be implemented; and if he will give an estimate of the effect on the revenues to his Department of the length of time during which this property has been left vacant.

Mr. Hanley: It remains our aim to bring about the development of the former East Camp of RAF Hendon as soon as practicable. Two acres have been sold to the Metropolitan police and an offer for a further five acres of the site including the former officers mess is under consideration. My Department is unable to secure the viable reuse of the majority of East Camp and optimise the potential financial return while wider planning issues remain unresolved.

Mr. Gorst: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will set up a public inquiry to establish the circumstances that have led to a delay in the development of the RAF East Camp in Hendon and to the state of listed buildings on the site; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: No such inquiry is planned.

Mr. Gorst: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what problems his Department has encountered relating to planning permission from the borough of Barnet in disposing of the 36 acre site at RAF East Camp in Hendon; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: Negotiations with the London borough of Barnet have been protracted and there remains a fundamental difference of opinion between the borough council, the Ministry of Defence and our professional consultants regarding the ways in which the site might be redeveloped. In particular, the borough council's planning brief has not generated any viable commercial interest when tested in the marketplace, given the constraints upon the site and the generally depressed state of the property market. We are, however, maintaining a constructive dialogue to try to resolve the difficulties as quickly as possible.

Piers

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the location and number of piers previously owned by his Ministry which have been sold in Scotland in the past 10 years; and if he will give details of the purchaser and the selling price in each case.

Mr. Hanley: Details of the piers in Scotland formerly owned by my Department which have been sold in the past 10 years and the purchaser in each case are set out below. The sale prices are commercial in confidence.

Location	*Purchaser*	*Date sold*
Arrochar	Clydebank Developments	21 January 1993
Invergordon	The Bannerman Company	31 May 1993
Inveraray	I. Turner	2 June 1993
Holy Loch (Ardnadam)	G. R. Thompson	11 June 1993

In addition, offers for the purchase of two further piers at Holy Loch (Sandbank) and Gourock are at an advanced stage of consideration by my Department.

Aldermaston

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) of 22 July, *Official Report*, column *353*, if he will set out the reason for the confidentiality of the Aldermaston Radioactive Waste and Decommissioning Document to which he refers; and whether he applies the harm test to the refusal to disclose information, as set out at paragraph 3.7 of the White Paper on open government (Cm 2290).

Mr. Aitken: The decommissioning plan is a classified document and the waste management plan contains commercially sensitive information. The information contained in these two documents is such that the harm test, as set out in paragraph 3.7 of the White Paper on open government (Cm 2290), is applicable.

Anthony Evans

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what action has been taken to discipline those soldiers identified as being involved in the racial abuse and harrassment of Anthony George Evans, a former private in the first battalion of the Royal Regiment of Wales.

Mr. Hanley: The soldiers were dealt with summarily by their commanding officer. It is not our practice to comment on the disciplinary action taken by commanding officers in such cases.

Depleted Uranium

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 19 July 1993, *Official Report*, column *80*, whether the testing of depleted uranium-tipped shells is covered by his policy of not revealing the costs of nuclear testing.

Mr. Aitken: No. Depleted uranium (DU) is not a fissile material and is used for armour-piercing projectiles because of its high density and mechanical properties. Ammunition natures which incorporate DU cannot be regarded as nuclear weapons, do not form part of the defence nuclear programme, and it is not sensible to link their testing with the testing of nuclear weapons.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received since 28 July from *(a)* serving members of the armed forces, *(b)* retired service people and *(c)* members of the public who fear they are suffering (i) from the alleged Desert Storm syndrome or (ii) from the effects of testing missiles tipped with depleted uranium at sites in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Hanley: Since 28 July my Department have received one representation from an ex-soldier who alleges he is suffering from Desert Storm syndrome. He has been advised to consult his general practitioner in the first instance with a view to referring the case to the defence medical services.

Fylingdales

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the electromagnetic radiation levels around the Fylingdales monitoring station in Yorkshire.

Mr. Hanley: I am writing to the hon. Member and will place a copy of the letter in the Library of the House.

Ammunition

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what guidelines are issued on the use of *(a)* dum-dum bullets and *(b)* Frag 12 exploding ammunition in the United Kingdom by the armed forces.

Mr. Hanley: No such ammunition is held by our armed forces.

MOD Police

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence to what extent Home Office police regulations are applied to members of the Ministry of Defence police.

Mr. Hanley: The Ministry of Defence police force (MDP) is constituted in accordance with the Ministry of Defence Police Act 1987. This Act, from which the independent MDP force derives its authority, sets out where and how far the MDP powers and privileges of constable operate in the United Kingdom.

In addition to the 1987 Act, Home Office guidelines have been drawn up to assist in defining the respective responsibilities of the MDP and local police forces. These have been agreed by the Association of Chief Police Officers for England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland and by the chief constable MDP.

As with the Home Department Police Forces, the MDP operates in accordance with all appropriate legislation and in particular the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984.

As well as holding the office of constable, the MDP are non-industrial civil servants and their terms and conditions of employment being covered by both departmental and police regulations reflect this unique position. Those areas of employment specifically drawn from police regulations encompass:

Appointment Qualifications
Probation
Discipline
Conditional Allowances
Pay
Overtime
"Police" Allowances, e.g.:
- Housing
- Plain Clothes
- Detective Duty
- Detective Expenses

Leave

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if a Minister from his Department will meet representatives of the Ministry of Defence Police Federation to discuss the ramifications of *(a)* the Sheehy report, *(b)* the White Paper on police and *(c)* matters of general concern to federation members which are not operational matters reserved for the chief constable.

Mr. Hanley: The Government have yet to complete their deliberations on the way forward in implementing the recommendations of the Sheehy report and the White Paper on police and it is too early to say how far these initiatives will apply to the Ministry of Defence police. A review team is to be appointed under the chairmanship of Sir John Blelloch, to examine how these and other matters may affect the future structure, organisation and conditions of service of the Ministry of Defence police. The review team will consult widely and seek among others the views of the MOD police staff associations including the Defence Police Federation. These matters will also be considered in accordance with the normal consultative procedures and a special meeting of the Ministry of Defence police joint consultative committee (JCC) is to be convened for this purpose.

Under the terms of the consultative agreement the MOD police staff associations are allowed access to Ministers, but matters raised should normally have been first considered within the joint consultative committee forum. At this stage therefore it would be premature for Ministers to meet representatives of the Defence Police Federation, but should their representatives have continuing concerns following the special JCC meeting, it would be open for them to seek discussions at ministerial level.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence who serves on the police committee of the Ministry of Defence police; and how often it has met over the past five years.

Mr. Hanley: The current membership of the Ministry of Defence police committee is as follows:

Second Permanent Under Secretary of State—Chairman
Vice Chief of the Defence Staff—Vice Chairman
Deputy Under Secretary of State (Civilian Management)
Assistant Chief of the Defence Staff[1]—(Operations/Security)
Assistant Chief of the Naval Staff
Assistant Chief of the General Staff
Assistant Chief of the Air Staff[1]
Assistant Under Secretary of State (Security and Counter

Terrorism)—Clerk
Such other persons as the Secretary of State may from time to time appoint.

In addition, the following who are not members attend the meetings on a regular basis:

Chief Constable Ministry of Defence Police—accompanied by the Deputy Chief Constable MDP and Head of MDP Secretariat as required)
Police Adviser
Scottish Police Adviser

The number of times the police committee has met over the last five years is as follows:

Year	*Number*
1989	4
1990	3
1991	4
1992	4
1993	3
Total	18

[1] ACDS (Ops/Sy) and ACAS replace Assistant Under Secretary for Research and Development Establishments and Research Administration, AUS(ER), a defunct post and Commodore General and Director General of Security for the Royal Air Force (CG and DG SY(RAF)). The latter posts are at present included in statutory instrument 1988 No. 1098 which promulgates the police committee membership, but a new statutory instrument in the course of preparation will reflect the updated changes in composition.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what joint consultation procedure exists between the police committee of the Ministry of Defence police, and that force's Police Federation, and the representative bodies of other ranks at which matters relating to police pay and conditions of service are discussed; what is the membership of the joint body; and on how many occasions it has met in the past five years.

Mr. Hanley: Ministry of Defence police pay and conditions of service are discussed in accordance with the memorandum of agreement on the consultative machinery between the Ministry of Defence, the Defence Police Federation (DPF) and the Chief Police Officers Association (CPOA). The means of implementing this agreement is the Ministry of Defence police joint consultative committee (JCC). The membership of this joint consultative committee is as follows:

Official Side Representation
2nd Permanent Under Secretary of State—Chairman
Deputy Under Secretary of State (Civilian Management)—Deputy Chairman
Vice Chief of The Defence Staff
Chief Constable Ministry of Defence Police
Head of Ministry of Defence Police Secretariat
Staff Side Representation
Chairman of the Chief Police Officers' Association
Chairman of the Defence Police Federation
Vice-Chairman of the Defence Police Federation
General Secretary of the Defence Police Federation
Secretariat
Civilian Management (Ministry of Defence Police)

The JCC normally meets twice a year and there have been nine meetings in the past five years.

Search and Rescue

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many missions have been flown by search and rescue helicopters at each RAF and naval search and rescue base in the United Kingdom in each year since 1986; and how many of these missions were military and how many civilian.

Mr. Hanley: The information requested is given below:

1986

	Civilian	*Military*	*Total*
RAF			
Boulmer	90	14	104
Brawdy	87	11	98
Chivenor	98	12	110
Coltishall	65	10	75
Leconfield	74	18	92
Leuchars	109	11	120
Lossiemouth	151	16	167
Manston	98	2	100
Valley	123	5	128
Aldergrove	6	0	6
RAF Total	901	99	1,000
RN			
Culdrose	75	3	78
Lee-on-Solent	115	4	119
Portland	5	0	5
Prestwick	53	5	58
RN Total	248	12	260

1987

	Civilian	*Military*	*Total*
RAF			
Boulmer	104	16	120
Brawdy	117	17	134
Chivenor	107	21	128
Coltishall	89	18	107
Leconfield	81	12	93
Leuchars	103	10	113
Lossiemouth	134	19	153
Manston	117	4	121
Valley	137	15	152
Aldergrove	18	0	18
RAF Total	1,007	132	1,139
RN			
Culdrose	116	38	154
Lee-on-Solent	131	5	136
Portland	1	0	1
Prestwick	49	6	55
RN Total	297	49	346

1988

	Civilian	*Military*	*Total*
RAF			
Boulmer	116	9	125
Brawdy	141	13	154
Chivenor	169	19	188
Coltishall	79	14	93
Leconfield	103	10	113
Leuchars	134	18	152
Lossiemouth	128	18	146
Manston	144	3	147
Valley	158	9	167
Aldergrove	16	1	17
RAF Total	1,188	114	1,302
RN			
Culdrose	143	27	170
Lee-on-Solent	67	3	70
Portland	104	9	113
Prestwick	70	12	82
RN Total	384	51	435

1989

	Civilian	Military	Total
RAF			
Boulmer	112	13	125
Brawdy	143	5	148
Chivenor	176	13	189
Coltishall	74	23	97
Leconfield	128	14	142
Leuchars	114	19	133
Lossiemouth	126	10	136
Manston	157	8	165
Valley	179	13	192
Aldergrove	19	0	19
RAF Total	1,228	118	1,346
RN			
Culdrose	204	11	215
Lee-on-Solent	0	0	0
Portland	105	16	121
Prestwick	80	6	86
RN Total	389	33	422

1990

	Civilian	Military	Total
RAF			
Boulmer	127	10	137
Brawdy	163	9	172
Chivenor	145	12	157
Coltishall	74	24	98
Leconfield	125	16	141
Leuchars	119	6	125
Lossiemouth	154	15	169
Manston	175	5	180
Valley	160	16	176
Aldergrove	9	0	9
RAF Total	1,251	113	1,364
RN			
Culdrose	213	24	237
Lee-on-Solent	0	0	0
Portland	97	12	109
Prestwick	126	7	133
RN Total	436	43	479

1991

	Civilian	Military	Total
RAF			
Boulmer	108	10	118
Brawdy	155	7	162
Chivenor	139	10	149
Coltishall	60	10	70
Leconfield	99	12	111
Leuchars	154	7	161
Lossiemouth	208	16	224
Manston	141	7	148
Valley	155	11	166
Aldergrove	19	2	21
RAF Total	1,238	92	1,330
RN			
Culdrose	172	34	206
Lee-on-Solent	0	0	0
Portland	97	9	106
Prestwick	143	8	151
RN Total	412	51	463

1992

	Civilian	Military	Total
RAF			
Boulmer	125	9	134
Brawdy	151	7	158
Chivenor	163	11	174
Coltishall	103	3	106
Leconfield	146	14	160
Leuchars	118	13	131
Lossiemouth	227	14	241
Manston	157	5	162
Valley	179	8	187
Aldergrove	20	2	22
RAF Total	1,389	86	1,475
RN			
Culdrose	204	29	233
Lee-on-Solent	0	0	0
Portland	126	12	138
Prestwick	153	15	168
RN Total	483	56	539

Jetstream Aircraft

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what discussions he has had with British Aerospace about possible orders to be placed by his Department for new Jetstream aircraft; what the outcome has been; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what representations or request he has received concerning the relaunch of the ATP aircraft as Jetstream 61; what action he has taken as a result; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what representations he has received concerning the replacement of the Jetstream aircraft currently operated by the Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force with new aircraft; what discussions or action have followed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: A number of representations concerning the replacement of Royal Navy and Royal Air Force Jetstream aircraft have been received. My officials maintain a regular dialogue with British Aerospace to discuss future requirements. However, there is currently no requirement for turbo-prop aircraft to replace those in-service with the Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force. Should a future requirement emerge, British Aerospace would have every opportunity to compete.

NATO

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what projects in the United Kingdom have been in receipt of infrastructural funding from NATO in the last 10 years for which information is available; and how much such funding there has been in each case.

Mr. Hanley: The number of projects in the United Kingdom funded in the past 10 years and the amount funded is as follows:

Year	Amount (£)	Total Projects
1982	57,842,282	22
1983	26,284,008	18
1984	72,720,315	27
1985	84,590,421	42
1986	107,233,047	47
1987	78,669,515	48

Year	Amount (£)	Total Projects
1988	92,685,963	69
1989	75,262,451	64
1990	85,506,958	64
1991	33,049,156	73
1992	34,219,482	59

EMPLOYMENT

Offshore Oil Workers

Mr. Bates: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the policy of his Department when dealing with claims for unemployment benefit by those formerly employed in offshore oil and gas fields.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. Michael Bates, dated 18 October 1993:

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, the Secretary of State has asked me to write to you direct to respond to your Parliamentary Question to him about the policy of his Department when dealing with claims for unemployment benefit by those formerly employed in offshore oil and gas fields. This is something which falls within the responsibilities he has delegated to me as Chief Executive of the Agency.

All claims for unemployment benefit, including those from people formerly employed in offshore oil and gas fields, are dealt with in accordance with the provisions of Social Security legislation. Unemployed people who have paid sufficient National Insurance contributions, are available for and actively seeking employed earners employment in GB, and are not disqualified from receiving benefit for any reason, may receive unemployment benefit.

I hope this is helpful.

As decided by the Administration Committee of the House of Commons, Chief executive replies to written Parliamentary Questions will now be published in the Official Report. I will also place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

Oil Industry

Mr. Loyden: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his policy on the application of the International Labour Organisation conventions on *(a)* freedom of association and protection of the right to organise and *(b)* application of the principles of the right to organise and bargain collectively, to United Kingdom workers (i) generally and (ii) in the oil industry.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: It is the Government's firm policy to honour their obligations under the international labour conventions they have ratified. Workers in the oil industry are covered in the same way as those in any other occupation or industry.

Mr. Loyden: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received from employees of the oil industry concerning the right of freedom of association at their place of work; what response he has made; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State receives representations from employees on a variety of issues, but none has been identified in this form. Our employment law is consistent with international treaties ratified by the United Kingdom on freedom of association.

Southend

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will rename the Southend travel-to-work area as the South Essex travel-to-work area or the Southend/Thurrock travel-to-work area.

Miss Widdecombe: A review of all travel-to-work areas is currently being undertaken. New boundaries will be drawn using information on commuting patterns from the 1991 census of population special workplace statistics. These are due to be released by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys at the end of November this year. Revised travel-to-work areas, including maps, will be circulated for comment six to nine months after this date. All comments received, regarding boundaries and names, will be considered at this time.

EC Labour Markets

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what were the labour market participation rates in each EC country at the last date for which figures were available.

Miss Widdecombe: The latest available economic activity rates, comparable across all EC countries, are for spring 1991 and are shown in the table:

	Per cent
Denmark	67·1
United Kingdom	61·8
Portugal	59·5
FR Germany	58·7
Netherlands	56·9
France	54·5
Ireland	51·9
Luxembourg	51·2
Italy	49·9
Belgium	48·5
Greece	47·4
Spain	47·2
Europe 12	55·1

Source: Eurostat, labour force survey results 1991.

Older Workers (Health Care)

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps he is taking to encourage employers to undertake initiatives to promote preventive health care among older workers.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) provides employers with a wealth of advice and guidance on occupational health, which applies to all persons exposed to health risks at work including older workers. Both the Employment Department and HSE are members of the workplace task force and have been active in supporting "The Health of the Nation" initiatives designed to encourage employers to promote health in the workplace.

EC Unemployment

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the level of unemployment in each EC country *(a)* in January 1993 and *(b)* at the latest date for which figures are available; and what was *(b)* as a percentage of *(a)*.

Miss Widdecombe: Up-to-date and internationally comparable unemployment figures are available only in the form of rates and are based on the ILO definition of unemployment. These figures are published by EUROSTAT in its monthly "Unemployment Bulletin", copies of which are available in the Library. The table shows the latest available information.

Seasonally adjusted unemployment rates in EC countries January 1993 and latest month

	January 1993	*Latest Month*	*Change*
Belgium	8·8	[3]9·5	0·7
Denmark	10·0	[2]10·6	0·6
Germany[1]	5·0	[2]5·7	0·7
Greece	—	—	—
Spain	20·0	[2]21·2	1·2
France	10·3	[2]10·9	0·6
Ireland	18·4	[2]18·2	–0·2
Italy	10·6	[2]10·9	0·3
Luxembourg	2·0	[3]2·6	0·6
Netherlands	7·2	[3]7·9	0·7
Portugal	5·0	[2]5·0	n/c
United Kingdom	10·5	[2]10·3	–0·2
EC Average	9·9	[2]10·4	0·5

[1] This figure only relates to the former West Germany.
[2] August.
[3] July.

Parliamentary Television

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the locations of the television sets in his Department which can receive the live television feed from the Chamber of the House; and what is the total cost to his Department of this Service.

Miss Widdecombe: There are seven television sets in the Department's headquarters which can receive the live television feed from the Chamber of the House. There is one in each of the four Ministers' private offices; one in the permanent secretary's office; one in the parliamentary branch; and one in the press office. The annual cost of the service is £17,900.

Training

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the job entry rate for employment training leavers in the west midlands.

Miss Widdecombe: Latest information shows that three months after leaving employment training in the west midlands during September 1992, 29 per cent. were in a job and a further 15 per cent. were undertaking activities including training, full-time education, work experience or voluntary work.

Ms Short: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the latest information he has on the number of people who are participating on training courses which are supported by the European social fund; how many are operated by *(a)* training and enterprise councils and local enterprise companies, *(b)* local authorities and further education colleges and *(c)* voluntary organisations; how many people will benefit from ESF training courses in the current operational year; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe *[pursuant to her reply, 27 July 1993, c. 785]:* I regret that the numbers of participants on European social fund (ESF) courses in 1993 in Great Britain given in my reply of 27 July 1993, *Official Report*, column *785*, was incorrect. The number of beneficiaries given for the training and enterprise councils and local enterprise companies—including departmental programmes to help the unemployed—included beneficiaries from another sector. The correct information is given below:

Sector	*Beneficiaries*
Training and Enterprise Councils, Local Enterprise Companies (including Departmental programmes to help the unemployed)	326,000
Local Authorities/Further Education Colleges	438,000
Voluntary sector	106,000

Overall we currently expect some 1,308,000 people to benefit from ESF-funded training during 1993. This figure is likely to rise as further projects continue to be approved.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Bishops' Residences

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, representing the Church Commissioners, if he will list the expenditure for each of the last 10 years on the residences of each bishop, diocesan area and suffragan.

Mr. Alison: The following figures for diocesan bishops' houses, which include both a chapel and office accommodation for the bishops' staff, show the total expenditure—capital and revenue—on each. The figures include expenditure on furnishings and gardens, but are net both of rental income for accommodation not occupied by the bishop and of sale proceeds of any surplus property.

Suffragan, area and full-time assistant bishops' houses also incorporate office accommodation. The figures include total expenditure borne by dioceses on periodical outgoings, e.g., rates, insurance and repairs, half of which are met by grants from the commissioners. Full details of all capital expenditure is not available, but capital grants made by the commissioners are included.

Expenditure on Diocesan Bishops' Residences

	1983	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*
Bath and Wells	55,906	51,980	47,414	48,841	37,480	106,937	19,104	67,109	53,336	58,315
Birmingham	12,499	13,094	5,830	21,335	45,001	13,817	30,187	70,240	76,667	70,808
Blackburn	16,880	7,282	4,274	7,301	13,317	9,771	38,333	15,776	25,755	18,888
Bradford	8,196	17,208	27,710	55,938	30,869	58,425	15,571	18,029	18,009	62,705

	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992
Bristol	5,036	16,196	19,997	43,488	15,492	10,050	22,709	31,050	21,187	25,176
Canterbury:										
Lambeth Palace	201,248	178,073	27,868	113,760	(70,938)	173,367	164,979	270,726	272,680	176,812
Old Palace	144,140	35,439	15,987	21,830	37,402	8,629	12,286	19,545	117,777	14,233
Carlisle	19,319	17,038	30,486	11,474	37,693	35,503	94,167	29,163	22,210	27,976
Chelmsford	20,991	10,001	20,716	40,721	36,622	22,395	25,212	23,460	15,849	26,841
Chester	14,503	35,505	13,556	15,803	36,573	20,028	22,968	16,795	36,739	25,907
Chichester	26,492	37,488	24,505	20,902	27,531	18,055	32,877	27,760	28,111	37,167
Coventry	(61,272)	11,263	65,574	37,346	15,326	14,136	12,818	63,458	50,898	35,270
Derby	52,241	(15,678)	9,643	6,767	10,807	29,182	19,649	13,158	20,062	11,399
Durham	157,103	71,114	82,840	13,549	19,228	44,653	59,232	113,813	60,910	53,852
Ely	5,131	7,596	15,221	8,867	15,042	9,283	42,069	200,622	100,633	68,019
Exeter	18,713	9,669	25,314	18,145	(915)	13,867	22,960	21,312	7,229	12,563
Gloucester	6,130	6,039	6,489	25,431	8,492	8,400	16,709	36,673	85,981	58,532
Guildford	34,613	13,483	37,592	37,253	2,552	20,684	27,002	28,458	37,264	24,437
Hereford	7,866	32,762	78,358	55,803	7,222	3,138	7,550	52,083	16,166	20,123
Leicester	8,836	8,181	10,512	15,533	1,848	12,162	8,146	11,904	70,684	9,270
Lichfield	8,813	18,591	16,584	20,573	11,960	12,341	21,323	27,488	49,858	26,342
Lincoln	15,428	58,669	4,511	10,305	19,766	61,534	91,428	12,382	24,001	8,358
Liverpool	9,271	12,796	28,743	24,067	21,512	44,279	18,628	38,239	38,703	24,179
London	3,970	4,821	11,009	15,698	7,437	27,977	22,913	4,576	66,134	7,187
Manchester	14,567	7,548	13,515	22,685	268,597	10,223	11,518	9,620	20,145	14,341
Newcastle	12,146	5,049	6,365	3,004	5,684	3,674	9,422	8,000	6,297	7,698
Norwich	19,318	8,123	16,528	40,777	31,228	22,861	23,419	34,575	32,848	63,591
Oxford	8,471	3,122	5,626	3,657	31,501	6,037	15,533	23,107	20,114	11,714
Peterborough	20,126	21,988	11,759	19,123	54,008	92,439	18,257	42,097	28,371	25,651
Portsmouth	12,758	13,923	48,248	12,347	46,759	5,274	34,372	39,796	41,473	37,530
Ripon	18,643	8,313	22,301	20,260	103,016	23,450	43,178	33,984	28,553	27,709
Rochester	7,635	6,481	8,766	7,936	17,359	146,142	28,406	37,840	39,948	52,836
St Albans	22,931	8,419	23,425	15,177	11,111	25,524	9,930	19,839	26,008	10,764
St Eds and Ips	7,985	7,005	21,425	10,338	111,447	25,828	11,485	40,862	29,640	28,454
Salisbury	(274,297)	28,024	5,159	15,490	5,164	15,324	20,406	14,245	20,248	18,524
Sheffield	10,054	33,159	8,022	7,694	16,368	13,971	28,238	24,425	18,039	32,267
Sodor and Man[1]	599	285	0	0	0	0	14,233	24,756	417	3,687
Southwark	16,425	33,271	20,434	9,005	24,068	8,648	13,767	38,315	90,939	79,835
Southwell	21,175	45,644	219,607	107,576	20,141	46,232	10,284	27,983	22,946	8,112
Truro	14,034	8,277	12,594	18,232	16,054	14,318	11,219	28,180	42,371	14,624
Wakefield	27,784	15,780	39,688	13,870	13,830	11,731	15,317	27,675	20,116	75,821
Winchester	23,988	9,559	46,537	26,269	1,885	10,921	13,653	30,868	48,642	49,535
Worcester	41,976	31,112	17,563	14,245	11,701	8,104	46,140	83,657	36,711	36,874
York	87,980	62,268	89,387	74,967	69,083	19,126	32,116	34,588	113,040	30,838
Europe	2,209	5,943	2,209	8,367	8,353	1,872	3,622	14,614	12,487	3,481

[1] The See house is owned by the commissioners of the Isle of Man.

Expenditure on suffragan, area and full-time assistant bishops houses

	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992
Bath and Wells										
Taunton	4,024	2,847	2,110	4,326	1,275	7,511	959	17,171	3,089	9,133
Birmingham										
Aston	1,453	5,984	2,033	2,186	1,292	1,338	1,188	0	0	90
Blackburn										
Burnley	1,087	2,165	1,260	824	1,926	6,368	74,275	40,263	19,268	3,227
Lancaster	1,802	1,758	732	1,245	3,160	1,023	2,513	6,841	5,083	4,081
Bradford										
Asst Bishop	0	0	0	0	0	89,747	0	0	0	0
Bristol										
Malmesbury	540	3,603	3,471	3,740	10,854	9,784	4,936	15,086	4,622	4,669
Canterbury										
Dover	707	644	709	962	2,821	3,601	1,032	1,160	791	9,226
Maidstone	15,628	702	922	946	2,825	1,360	1,517	4,115	973	3,466
Carlisle										
Penrith	399	240	515	393	2,604	6,113	5,189	1,724	1,660	3,102
Chelmsford										
Barking	27,648	1,358	2,556	1,310	1,373	6,233	2,644	925	1,484	578
Bradwell	14,378	2,915	1,015	4,109	1,422	10,567	17,954	1,680	813	771
Colchester	905	618	1,343	1,041	739	241,155	2,568	1,304	572	2,575

	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992
Chester										
Birkenhead	4,007	3,992	739	1,915	3,884	10,690	980	1,382	9,086	1,670
Stockport	1,465	1,236	1,424	1,254	1,353	1,035	2,770	5,757	3,187	954
Chichester										
Lewes	0	0	0	0	0	0	1,178	27,622	4,776	4,574
Horsham	2,535	7,025	1,011	1,291	5,941	1,792	2,071	650	6,115	3,484
Coventry										
Warwick	3,271	1,574	1,319	65,783	20,883	12,929	1,780	652	1,022	7,442
Derby										
Repton	617	648	1,302	2,289	2,283	1,810	1,680	2,298	9,632	4,758
Durham										
Jarrow	5,089	2,690	2,899	2,103	3,166	14,295	3,291	67,661	31,911	6,907
Ely										
Huntingdon	544	2,913	808	949	1,092	3,034	218,688	1,039	1,166	1,593
Exeter										
Crediton	5,644	1,328	5,654	2,041	5,386	3,209	1,967	1,267	7,911	1,674
Plymouth	481	3,842	536	1,591	807	695	832	50,325	586	3,329
Gloucester										
Tewkesbury	2,877	1,010	1,907	25,920	1,074	706	786	889	3,616	866
Guildford										
Dorking	771	906	1,674	1,422	1,355	1,238	1,307	19,951	1,707	894
Hereford										
Ludlow	0	0	0	0	63,896	445	902	2,361	3,883	682
Leicester										
Asst Bishop	0	0	0	0	0	33,498	8,245	1,246	9,510	2,238
Lichfield										
Shrewsbury	1,178	4,661	898	5,234	3,841	4,107	1,348	4,685	899	8,141
Stafford	1,823	1,477	1,492	644	4,097	5,031	1,832	4,338	773	727
Wolverhampton	5,361	5,055	2,928	1,343	2,227	1,135	1,590	552	2,793	650
Lincoln										
Grantham	2,404	2,773	2,020	2,896	65,976	7,128	1,558	6,307	2,054	862
Grimsby	902	1,140	2,674	1,418	788	2,846	1,409	76,245	6,168	602
Liverpool										
Warrington	1,962	2,495	8,306	1,995	1,584	3,059	6,870	6,520	2,444	2,754
London										
Fulham	0	0	0	0	0	506	11,033	5,769	1,067	30,340
Kensington	2,363	3,652	11,518	6,263	15,089	17,944	46,564	7,835	2,928	7,345
Stepney	2,867	1,185	16,195	8,883	2,787	2,057	1,133	1,612	1,514	18,710
Willesden	3,945	2,411	18,332	1,842	1,318	6,790	23,171	9,851	1,268	15,754
Edmonton	484	519	2,838	519	519	610	223,964	3,177	13,722	3,626
Manchester										
Hulme	692	52,776	1,324	2,066	1,112	2,019	7,695	1,225	764	1,774
Middleton	13,938	1,501	870	3,462	3,118	1,449	1,772	921	1,683	547
Bolton	0	744	520	1,511	2,630	863	2,078	937	9,251	5,754
Newcastle										
Asst Bishop	770	1,653	2,174	9,958	3,139	1,520	2,040	815	861	6,379
Norwich										
Lynn	4,494	4,658	5,592	4,554	23,550	3,010	8,960	23,179	15,607	906
Thetford	1,513	778	12,714	2,430	1,243	1,905	6,639	709	999	83,641
Oxford										
Buckingham	1,225	1,449	3,495	4,532	2,094	1,845	2,125	2,376	2,740	1,432
Dorchester	1,199	2,783	1,891	2,346	1,505	5,940	7,132	6,640	3,102	1,180
Reading	8,270	3,130	3,635	2,986	4,161	1,952	6,608	8,381	2,649	1,036
Peterborough										
Brixworth	2,068	933	589	429	138,000	302	5,649	3,170	3,957	1,334
Ripon										
Knaresborough	1,830	498	1,053	1,917	2,906	3,905	1,431	1,020	1,097	2,750

	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992
Rochester										
Tonbridge	4,693	2,487	2,213	2,263	2,312	2,715	2,912	6,689	2,024	4,880
St Albans										
Bedford	782	823	997	1,849	1,180	1,270	1,708	1,478	4,014	989
Hertford	1,227	996	1,016	1,182	1,563	1,823	4,442	1,195	3,414	1,037
St Edmunds and Ipswich										
Dunwich	1,233	809	1,515	1,432	37,944	910	1,247	(16,782)	1,903	4,480
Salisbury										
Sherborne	2,658	2,698	2,194	3,185	533	42,651	1,216	705	4,121	782
Ramsbury	261	227	691	2,334	1,498	4,399	2,685	1,718	3,965	4,219
Sheffield										
Doncaster	1,886	775	3,356	2,951	2,183	489	1,137	11,421	1,500	777
Southwark										
Kingston	206	3,356	1,217	1,598	1,412	1,089	5,327	6,027	1,870	20,690
Woolwich	1,915	1,403	4,432	1,486	3,782	1,826	8,888	2,811	442	1,946
Croydon	726	906	792	736	1,377	14,698	13,278	1,981	1,272	1,129
Southwell										
Sherwood	8,750	1,282	1,653	1,579	2,724	1,558	1,200	2,307	9,894	10,746
Truro										
St Germans	7,724	260	278	632	378	435	476	3,741	3,080	4,767
Wakefield										
Pontefract	0	5,948	10,825	2,127	4,530	2,079	3,808	1,812	3,230	1,561
Winchester										
Basingstoke	15,425	782	782	2,173	50,476	11,729	607	0	3,531	1,312
Southampton	842	4,558	3,499	487	721	997	7,487	1,053	1,652	836
Worcester										
Dudley	1,200	1,933	1,203	4,790	1,418	2,930	3,943	1,054	11,634	1,673
York										
Hull	1,898	2,223	3,641	4,279	2,041	4,124	2,476	676	1,021	1,338
Selby	875	1,069	1,260	731	912	2,923	1,060	881	1,012	2,003
Whitby	849	885	1,943	755	7,407	772	4,618	477	4,433	868
Europe										
Europe	3,903	4,522	5,103	5,585	5,910	7,909	7,414	13,477	6,714	11,301

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Hong Kong

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give details of all animal products confiscated by the Hong Kong authorities at *(a)* ports of entry and *(b)* in restaurants and shops during the past 12 months.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: In the past 12 months—from 1 August 1992 to 31 July 1993—the Hong Kong authorities made 198 seizures of suspected endangered animals and animal products at ports of entry and 14 seizures in restaurants and shops. Court proceedings for 89 of the above cases have been concluded and the related animals/animal products confiscated. The remaining cases are either under investigation or awaiting court proceedings. The local legislation provides for mandatory forfeiture of the animals/animal products upon conviction.

Interpreters

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what training is given to interpreters at overseas British missions in respect of entry clearance officers.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Those appointed as interpreters should already be fluent in the languages concerned, so no linguistic training will normally be necessary. Appropriate training, including on the job, in office practices and procedures will be given after recruitment.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what training is given to interpreters employed by the British embassy in Ankara; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The British embassy in Ankara does not employ any interpreters, but does employ two translators, one in the information section and one in the defence section. Both were required to demonstrate their competence on recruitment. Additional training has not been needed.

European Treaties

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he expects a publication of consolidated text of the treaty on European union incorporating all the amendments, which it, and other treaties, have made to the treaty of Rome and the treaties establishing the coal and steel, and Euratom communities respectively; and if he knows of any impediment to such a document being printed and published by Her Majesty's Government in the Command series prior to October.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: A consolidated text of the treaty of Rome incorporating the amendments which would be made by the treaty on European union was published in the *Official Journal* of the European Communities (C 224 Vol. 35) on 31 August 1992. It has been available through HMSO outlets since that time. There are no plans, either by the European Community or by ourselves, to produce similar consolidated texts of the treaties establishing the European coal and steel and Euratom communities in advance of entry into force of the treaty on European union.

El Salvador

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what monitoring is taking place of the electoral registration process in El Salvador; and if Her Majesty's Government will send a delegation to monitor the process.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The UN observer mission in El Salvador, ONUSAL, is supervising preparations for next year's elections. We expect to send an observer.

Israel

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations he has made to the Government of Israel concerning the plight of Mordechai Vanunu; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have raised with the Israelis concerns over humanitarian aspects of this case. They assured us earlier in the year that the conditions under which Mr. Vanunu is detained have improved. We have no formal locus to intervene.

Sudan

Mr. Godsiff: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action the United Kingdom Government are taking to ensure that human rights are respected in Sudan.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We were active at the last sessions of the UN General Assembly and the UN Commission on Human Rights in highlighting the human rights situation in Sudan, and in particular in securing the appointment of a public UN rapporteur. The rapporteur has just visited Sudan, and we await his report.

Mr. Godsiff: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action Her Majesty's Government are taking to further the peace progress in the Sudan and to bring fighting to an end.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have welcomed the initiative of the Kenyan, Ugandan, Ethiopian and Eritrean Presidents to try to encourage dialogue between the Government of Sudan and the factions of the Sudan People's Liberation Army. With our EC partners, we are addressing ways of putting further pressure on the parties to respond positively to mediation efforts.

French Nuclear Tests

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what tests the French Government have reported to *(a)* European political co-operation or *(b)* the European Foreign Affairs Council under the provisions of article 34 of the Euratom treaty on nuclear tests conducted on any of its overseas territories since 1963.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We are not aware of any such notifications having been made under article 34 of the Euratom treaty.

Western Sahara

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the current support for the UN MINORSO team in the western Sahara; what plans there are to continue this; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The United Kingdom has contributed 14 military observers and the chief of staff to the MINORSO operations since September 1991. We keep all UN commitments under review as operations' mandates develop, and informed the UN in March this year that we were considering the withdrawal of our personnel. We confirmed to the UN the decision to withdraw in August 1993, and the United Kingdom military contribution to the force is now running down. All 15 British military personnel will have withdrawn by the end of October. The UN has so far identified Malaysian, Ghanaian and Bangladeshi replacements for 12 of the departing British observers and expects to fill the remaining three positions in the near future.

China

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations Her Majesty's Government have made to the Chinese Government about the prisoners of conscience *(a)* Li Jiayao in Chek Li prison near Guangzhou, *(b)* Pastor Pei Zhongxun (Chun Chul) imprisoned in Shanghai and *(c)* Xu Guoxing, leader of the Protestant House Church in Shanghai; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: No specific representations have been made. We have, however, raised human rights and my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's list of cases of concern on a number of occasions with senior Chinese leaders, most recently during my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary's meeting with Vice Premier and Foreign Minister Qian Qichen in New York on 1 October.

India

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations have been made to the Government of India concerning human rights abuses in Punjab and Kashmir; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have regularly raised our concerns about human rights with the Indian Government, most recently during a discussion between my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs and the Indian Foreign Minister, Dinesh Singh, in New York in September.

Antarctica

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 9 June 1992, *Official Report*, column *86*, when he now proposes to bring forward legislation to repeal the Antarctic Minerals Act 1989.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We intend that a provision to repeal the Antarctic Minerals Act 1989 should be included in a Bill to give effect to the environmental protection protocol to the Antarctic treaty. We hope that this Bill can be introduced at the earliest opportunity.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what measures are taken to enforce the moratorium on mining activity in Antarctica.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Measures to enforce the moratorium require the introduction of legislation. We intend that a provision to repeal the Antarctic Minerals Act 1989 should be included in a Bill to give effect to the environmental protection protocol to the Antarctic treaty. We hope this Bill can be introduced at the earliest opportunity.

Until the new legislation is in force, the United Kingdom will do all it can by administrative means to implement the provisions of the environmental protocol, including the prohibition of mineral activities. The other Antarctic treaty consultative parties are doing likewise.

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government towards the creation of a world natural park in Antarctica; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Antarctica is a special conservation area under the 1964 agreed measures for the conservation of Antarctic fauna and flora. It is also designated a natural reserve, devoted to peace and science, by the 1991 environmental protection protocol to the Antarctic treaty. We believe that this and the stringent environmental protection measures in the protocol adequately reflect the concept of a world park.

Nuclear Proliferation

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with his United States counterpart over the American initiative launched in July to assist Asian countries to develop policies to control regional nuclear proliferation.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: To the best of my knowledge no specific American initiative aimed at controlling nuclear proliferation in Asia has been launched.

EC Measures

Mr. Mandelson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish a list of the EC measures which it was agreed at the Anglo-French summit on 26 July should be *(a)* amended and *(b)* withdrawn.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: It is not our intention to publish the Anglo-French subsidiarity list. We have fed ideas into the Commission at several stages as a contribution to the report on subsidiarity that it is preparing for the Brussels European Council in December. The Commission report will, of course, be published.

Falkland Islands

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many mining companies have offices in the Falkland Islands; and what cases of mining exploration licences have been sought for.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The only company with interests in mining which has offices in the Falkland Islands is the Falkland Islands Company. It is a subsidiary of Anglo United plc.

Since 1982 the Falkland Islands Government have twice authorised exploratory surveys of one farm. Before Anglo United plc sold its farmlands in the Falkland Islands in 1991, it carried out a preliminary geological survey of those lands.

Secret Intelligence Service Headquarters

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what has been the total cost for the internal equipping of the new Secret Intelligence Service headquarters at Vauxhall cross; and if he will indicate the budgets drawn upon to cover the costs to date.

Mr. Hurd: The programme provision for the total cost of fitting out and equipping the new Secret Intelligence Service headquarters is £86 million. This sum has been included in the programme of the Foreign and Commonwealth office, and we expect the final cost to be within this total. A revised figure will be published in next year's estimates.

European Parliament

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many buildings the European Parliament rent in *(a)* Brussels, *(b)* Luxembourg and *(c)* Strasbourg; and what is the total rent paid in each city.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The European Parliament rents nine buildings in Brussels—some of which are physically linked—five buildings in Luxembourg and five buildings in Strasbourg—three of which are linked extensions to the original building.

The rents paid in each city for 1993 are as follows:

Brussels: 27·258 million ECU (approx £21·264 million);
Luxembourg: 12·212 million ECU (£9·527 million);
Strasbourg: 13·254 million ECU (£10·339 million);

The detailed appropriations are given in section 1, chapter 20 of the general budget of the European Community, published in *Official Journal* No. L31, Vol. 36 of 8 February 1993, copies of which are available in the House.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the allowances payable to Members of the European Parliament.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The European Parliament's allowances for Members in 1993 are as follows:

Subsistence
Subsistence allowance of 199 ecu (approx £155) per day for attending official meetings within the European Community plus the cost of overnight accommodation, etc. for attending official meetings outside the Community.

Travel
Flat rate travel allowance of 0·73 ecu (57p) per kilometre for the first 800km and 0·37 ecu (29p) for each additional kilometre for travel within the Community to attend official meetings. Reimbursement of the return air fare by the most direct route for travel outside the EC to attend official meetings. Travel allowance of up to 3,000 ecu (£2,340) per annum for travel on official business other than to attend official meetings.

Office and Secretarial Assistance
Secretarial assistance allowance of up to 7,468 (£5,826) ecu per month. General expenditure allowance of 2,732 ecu (£2,131) per month for office management costs, telephone, postage and travel within member states. (Halved in respect of Members who, for no valid reason, have failed to attend at least half the number of plenary sittings.)

Data Processing
Data processing allowance of up to 1,000 ecu (£780) per annum for purchase or rent of equipment.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what has been the cost of the European Parliament each year since 1989-90.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Expenditure under the European Parliament's budget for each year since 1989 has been as follows:

Expenditure net of receipts

Year	*Million ECU*	*£ million*
1989	349·451	[2]272·607
1990	393·346	306·849
1991	450·441	351·389
1992	538·241	419·882
[1]1993	585	456·358

[1] Estimate.
[2] Approximate.

Bosnia

Sir Russell Johnston: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 6 July to the hon. Member for Blackpool, North (Mr. Elletson), *Official Report*, column *86*, regarding the reported no-fly zone of 13 March, for how long the aircraft were observed over Gladovici; whether the border is visible from the village of Gladovici; what is the minimum time required to reach the border from Gladovici; what further information has since come to light about the incident; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: We understand that the Serbian border is not visible from Gladovici, but that an aircraft or helicopter could fly between Gladovici and the border in under a minute. No further information has come to light about the incident there on 13 March.

Sir Russell Johnston: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made as to the accuracy of information surrounding the alleged breach of the no-fly zone over Gladovici on 13 March; if his Department has contacted any international agency or body regarding the details of this alleged breach during the past four weeks; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: We are satisfied with the standard of UN reporting on the observance of the no-fly zone over Bosnia-Herzogovina, including the information provided about the breach over Gladovici on 13 March. We have not contacted any international agency concerning the details of the breach in the past four weeks.

Sir Russell Johnston: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if the evidence now available on the reported no-fly zone violation on 13 March over Gladovici, Bosnia-Herzegovina, has produced proof as to the nature of the mission, the identity of the aircraft operators or the location of the aircraft operating base; who Her Majesty's Government now regard as being responsible for this violation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: No new information has been received concerning the breach of the no-fly zone over Gladovici. The aircraft observed there on 13 March were never definitely attributed to any party. However, the flight pattern of the aircraft would be consistent with the use of Serbian airspace to lose altitude before landing at an airstrip near the border.

Sir Russell Johnston: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the names, rank and national origin of UN personnel present in Gladovici on 13 March; what role they were fulfilling there; when reports were first received by these personnel of a breach of the no-fly zone; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: We are unable to give detailed information on UN personnel. Those in Gladovici on 13 March were carrying out duties pursuant to UN Security Council resolution 781 of 9 October 1992. Information on the breach released by the UN on 16 March made it clear that the UN personnel concerned observed the incident themselves.

Cyprus

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the estimated cost of the new wall being built along the frontage of the high commission property at Shakespeare avenue, Lefkosa, northern Cyprus; why this wall is necessary; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The estimated cost of rebuilding the wall is £35,000. The new wall is necessary because the old one had been undermined by a culvert and was in danger of collapsing and endangering passers by.

Iran

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations he has received regarding the human rights position of the Baha'i community in Iran.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have received representations from several Members of Parliament and from the National Spiritual Assembly of Baha'is of the United Kingdom about the human rights of the Baha'i community in Iran. We and our EC partners have raised specific alleged cases of human rights abuses affecting the Baha'i community with the Iranian authorities. We have also co-sponsored resolutions at the United Nations General Assembly and the Commission on Human Rights urging the Iranian authorities to improve their human rights record, and drawing attention to the treatment of Baha'is in Iran.

Thailand

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many visa applications for entry into the United Kingdom have been made from applicants from Thailand in the latest year for which figures are available; and how many were *(a)* accepted and *(b)* rejected.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: In 1992, the latest year for which figures are available, 28,316, visa applications for entry into the United Kingdom were received at the British embassy in Bangkok, of which 27,329 were granted and 927 refused.

Immigration

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what is the current backlog in each of the queues at the following posts *(a)* Bombay, *(b)* New Delhi, *(c)* Islamabad, *(d)* Karachi, *(e)* Dacca, *(f)* Nairobi and *(g)* Dar-es-Salaam; and what is the average length of time in each queue from application to interview.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[pursuant to his answer, 22 October 1992, c. 341]:* As I have already explained to the hon. Member, the figures quoted for Islamabad were incorrect. They should have read:

Islamabad

Queue	*Number*
1	51
2	1,470
3	237
4	557
Total	2,315

Gulf War

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the health risks passed to Iraqi children as a result of the use during the Gulf war by United Kingdom armed forces of depleted uranium ammunition.

Mr. Hanley: I have been asked to reply.

During the Gulf conflict, British forces used small quantities of depleted uranium ammunition in sparsely populated desert areas of Iraq. This is not considered to have constituted a significant risk to the health of Iraq's civilian population.

ENVIRONMENT

Jobs, Walsall

Mr. George: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the jobs created within the Walsall borough area covered by the Black Country development corporation for each year since its establishment.

Mr. Baldry: The jobs created in the Walsall borough area covered by the Black Country development corporation—and related to its activities—for each year since designation are as follows:

Financial Year	*Jobs*
1987-88	10
1988-89	25
1989-90	70
1990-91	450
1991-92	104
1992-93	320

Standard Spending Assessments

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Milburn) of 25 March, *Official Report*, column *712*, if he will make a statement on the progress of the review of standard spending assessments.

Mr. Baldry: Work on the review of standard spending assessments for 1994-95 is proceeding in consultation with the local authority associations. A substantial programme of work remains and we have not yet reached any conclusions.

Homelessness

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many hostel spaces for the homeless in London have been supported by his Department in 1990-91, 1991-92, 1992-93 and for the current year; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: Under the rough sleepers initiative in central London, my Department funds voluntary organisations and housing associations to provide temporary hostels for homeless people. The total number of bed spaces made available in each of the specified years is as follows.

Year	*Number*
1990-91	87
1991-92	485
1992-93	834
1993-94	806

In addition, my Department allocates resources, through the Housing Corporation, to housing associations for the provision of bedspaces in shared housing/hostels for the single homeless in central London. New units provided by the Housing Corporation in each of the specified years are as follows.

Year	Number
1990-91	587
1991-92	1,782
1992-93	738
1993-94	443

The Housing Corporation also continues to provide support for 7,381 places for homeless people in London that were approved before the introduction of a new funding system in 1991.

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on what monitoring has been undertaken of the controlled experiment in nuclear waste discharges to the Irish sea from the Windscale plant; and if he will set out in *(a)* historic and *(b)* current prices the costs incurred in carrying out the monitoring.

Mr. Yeo: Although historical discharges to the Irish sea from Sellafield may once have been described as a "controlled experiment in nuclear waste discharges", this has certainly not been the case in recent times. Strict discharge limits have been set and British Nuclear Fuels —BNF—plc has been required to satisfy Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution—HMIP—and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food—MAFF—inspectors that best practicable means are being applied to minimise discharges.

BNF plc publishes an annual report on radioactive discharges and monitoring of the environment relating to its nuclear licensed sites, including Sellafield—formerly Windscale. In addition, HMIP and MAFF each publish annual reports on monitoring of radioactive substances. The reports of both official bodies include monitoring information relevant to historical discharges to sea from Sellafield. The costs of monitoring by BNF plc are a matter for the company. The costs of monitoring by HMIP and MAFF are recovered from the company through the levy of fees and charges in accordance with section 43 of the Radioactive Substances Act 1993.

The monitoring information shows a substantial and continuing reduction in environmental radioactivity from the peak levels in the 1970s.

Travellers

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will make available in the Library copies of the responses received to the consultation on planning guidance on gipsy sites;

(2) if he will publish an analysis of the responses received to the consultation on planning guidance on gipsy sites; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: Copies of the responses to the draft planning guidance on gipsy sites are available for public inspection in the Library of my Department. A list of respondents has been placed in the Library of the House. We are not proposing to publish an analysis of responses.

A joint DOE/Welsh Office circular will be published as soon as the views of respondents have been fully considered. The circular will guide local planning authorities in assessing gipsies' accommodation needs in their areas, making suitable policies in their development plans, and determining applications for gipsy sites.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what measures he is taking to co-ordinate policies between Government Departments on the subject of gipsy sites; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: Our proposals for reform of the Caravan Sites Act 1968, which were set out in the answer I gave to my right hon. Friend the Member for Woking (Sir C. Onslow) on 31 March, *Official Report*, column *291*, were prepared in close consultation with other interested Government Departments. We will continue to liaise closely with these Departments and, in particular, when we bring forward legislation to implement these proposals.

Metropolitan Districts

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what guidance he plans to issue to the review of the electoral boundaries in metropolitan districts; and whether he will consult local authorities and the local authority associations before finalising.

Mr. Baldry: My right hon. Friend has not yet reached a view on whether to issue separate guidance to the Local Government Commission on the conduct of either boundary and electoral reviews of metropolitan areas, or the commission's statutory periodic electoral reviews of all areas. My right hon. Friend will consult on any proposed guidance before issuing it to the commission.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will ensure that the Local Government Commission prepares and consults local authorities and their associations on a statement of the principles it will use in carrying out the review of electoral boundaries in metropolitan districts prior to the review being undertaken.

Mr. Baldry: In undertaking reviews, the Local Government Commission must have regard to the provisions of the Local Government Act 1992 and to any guidance which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has issued to it. Otherwise, the conduct of reviews is a matter for the commission itself. The Secretary of State has as yet issued no guidance on electoral reviews in metropolitan areas.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the terms of reference of the review of electoral boundaries in metropolitan districts extend to changes requiring legislation.

Mr. Baldry: The Local Government Act 1992 makes provision for my right hon. Friend to direct the commission to undertake reviews of the structure, boundaries and electoral arrangements of local government in areas of England. The commission also has a statutory duty to undertake periodic reviews of local government electoral arrangements in all areas.

Any changes recommended by the commission, whether as a consequence of a review undertaken at the direction of my right hon. Friend or of the commission's statutory responsibilities, can be implemented only by means of an order made by statutory instrument.

Bedsitting Rooms

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received to alter legislation in respect of local authority powers to inspect and register bedsitting rooms.

Mr. Baldry: Several local authorities have requested from time to time that a mandatory system of licensing for houses in multiple occupation—HMOs—should be introduced. However, the Government consider that the powers currently available to local authorities under the Housing Act 1985 to register and inspect HMOs are adequate and have no plans to amend them.

Multiple Occupation Homes

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has to alter the statutory duty of local authorities to inspect multiple occupation houses.

Mr. Baldry: We have no plans to alter the statutory powers of local authorities to inspect houses in multiple occupation. They have a duty to ensure that houses in multiple occupation—HMOs—with at least three stories and a combined floor area over 500 sq m are provided with adequate means of escape from fire, and have powers to inspect all HMOs.

Sporting Clubs

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many local authorities grant 80 per cent. discretionary rating relief to all private sporting clubs; and what would be the cost to the Exchequer if all authorities did so.

Mr. Baldry: The information requested is not available. The cost to the Exchequer of authorities' decisions to grant relief is 75 per cent. of the sum granted.

Capital Receipts

Mr. Sumberg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) how much local authorities have received in capital receipts since his announcement in the last autumn statement of a relaxation of the rules which govern their use;

(2) what plans he has to extend the relaxation of the rules governing the use by local authorities of capital receipts beyond 31 December; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: We have no plans to extend the relaxation in the capital receipts rules. Recent information provided by most local authorities in England indicates that around £1·3 billion of usable receipts were obtained during the period 13 November 1992 to 31 July 1993, of which about £0·7 billion represented additional spending power as a result of the relaxation. This information also suggests that local authorities currently expect to obtain around £2·3 billion of usable receipts during the whole period of the relaxation—13 November 1992 to 31 December 1993—of which about £1·3 billion represents extra spending power arising from the relaxation.

Liverpool

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the recent visit of the Housing Minister to Liverpool.

Sir George Young: I visited Liverpool on 4 October. I had a very full and interesting day. I visited the Project Rosemary site where I was impressed by the physical regeneration of the area. I delivered the opening speech at the Housing Corporation's conference on "Housing and Partnership". I opened an exhibition set up by Wimpeys which will show the options available to tenants as part of the redevelopment of housing stock in Islington under the vacant dwelling initiative. I attended the ceremony where Councillor Rimmer, on behalf of Liverpool city council, handed over ownership of 67 tower blocks to the Liverpool housing action trust. I also had a useful visit to the Buying Agency. Finally, I met a deputation of tenants from the Dovecot residents association.

Environment Council

Mr. Trend: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the outcome of the Environment Council on 5 October.

Mr. Yeo: I represented the United Kingdom at the Environment Council held in Luxembourg on 5 October. The Council discussed a lengthy agenda, including a number of waste issues. No formal vote was taken on any of the items under discussion.

The Council reached political agreement, pending receipt of the opinion of the European Parliament, on a proposal to amend annex I to regulation 2455/92. That regulation established a system of prior informed consent whereby non-EC countries which import chemicals banned or severely restricted in the EC are: notified of the potential dangers; informed of the necessary safety precautions; and advised of the restrictions on those products in force in the Community. The amendment will add 15 chemicals and groups of chemicals substances to the existing annex.

The Council discussed a proposed new regulation on ozone-depleting substances which will enable the Community to ratify the Copenhagen amendments to the Montreal protocol on substances that deplete the ozone layer, relating to hydrochlorofluorocarbons—HCFCs—and methyl bromide. Good progress was made and the Council referred the proposal to the Committee of Permanent Representatives—COREPER—for further discussion. I reaffirmed the United Kingdom's commitment to going further than was agreed in Copenhagen on both methyl bromide, and on HCFCs where I supported the Commission's proposal for phase-out by 2015. I also urged those member states that had put forward the servicing of existing refrigeration equipment as essential use for chlorofluorocarbons—CFCs—to withdraw their nominations.

The Council held a substantive policy debate on the proposed packaging and packaging waste directive. This focused on six issues suggested by the presidency, in particular the hierarchy of waste management options, the principle of prevention, and the scope, level and time scale of recovery targets. Ministers also briefly discussed collection systems, the question of marking packaging and the essential requirements it must meet. The Council referred the proposal to COREPER for further discussion.

The Council considered substantively for the first time a proposed directive on waste landfill. I made clear the United Kingdom's view that the proposal fails to meet the guidelines on subsidiarity agreed at the Edinburgh European Council. In the event that the directive proceeds, I also spoke strongly in favour of a proposal from the presidency which would allow for co-disposal of waste albeit with the possibility of individual member states banning this practice within their own countries. Some

member states shared our concern over subsidiarity, at least in respect of the level of technical and administrative detail in the current draft. The discussion on co-disposal left the door open to the directive allowing this landfill practice which I had explained was environmentally sound when properly controlled. Our views on co-dispersal were set out in a brochure on landfill which we had published in September and had circulated to other member states and the Commission.

The Council held a first discussion of a proposal to amend directive 91/689/EEC on hazardous waste. Problems have arisen over the implementation of this directive, due to be completed by December this year, since the Commission has not produced the list of hazardous waste required by the directive. The Council recognised this by reaching a consensus on the Commission's proposal to prolong the existing directive on toxic and hazardous waste—78/319/EEC—to 31 December 1994 and to aim to establish the list by 30 June 1994. COREPER will continue its deliberations on the Commission's proposal.

The Council also considered a proposed directive on the disposal of polychlorinated biphenyls—PCBs—and polychlorinated terphenyls. The Council invited COREPER to discuss the proposal further on the basis of a revised text that had just been issued by the presidency after consultation with the Commission. The United Kingdom is committed under the North sea conference to phasing out PCBs by 1999 at the latest.

The Commissioner introduced to the Council new proposals for a directive concerning the placing of biocidal products on the market; and for a directive on integrated pollution prevention and control. There was a general welcome for both proposals. The latter proposal is broadly in line with the United Kingdom system of IPC. The presidency indicated that discussion of both proposals would begin at working level before the end of the year.

Halon

Mr. Trend: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he considers that there are any essential uses of halon for which the United Kingdom will seek continued production in 1995; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: The Government are today issuing a consultation paper seeking nominations for potential candidates for "essential uses" which might need production of halons in 1995 under the Montreal protocol on substances that deplete the ozone layer and EC regulation 3952/92.

All applications for halon production in 1995 have to meet the stringent criteria agreed by the parties to the protocol. Uses must be necessary for the health and safety of society or critical for its functioning. There must be no technically and economically feasible alternatives available which are acceptable on health and environmental grounds. And finally, a particularly important point for halons, there must be insufficient recycled material available for the use. All these criteria must be met.

The availability of recycled material through the Halon Users National Consortium made it possible for the United Kingdom to withdraw the nominations we had made to the UN Environment Programme—UNEP—for halon production in 1994. However, in withdrawing those nominations the United Kingdom stressed that further production might be needed in subsequent years.

I understand that nominations for 1995 have to be with the protocol secretariat by 31 December 1993. The closing date for the Government's consultation exercise is therefore 30 November 1993. All applications will be considered, but the Government are committed to keeping essential uses to a minimum. A list will be published of those candidate uses, if any, that the Government nominate to UNEP for 1995.

Dovecot Residents Association

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the Housing Minister's recent discussions with the Dovecot residents association in Liverpool; what representations were made to him; and what actions he proposes to take in response to those representations.

Sir George Young: I met representatives of the Dovecot residents association in Liverpool on 4 October. They explained their concerns about the poor conditions in their area and I have written to the leader of Liverpool city council.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Widgery Inquiry

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations he has received in the past three months concerning the Widgery inquiry into Bloody Sunday; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I have received none.

The Government have stated and continue to believe that it would not be right, after a tribunal of inquiry has reported, to set in train a further examination of events that occured 21 years ago.

Waste Disposal

Mr. Beggs: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on future planning for waste disposal in the Greater Belfast area.

Mr. Atkins: Waste disposal planning is a matter for the district councils. Under article 4 of the Pollution Control and Local Government (Northern Ireland) Order 1978, councils are required to prepare—and update from time to time—plans for the disposal of waste.

Proposals for changes in the legislation dealing with waste were recently announced in a consultation paper dated March 1993. These proposals do not include any changes in the responsibility for planning for waste disposal.

Ophthalmology

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what were the (i) average waiting times and (ii) the year end waiting list for *(a)* in-patient and *(b)* out-patient treatment in ophthalmology for each health and social services board and for Northern Ireland in each year since 1985.

Mr. Ancram: The information requested is provided in the tables:

Median waiting time by months waiting—In-patients

At 31 March	Eastern Board	Western Board	Northern Ireland
1985	0-2	0-2	0-2
1986	3-5	0-2	0-2
1987	3-5	0-2	3-5
1988	3-5	3-5	3-5
1989	3-5	3-5	3-5
1990	6-8	6-8	6-8
1991	6-8	6-8	6-8
1992	6-8	3-5	6-8
1993	3-5	6-8	3-5

Median waiting times by months waiting—Out-patients

At 31 March	Eastern board	Northern board	Southern board	Western board	Northern board
1985	0-2	0-2	0-2	0-2	0-2
1986	0-2	0-2	3-5	0-2	0-2
1987	0-2	0-2	0-2	0-2	0-2
1988	0-2	0-2	0-2	0-2	0-2
1989	—	—	—	—	—
1990	—	—	—	—	—
1991	—	—	—	—	—
1992	—	—	—	—	—
1993	n/a	0-2	0-2	3-5	n/a

Notes:

1. In-patient treatment in the ophthalmology specialty is only available in the Eastern and Western boards.
2. Information relating to waiting times for out-patient treatment was not collected centrally between 1 April 1988 and the introduction of the corporate monitoring system on 1 April 1992.
3. The information requested on out-patients in the Eastern board area is not available for 1993 and so no figure for Northern Ireland as a whole is available.

Numbers Waiting—In-patients

At 31 March	Eastern Board	Western Board	Northern Ireland
1985	1,256	113	1,369
1986	1,188	259	1,447
1987	1,421	249	1,670
1988	1,610	562	2,172
1989	2,572	616	3,188
1990	3,083	768	3,851
1991	3,752	922	4,674
1992	3,639	801	4,440
1993	3,552	973	4,525

Note:
In-patient treatment in the ophthalmology specialty is only available in the Eastern and Western health and social services boards.

Numbers Waiting—Out-patients

At 31 March	Eastern Board	Northern Board	Southern Board	Western Board	Northern Ireland
1985	1,264	364	427	464	2,519
1986	1,102	387	791	213	2,493
1987	1,899	440	879	345	3,563
1988	991	591	957	525	3,064
1993	[1]—	899	694	780	[1]—

[1] Not available.

Notes:

1. Information detailing the number of people waiting for first out-patient appointment was not collected centrally from 1 April 1988 until the introduction of the corporate monitoring system on 1 April 1992.
2. Information on the numbers of out-patients waiting for their first appointment in the Eastern board area in 1993 is not presently available and so no figure is available for Northern Ireland as a whole.

Police

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what joint consultation exists between the police committee of Northern Ireland police and that force's police staff assocation, and the representative bodies of other ranks at which matters relating to police pay and conditions of service are discussed; what is the membership of the joint body; and on how many occasions it has met in the past five years.

Sir John Wheeler: There is no police committee of Northern Ireland police. The Police Negotiating Board for the United Kingdom provides a forum for the consideration of questions relating to police pay and conditions of service for the Royal Ulster Constabulary. Membership of the Police Negotiating Board includes representatives of the RUC staff associations and the Police Authority for Northern Ireland. The Police Negotiating Board meets on a regular basis.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if a Minister from his Department will meet representatives of the Northern Ireland Airport police to discuss the ramifications of *(a)* the Sheehy report, *(b)* the White Paper on police and *(c)* matters of general concern to federation members, which are not operational matters reserved for the Chief Constable.

Mr. Atkins: I met with representatives from the Belfast Airport Police Association on Tuesday 7 September 1993, when there was a wide-ranging discussion on the arrangements for the future policing of Belfast international airport. The Sheehey report and the White Paper on police do not affect the Northern Ireland Airport police.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland who serves on the police committee of the Northern Ireland Airport police; and how often it has met over the past five years.

Mr Atkins: Northern Ireland Airport police do not have a police committee. The constabulary is under the direct control of the airport management.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask then Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to what extent Home Office police regulations, or those applicable to the Royal Ulster Constabulary, are applied to members of Northern Ireland Airport police.

Mr. Atkins: The Nothern Ireland Airport constabulary are subject to regulations established by the management of Northern Ireland Airports Ltd., who have at their discretion implemented similar regulations to those of the RUC.

Rural Housing

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what action he proposes to take in relation to rural unfitness as reported in the house condition survey 1991.

Mr. Atkins: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the replies I gave him on 16 July and 27 July, *Official Report*, column

602 and columns *848-49*. The chief executive of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive has advised me that the measures outlined in those replies are kept under review and are currently considered to be the best means of dealing with rural unfitness as indicated by the house condition survey 1991.

Mr. Billy Gorman

Mr. Canavan: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he expects to make a substantive reply to the letter of 28 May from the hon. Member for Falkirk, West about the case of Mr. Billy Gorman.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I replied to the hon. Member on 3 September 1993.

Vehicles (Testing)

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps have been taken to implement European Council directive 88/449/EEC in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Atkins: As Northern Ireland law already incorporated the requirements of Council directive 88/449/EEC, no action was necessary.

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what amendments have been made to *(a)* primary or *(b)* secondary legislation in Northern Ireland, pursuant to (i) Council directive 77/143/EEC and (ii) Council directive 88/449/EEC.

Mr. Atkins: The only change made was in primary legislation. Article 34 of the Road Traffic (Northern Ireland) Order 1981 was amended to provide for the testing of an ambulance one year after its first use rather than seven years after its first use.

Public Service Vehicles

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what proposals he has to assimilate Northern Ireland road traffic legislation in respect of public service vehicle regulation with that of Great Britain.

Mr. Atkins: I have no such proposals.

PRIME MINISTER

Correspondence

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Prime Minister what is the target reasonable period for replies to ministerial correspondence; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: Each Department and agency has set its own target for replying to correspondence from hon. Members. The nature of correspondence and case load varies between Departments and between agencies and targets are set to reflect the particular circumstances of each. A table showing performance against targets for 1992 was published on 23 March 1993, *Official Report*, columns *550-52*.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer of 13 June, *Official Report*, column *317*, when he now expects to be able to reply to letters of 8 February, 31 March, 4 May and 21 June from the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford.

The Prime Minister: I have done so.

Human Rights (Jamaica)

Mr. Kaufman: To ask the Prime Minister whether, at the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting, he will raise the question of human rights in Jamaica with specific reference to men held on death row.

The Prime Minister: I have no plans to do so. My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs visited Jamaica from 6 to 10 September and discussed capital punishment with Jamaican Ministers, who are aware of our concern.

Business Opportunities

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister what steps have been taken by Her Majesty's Government since the Earth summit in June 1992 to work with industry to create business opportunities from environmental protection and enhancement.

The Prime Minister: The Government established the joint DOE/DTI environmental markets unit in late 1992 in response to a recommendation from the Advisory Committee on Business and the Environment. The unit's objective is to increase awareness among United Kingdom firms of the huge and growing markets for environmental goods and services and to help and encourage United Kingdom firms to exploit such opportunities.

In March the United Kingdom launched a technology partnership initiative aimed at encouraging greater co-operation in technology between businesses in the United Kingdom and those in newly industrialising countries. This will include technology for environmental protection and will open up commercial opportunities for United Kingdom companies.

Nuclear Trade

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister what matters in regard to nuclear trade and the thermal oxide reprocessing plant at Sellafield were discussed during his visit to Japan in September.

The Prime Minister: During my visit to Japan I discussed a wide range of bilateral trade issues.

Chlorofluorocarbons

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister what meetings he has had or plans to have with officials of the Institute of Refrigeration regarding the phase-out of CFC use in refrigeration.

The Prime Minister: I have no plans to meet the institute. However, I understand that my hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment and Countryside is arranging a meeting with refrigeration industry representatives, including the Institute of Refrigeration, in order to discuss all aspects of ozone-depleting substances.

EDUCATION

Visual Impairment

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many teachers are to be seconded for training leading to a recognised qualification in visual impairment during the year 1993-94.

Mr. Forth: The Department has completed a survey of local education authorities' use of grant 12—training for special educational needs—of the grants for education support and training programme in 1993-94. The 95 authorities which responded to the survey were supporting a total of 130 teachers on courses leading to qualifications approved by my right hon. Friend for teachers of children who are visually impaired.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the level of earmarked grants made available to support the training of teachers in recognised courses of visual impairment for each year since 1987-88.

Mr. Forth: This information is not available for all of the years requested. In 1991-92 and 1992-93, £1·2 million and £1·3 million respectively was made available to support the training of teachers in recognised courses of visual impairment, under the grants for education support and training (GEST) programme. In the GEST programme for 1993-94, special needs training is no longer confined to specific areas and the programme has been extended to cover all areas of special needs training. To accommodate this extension, the amount of eligible expenditure to be supported was increased from £7·2 million in 1992-93 to £10 million in 1993-94.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is his Department's estimate of the number of teachers who should be qualified in visual impairment during each academic year to maintain the required level of qualified personnel.

Mr. Forth: Under the Education Acts, local education authorities and schools have responsibility for securing special educational provision for pupils who have special educational needs. It is for the LEAs and schools themselves to decide, taking account of local needs and priorities, exactly what form this provision should take, and what levels of staffing are needed to deliver it.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many teachers who received a recognised qualification to teach visually impaired children in each academic year since 1987-88 attended *(a)* a full-time course, *(b)* a part-time course or *(c)* distance courses.

Mr. Forth: This information is not available centrally.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how much grant he estimates is to be allocated in support of visual impairment training towards a recognised qualification in 1993-94.

Mr. Forth: Under the grants for education support and training (GEST) programme for 1993-94, local education authorities are free to choose which areas of special needs training to support, according to local needs and priorities. A recent survey by the Department, of LEAs' use of GEST funding for special needs training, received information from 95 LEAs. It is estimated that these 95 LEAs intend to allocate in 1993-94 at least £915,000 in support of courses for training teachers of the visually impaired, including those which lead to a qualification approved by my right hon. Friend for the purposes of the Education (Teachers) Regulations 1993.

Special Needs Training

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is his response to the survey inspection of specialist training courses in England and Wales for teachers intending to teach hearing impaired pupils, visually impaired pupils and pupils with severe learning difficulties 1990-91 Ref. 64/92/NS; and what assessment he has made of the effects of the reduction in the supply of specialist trained teachers on the quality of education provision for hearing-impaired pupils.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend is aware of the findings of the survey, and is monitoring the situation carefully in respect of training for teachers in all areas of special education.

DNA Technology

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is Her Majesty's Government's policy on the introduction to schools of courses involving DNA technology.

Mr. Robin Squire: The National Curriculum Order for science includes study of DNA and genetics in attainment —target 2 life and living processes for pupils aged 14 to 16. It is compulsory for pupils in maintained schools in England and Wales.

Teacher Training

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many places were available in universities and other institutions of higher education for educating and training *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary school teachers in each of the academic years from 1989-90.

Mr. Robin Squire: Data showing the number of places available are not collected by the Department. The table shows the number of students enrolled at higher education institutions in England on primary and secondary phase initial teacher training courses for the academic years 1989-90 to 1992-93.

Enrolments on initial teacher training courses[1]

	1989-90	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*1992-93*[2]
PRIMARY				
1st year	11,300	12,000	14,400	15,900
2nd year	5,900	6,500	7,300	8,800
3rd year	4,600	5,200	6,000	6,800
4th year	3,800	4,600	5,300	6,100
Total	25,600	28,200	33,000	37,600
SECONDARY				
1st year	7,700	8,500	11,100	11,900
2nd year	1,600	1,800	2,300	3,000
3rd year	1,100	1,100	1,200	1,700
4th year	1,000	1,100	1,100	1,100
Total	11,400	12,500	15,700	17,700

[1] Figures are full-time equivalents to the nearest hundred for higher education institutions in England.
[2] Provisional.

Class Sizes

Mr. Gapes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to his answers of 17 May, *Official Report*, column *23*, and 7 July, *Official Report*, column *137*, what other studies on the impact of class size on educational attainment have been considered by his Department.

Mr. Robin Squire: The Department monitors work generally in this field.

STAR Project

Mr. Gapes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to his answer of 14 July, *Official Report*, column *511*, if he will place a copy of the report on the STAR project in the Library.

Mr. Robin Squire: A copy of the final executive summary report of June 1990 has been placed in the Library.

Parliamentary Television

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list the locations of the television sets in his Department which can receive live television feed from the Chamber of the House; and what is the total cost to his Department of this service.

Mr. Forth: The television sets utilising the live feed from the Houses of Parliament are located in Ministers' offices and the press office—a total of nine sets—in Sanctuary buildings. The net annual cost of this service is £14,458.

Student Unions

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assessment he has made of the potential impact of the proposed reform of student union membership and funding on student community action projects.

Mr. Boswell: My right hon. Friend has received a number of representations about student community action projects, which are being considered very carefully during the current consultations on the implementation of the Government's proposals for student union reform.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will identify all the specific purpose grants given to grant-maintained schools in Cumbria for each financial year since 1991-92 including the current year; and if he will state the purpose of each grant.

Mr. Robin Squire: The following self-governing schools in Cumbria have received special purpose grants (SPGs):

Amount paid (£) for each financial year

School	*1991-92*	*1992-93*	*1993-94*
Appleby Grammar School			
Transitional Grant	—	21,558	23,772
SPG (Development)	—	—	21,718
SPG (VAT)	—	—	10,832
SPG (Restructuring)	—	—	6,727
SPG (Premises)	—	—	5,925
Brampton Junior School			
Transitional Grant	—	—	27,250
SPG (Development)	—	—	5,331
SPG (VAT)	—	—	[1]978
Broughton Primary School			
Transitional Grant	—	—	18,000
Cartmel Priory School			
Transitional Grant	—	—	38,610
SPG (Development)	—	—	7,116
SPG (VAT)	—	—	[1]9,159
Dallam School			
Transitional Grant	—	30,225	19,245
SPG (Development)	—	—	27,583
SPG (VAT)	—	—	34,659
SPG (Restructuring)	—	—	4,741
SPG (Premises)	—	—	4,371
Harraby School			
Transitional Grant	—	—	43,276
SPG (Development)	—	—	23,800
SPG (VAT)	—	—	12,886
SPG (Premises)	—	—	6,000
Hayton Church of England School			
Transitional Grant	10,326	12,314	—
SPG (Development)	—	4,936	5,000
SPG (VAT)	—	2,463	2,679
SPG (Premises)	—	598	754
Kirby Stephen School			
Transitional Grant	—	24,688	15,542
SPG (Development)	—	—	14,493
SPG (Premises)	—	—	3,594
Kirkbie Kendal School			
Transitional Grant	57,600	—	—
SPG (Development)	22,245	37,953	37,953
SPG (VAT)	25,358	54,091	50,756
SPG (Restructuring)	—	9,253	36,131
SPG (Premises)	—	4,127	4,678
SPG (Emergency)	—	22,000	—
Parkview School			
Transitional Grant	—	—	45,078
SPG (Development)	—	—	19,460
Queen Elizabeth Grammar School			
Transitional Grant	45,000	—	—
SPG (Development)	5,295	21,388	22,865
SPG (VAT)	—	11,815	15,587
SPG (Restructuring)	—	10,020	—
SPG (Premises)	—	4,250	3,978
The Queen Katherine School			
Transitional Grant	—	60,000	—
SPG (Development)	—	26,651	49,300
SPG (Restructuring)	—	18,598	—
SPG (Premises)	—	—	5,528
Scotby School			
Transitional Grant	—	36,030	—
SPG (Development)	—	5,529	8,373
SPG (VAT)	—	3,089	7,355
SPG (Restructuring)	—	2,717	—
SPG (Premises)	—	—	1,065
St. Aidans County High School			
Transitional Grant	1,600	43,100	—
SPG (Development)	—	20,825	22,100
SPG (Restructuring)	—	—	16,086
SPG (Premises)	—	5,651	6,000
St. Pauls Church of England Junior School			
SPG (VAT)	—	—	[1]2,434

School	1991-92	1992-93	1993-94
Trinity School			
Transitional Grant	3,400	56,600	—
SPG (Development)	—	70,890	74,205
SPG (VAT)	—	14,868	10,306
SPG (Restructuring)		3,459	15,878
SPG (Premises)	—	—	6,000
Warwick Bridge School			
Transitional Grant	—	—	25,340
SPG (Development)	—	—	4,412
SPG (VAT)	—	—	[1]719

[1] Provisional figures to be finalised.

The purpose of each of the SPGs is as follows:

Transitional Grants
Available to help with the costs incurred as a result of the school's acquisition of self-governing status.

Special Purpose Grant (Development)
Available to fund management training, staff development and implementation of the national curriculum.

Special Purpose Grant (VAT)
Compensates for the payment of VAT on supplies and services, which self-governing schools may not claim back.

Special Purpose Grant (Restructuring)
Available to help with essential staff restructuring which involves costs arising from premature retirement, redundancy or voluntary severance of teaching staff.

Special Purpose Grant (Premises)
Assists self-governing schools with the additional cost of school premises insurance.

Special Purpose Grant (Emergency)
To meet any urgent need occasioned by circumstances outside the control of the governing body.

Literacy Problems

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assessment has been made of the estimated annual cost to business and industry, including small firms, of poor basic literacy.

Mr. Boswell: A recent survey by the Government-funded adult literacy and basic skills unit estimated the annual cost to British industry of poor basic skills—both literacy and numeracy—among the work force as almost £5 billion. This figure takes account of the cost of cancelled orders, rectifying incorrect orders, lost custom and the additional recruitment and staffing required.

Sex Education

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to ensure that *(a)* all pupils both in public and private sector schools receive sex education and *(b)* teachers are sufficiently trained to deal with the issues involved.

Mr. Forth: Under the Education Act 1993, all maintained secondary schools will from autumn 1994 be required to provide sex education for all their pupils, while at maintained primary schools it will remain discretionary. At all maintained schools, parents will have the right to withdraw their children from part or all of the sex education offered. We plan to issue detailed guidance to schools next spring on the operation of these arrangements and the content of sex education. These statutory arrangements do not apply to independent schools. The grants for education support and training programme has provided support for relevant in-service teacher training.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

BBC

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what progress the BBC has made in its programme for building new FM radio transmitters to extend the coverage of its national services.

Mr. Brooke: By September this year, I understand that the BBC had 185 national network radio transmitter sites in operation, including seven built since 1 April 1993. Transmissions from a further 15 sites are due to begin before 1 April 1994.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Aid and Trade

43. **Mr. Dickens:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on overseas aid decisions and trade implications for the United Kingdom.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We aim to expand trade opportunities for British firms in the future by promoting economic growth.

Forest Management and Conservation

44. **Dr. Liam Fox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what support the Government are giving to forest management and conservation in developing countries.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have around 200 projects in progress or under consideration, at an expected cost to the aid programme of over £150 million.

Southern Sudan

47. **Mr. Matthew Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next expects to meet European counterparts to discuss the situation in the southern Sudan; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My noble Friend Baroness Chalker of Wallasey has regular discussions, most recently on 6 October during her visit to Tokyo to attend the International Conference on African Development. We expect Sudan to be discussed at the EC Development Council on 2 December.

Yugoslavia

46. **Mr. Nigel Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the work of the ODA convoy drivers in the former Yugoslavia.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: British supplies to central Bosnia and the UN protected areas total some 47,000 tonnes in 600 convoys to date. I welcome this opportunity to pay tribute to the bravery and dedication of our drivers and mechanics and also their local interpreters.

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the latest position regarding humanitarian aid to the former Yugoslavia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We remain most concerned about the large number of people at risk in the former Yugoslavia over the coming winter. Britain's financial commitments for humanitarian aid are now £152 million, including our share of EC expenditure. We shall continue to do all we can to support the UN international relief effort, as long as security conditions are tolerable.

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action he is taking *(a)* domestically and *(b)* internationally to ensure that the target of the emergency appeal launched by the UNHCR is reached.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: UNHCR has 18 special programmes around the world for which funding is sought, in addition to its general programmes. Britain's contributions to UNHCR so far this year, including the value of our assistance to the UNHCR-led operation in former Yugoslavia, amount to £48 million. This is more than we contributed in the whole of 1992. If the value of our contributions through the European Community are also taken into account, Britain is the second largest national donor to UNHCR this year.

We regularly encourage other Governments to contribute to UNHCR, most recently associating ourselves with an appeal for support at this month's executive committee of UNHCR.

Nicaragua

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what monitoring of the aid programme of the aid to Nicaragua is taking place; and if he will make a statement on the administration of the aid.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Our small bilateral aid programme to Nicaragua is administered by the Overseas Development Administration and our embassy in Managua, and is monitored through regular project visits by British embassy staff.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Young Offenders

30. **Mr. William O'Brien:** To ask the Attorney-General what representations he has received over young offenders not being prosecuted when a guilty plea has been made in a statement to the police; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: Where an offence is admitted the police will consider cautioning the offender, following cautioning guidelines issued by the Home Office, usually without reference to the Crown Prosecution Service.

Mr. Asil Nadir

33. **Mr. Spellar:** To ask the Attorney-General what is the latest position regarding attempts to secure the return of Mr. Asil Nadir.

The Attorney-General: Asil Nadir remains in northern Cyprus whose administration is not recognised by the United Kingdom and with which we do not have any extradition arrangements. There is a warrant for his arrest should he return to the United Kingdom. Interpol have been notified of the warrant.

Serious Fraud Office

36. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Attorney-General what recent consideration he has given to the work of the Serious Fraud Office with regard to prosecutions for fraud; and if he will make a statement.

37. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Attorney-General what new proposals he has to improve the prosecution of crimes of fraud.

The Attorney-General: I am today announcing a review of the distribution of casework between the Serious Fraud Office and the fraud divisions of the Crown Prosecution Service in accordance with recommendation No. 36 of the Royal Commission on criminal justice.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Attorney-General if he will make a statement on the work of the Serious Fraud Office in the light of recommendation 36 of the report of the Royal Commission on criminal justice.

The Attorney-General: The distribution of casework between the Serious Fraud Office and the fraud divisions of the Crown Prosecution Service at present gives rise to substantial differences in the manner of their handling and the powers available which were highlighted by the Royal Commission on criminal justice. I have therefore decided that there should be a review of the handling of serious fraud and this is now under way.

This review will examine relative workloads and the criteria for allocating cases between the two departments; the organisation and management of investigation and prosecution work taking into account the role of the police in fraud investigations and of the DTI in company matters generally; and bearing in mind the need to secure timely and cost-effective prosecutions; and to examine the effect of the extended powers available to the SFO.

The outcome of the review will be material to the government's attitude to recommendation 36 of the Royal Commission on criminal justice.

Scott Inquiry

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Attorney-General how many of his staff are now seconded to the Scott inquiry.

The Attorney-General: Two lawyers from the Treasury Solicitor's Department have been assigned on a full-time basis to work in the secretariat to Lord Justice Scott's inquiry.

Crown Prosecution Service

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Attorney-General what proposals he has for improving the career prospects of non-legally qualified civil servants in the Crown Prosecution Service.

The Attorney-General: The restructuring of the Crown Prosecution Service over the last 12 months has led to a reappraisal of its administrative structure.

Each CPS area now has a new senior post to co-ordinate administrative functions and each assistant chief crown prosecutor (operations) has a senior non-lawyer at the head of his support team. In addition, development centres will be open to non-lawyers to identify those with the potential to become senior managers in the future.

The CPS continues to sponsor a number of staff to obtain the necessary legal qualifications to enable them to become Crown prosecutors.

Prison Officers

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Attorney-General how many assaults on prison officers have been referred to the Crown Prosecution Service each year since it was set up; how many of those referrals were proceeded with; and how many resulted in a conviction.

The Solicitor-General: The information sought by the honourable Member is not centrally recorded and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Blakenhurst Prison

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* staff assaults and *(b)* prisoner-on-prisoner assaults have taken place at Her Majesty's prison Blackenhurst since it opened.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from D. Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 18 October 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the number of *(a)* staff assaults and *(b)* prisoner-on-prisoner assaults that have taken place at Her Majesty's Prison Blakenhurst since it opened.

Central records of proven adjudications at Her Majesty's Prison Blakenhurst (including any attempted offences) show that provisionally in the six months April to September 1993 there were 16 assaults on staff and others plus 3 assaults on prisoners by prisoners.

Life Prisoners

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of life sentence prisoners have been released immediately on completion of their tariff in each of the last five years.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Information in the form requested is not recorded centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. However, examination of the records of the 87 life sentence prisoners released on life licence for the first time in 1992 show that 9 per cent. of them were released either before, on, or within one month after, expiry of tariff.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the total number of persons serving life sentences of imprisonment in England and Wales, the sub-totals for men and women prisoners and the proportion who are serving mandatory sentences for murder.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from D. Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 18 October 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question asking how many persons are serving life sentences of imprisonment, the sub-totals for men and women prisoners and the proportion who are serving mandatory sentences for murder.

The latest available information is for 31 May 1993 when there were 3,108 prisoners in Prison Service establishments in England and Wales serving life sentences, of whom 3,002 were men and 106 were women.

Of these some 81 per cent. of the total life sentence population were serving mandatory sentences for murder.

Prisons Ombudsman

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what arrangements are now being made to select a prisons ombudsman.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Following the Home Secretary's decision not to appoint from the previous competition, the post of prison ombudsman is to be readvertised in the national press next month. An executive search agency will also be used.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the cost of advertising the posts of prisons ombudsman and assistant prisons ombudsman.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The cost of both advertisements in the national press was £31,689.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the original timetable for the appointment of a prison ombudsman; how many candidates were short-listed; when he now expects to announce an appointment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The original intention was to announce an appointment in spring this year and to have the new office operating by January 1994. Six applicants for the post were interviewed in June, but after careful thought my right hon. and learned Friend decided that he needed to consider candidates from a wider range of backgrounds before agreeing an appointment. The post will therefore be re-advertised shortly and the aim is to announce the appointment of a prisons ombudsman by March 1994.

Prison Workshops

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prison workshops have been closed in the last 10 years; at which prisons they were closed; and when they were closed.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from D. Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 18 October 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about prison workshop closures in the last 10 years.

I am afraid it is not possible to provide all of the information you are seeking in precisely the form you have requested, but I hope the following may be of help.

In 1983 there were over 300 prison workshops. In 1985 Home Office Ministers approved proposals for a review of prison workshops that were under-utilised. This resulted in the closure of about 50 workshops. Since 1985 other workshops have closed (some of which have re-opened doing other work), some prisons which had workshops have been closed, and some new prisons with workshops have opened. At present there are 238 prison workshops in operation, a net reduction of around 60 on the 1983 figure.

Comprehensive details about the location and timing of all closures over the past 10 years could, I am afraid, only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many workshops there are in each prison in England and Wales.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from D. Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 18 October 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the number of workshops in each prison in England and Wales.

I enclose a list of all prisons in England and Wales having workshops, arranged by Prison Service Area. There are 238 workshops in all, at 99 prison establishments. A further 26 have no workshops but do have a Farms and Gardens enterprise; three have neither.

Area: East Anglia
- Establishment and workshop
  - Blundeston
    - Tailoring
    - Laundry
    - Printing
  - Bullwood Hall
    - Laundry
    - Contract Services
  - Chelmsford
    - Laundry
  - Highpoint
    - Tailoring
    - Contract Services
  - Norwich
    - Laundry
    - Printing
  - Wayland
    - Tailoring
    - Laundry

Area: Kent
- Establishment and workshop
  - Aldington
    - Contract Services
  - Canterbury
    - Combined textiles
  - Cookham Wood
    - Tailoring
  - Maidstone
    - Tailoring
    - Laundry
    - Contract Services
    - Printing
  - Rochester
    - Laundry
  - Standford Hill
    - Light textiles
  - Swaleside
    - Combined textiles
    - Contract Services
  - Elmley
    - Laundry

Area: London North
- Establishment and Workshop
  - Littlehey
    - Interlock
    - Shoes
    - Contract Services
  - Grendon
    - Laundry
  - Spring Hill
    - Contract Services
  - Holloway
    - Light Textiles
  - Whitemoor
    - Tailoring
    - Tailoring
    - Laundry
    - Contract Services
  - Oxford
    - Laundry
    - Heavy textiles
  - Pentonville
    - Tailoring
  - Wellingborough
    - Laundry
  - Wormwood Scrubs
    - Tailoring
    - Tailoring (cutting)
    - Laundry
    - Engineering assembly
    - Contract Services

Area: London South
- Establishment and Workshop
  - Albany
    - Tailoring
    - Woodwork joinery
    - Woodwork brushmaking
  - Camp Hill
    - Heavy textiles
    - Light textiles
    - Engineering fabrication
  - Feltham
    - Laundry
  - Parkhurst
    - Tailoring
    - Laundry
    - Contract Services
  - Wandsworth
    - Tailoring
    - Clothing repairs
    - Laundry
    - Contract Services
    - Woodwork joinery
    - Woodwork brushmaking
  - Belmarsh
    - Contract Services

Area: South Coast
- Establishment and workshop
  - Ford
    - Tailoring (shirts)

Engineering fabrication
Contract Services
Contract Services
Kingston-Portsmouth
Printing
Drawing Office
Lewes
Contract Services
Winchester
Tailoring
Contract Services
Contract Services
Downview
Contract Services
Highdown
Laundry

Area: Central
Establishment and workshop
Ashwell
Tailoring (shirts)
Shoes
Birmingham
Laundry
Heavy textiles
Heavy textiles
Featherstone
Interlock
Interlock
Interlock
Engineering fabrication
Gartree
Knitwear
Shoes
Plastics
Glen Parva
Laundry
Contract Services
Contract Services
Leicester
Contract Services
Long Lartin
Laundry
Light textiles
Engineering fabrication
Stafford
Tailoring
Tailoring (cutting)
Laundry
Contract Services
Contract Services

Area: Mercia
Establishment and workshop
Drake Hall
Laundry
Interlock
Contract Services
Shrewsbury
Interlock
Stoke Heath
Laundry
Engineering Assembly
Sudbury
Laundry
Shoes
Slippers
Contract Services
Woodwork joinery

Area: The Chilterns
Establishment and workshop
Aylesbury
Laundry
Contract Services
Coldingley
Laundry
Engineering fabrication
Engineering (signs)
Onley
Contract Services
Contract Services
The Mount
Engineering fabrication
Bullingdon
Laundry

Area: Wales and the West
Establishment and workshop
Bristol
Tailoring
Heavy textiles
Cardiff
Tailoring
Laundry
Contract Services
Erlestoke
Sewing machine repair
Leyhill
Laundry
Woodwork joinery
Printing
Swansea
Tailoring
Light textiles
USK
Concrete

Area: Wessex
Establishment and workshop
Channings Wood
Tailoring
Laundry
Woodwork (furniture)
Dartmoor
Laundry
Light textiles
Engineering fabrication
Woodwork (furniture)
Dorchester
Heavy textiles
Exeter
Contract Services
Guys Marsh
Laundry
Portland
Laundry
Woodwork joinery
Shepton Mallet
Tailoring
The Verne
Contract Services
Woodwork joinery

Area: East Midlands
Establishment and workshop
Lincoln
Laundry
Heavy textiles
Interlock
Interlock
Lindholme
Tailoring
Tailoring (shirts)
Nottingham
Tailoring
Ranby
Contract Services
Plastics
Woodwork joinery
Whatton
Tailoring (shirts)
Stocken
Heavy textiles
Sewing machine repair
Moorland
Heavy textiles
Contract Services

Area: North East
Establishment and workshop
Acklington
Tailoring

Laundry
Heavy textiles
Durham
Heavy textiles
Light textiles
Light textiles
Frankland
Laundry
Woodwork (furniture)
Low Newton
Light textiles
Castington
Heavy textiles
Full Sutton
Tailoring
Tailoring (shirts)
Clothing repairs
Tailoring (shirts)
Contract Services
Holme House
Laundry
Contract Services
Area: North West
Establishment and workshop
Haverigg
Tailoring (shirts)
Laundry
Heavy textiles
Weaving—hand
Weaving—machine
Sewing machine repair
Contract Services

Hindley
Weaving—hand
Concrete

Kirkham
Laundry
Weaving—machine
Sizing and beaming
Contract Services
Woodwork joinery

Lancaster
Heavy textiles
Light textiles

Preston
Heavy textiles
Light textiles

Wymott
Tailoring
Tailoring (shirts)
Laundry
Weaving—machine
Engineering fabrication

Garth
Tailoring
Tailoring (shirts)
Weaving—machine
Contract Services

Area: Trans Pennine
Establishment and workshop
Leeds
Heavy textiles
Light textiles
Light textiles
Contract Services

Liverpool
Tailoring (shirts)
Laundry
Shoes
Contract Services
Woodwork joinery
Contract Services

New Hall
Light textiles

Risley
Laundry
Light textiles
Contract Services

Styal
Tailoring (shirts)

Wakefield
Tailoring
Laundry
Heavy textiles
Heavy textiles
Light textiles
Engineering fabrication
Engineering
Contract Services
Area: Yorkshire
Establishment and workshop
Deerbolt
Laundry
Everthorpe
Woodwork joinery
Hull
Light textiles
Light textiles
Contract services
Contract services
Northallerton
Light textiles
Rudgate
Tailoring (shirts)
Laundry
Sizing and beaming
Sewing machine repair
Thorp Arch
Tailoring

New Prisons

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will name the construction firms which were hired to build each prison that has come on stream in the last 15 years;

(2) what are the projected capital costs, and over what period, of the new private prisons announced on 6 October;

(3) whether the proposed new prisons announced on 6 October are in addition to the prison building programme currently nearing completion.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for these matters has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from D. Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 18 October 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Questions about the prison building programme and the proposals to build six new prisons.

I attach a table listing the construction firms employed to build the new prisons which have opened in the last 15 years.

The six new prisons to which the Home Secretary referred on 6 October are in addition to the current new prison building programme which will be completed when Doncaster prison opens next year. The construction of the first two of these prisons was announced in the Autumn statement last year. On 2 September 1993 the Home Secretary announced that the design, construction, management and potentially financing of the new prisons would be contracted out to the private sector. I expect that the further four prisons which were announced on 6 October will be procured in the same way. It is too early to indicate the cost of these prisons which will be assessed on the basis of value for money obtained for the complete financial package comprising

both capital and operating costs. Outline proposals and expressions of interest in the first two prisons will be invited shortly.

Prison	*Location*	*Date of Opening*	*Main Construction Contractor*
Wymott	Leyland Lancashire	April 1979	Alfred McAlpine
Frankland	Frankland Durham	April 1982	Fairclough
Wayland	Thetford Norfolk	January 1985	Carters of Norwich
Stocken	Oakham Leicestershire	June 1985	Miller Construction
Thorn Cross	Warrington Cheshire	July 1985	Shepherd Construction
Full Sutton	Full Sutton York	September 1987	Monk Construction
Littlehey	Huntingdon Cambridgeshire	January 1988	Bovis Construction
Mount	Bovingdon Hertfordshire	March 1988	Wimpey Construction
Garth	Leyland Lancashire	July 1988	Tarmac
Swaleside	Isle of Sheppey Kent	May 1990	Mowlem
Belmarsh	South East London	April 1991	Wimpey Construction
Moorland	Hatfield Woodhouse South Yorkshire	July 1991	Higgs and Hill
Whitemoor	March Cambridgeshire	September 1991	Monk Construction
Brinsford	Featherstone Staffordshire	November 1991	Taylor Woodrow
Elmley	Isle of Sheppey Kent	February 1992	Mowlem
Bullingdon	Bicester Oxon	March 1992	Kier Construction
Wolds	Brough North Humberside	April 1992	UK Detention Contractors (Consortium: Mowlem and Sir Robert McAlpine)
Holme House	Stockton-on-Tees Cleveland	May 1992	Sir Robert McAlpine
Woodhill	Milton Keynes Buckinghamshire	July 1992	Higgs and Hill
High Down	Banstead Surrey	August 1992	Alfred McAlpine
Lancaster Farms	Lancaster	March 1993	AMEC
Blakenhurst	Redditch Worcestershire	May 1993	Tarmac
Doncaster	South Yorkshire	April 1994	Shepherd Construction

Wymott Prison

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners were transferred out of Wymott; and to which establishments they were sent following the riots at Wymott prison.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from D. Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 18 October 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the transfer of prisoners from Wymott following the riots.

A total of 696 prisoners were transferred to the following establishments:

Belmarsh
Birmingham
Blundeston
Chelmsford
Elmley
Full Sutton
Garth
Gloucester
Highdown
Highpoint
Holme House
Leeds
Leicester
Norwich
Pentonville
Preston
Shewsbury
Wakefield
Wandsworth
Wayland
Whitemoor
Winchester
Wormwood Scrubs

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects the Chief Inspector of Prisons to report on the causes of the recent riots at Wymott prison.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I received HM Chief Inspector of Prisons' report of his inquiry into the recent riot at Wymott prison on 30 September. The report is being carefully studied. I expect to publish it shortly.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give the latest estimate of the cost of refurbishing Wymott prison in the wake of the recent riots.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from D. Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 18 October 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the cost of refurbishing Wymott prison following the disturbances there at the beginning of last month.

If we were to reinstate the prison, which had an operational capacity of 768 places, as far as possible to its condition before the riot took place the cost would be in the region of £9 million. For the present, two of the four living units are being repaired and control measures strengthened so that they can be brought back into use for vulnerable prisoners. Work to A Wing was completed so that it could be re-occupied by prisoners within 14 days of the disturbance and work on B Wing is currently underway and should be finished by 1 November. Additional work to repair other essential parts of the prison affected by the riot is being undertaken at the same time. The repair work currently being undertaken is likely to cost approximately £6 million.

We are currently reviewing the future of C and D Wings, which were more severely damaged.

Prison Dog Service

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the cost of drawing up plans to market test the prison dog service.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from D. Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 18 October 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the cost of drawing up plans to market test the prison dog service.

I estimate this to be approximately £7,000, mainly the cost of the time of two staff members temporarily allocated to the project.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the future of the prison dog service.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from D. Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 18 October 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the future of the prison dog service.

There are no current plans for any major changes to the dog service.

Wolds Prison

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners from the Wolds prison have been treated at outside hospitals as the result of attacks on them in prison; and how many prisoners have been treated by medical services within the prison as a result of attacks since the prison opened.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from D. Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 18 October 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the numbers of prisoners from the Wolds remand prison who have been treated at outside hospitals and by medical services within the prison as a result of attacks since the prison opened.

Between 6 April 1992, when the prison opened, and 11 October 1993, ten prisoners have received treatment at Hull Royal Infirmary and 24 at the prison's Health Care Centre for injuries sustained in attacks on them by other prisoners.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department who represents the Wolds prison on the local criminal justice committee.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from D. Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 18 October 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about who represents Wolds remand prison on the local Criminal Justice Committee.

Wolds, like all prisons in the locality, is represented on the Committee by the governor of HMP Hull.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the Director of the Wolds prison currently receives copies of all relevant Prison Service instructions and advice to governors.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from D. Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 18 October 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about whether the Director of the Wolds prison currently receives copies of all relevant Prison Service instructions and advice to governors.

All instructions and advice to governors which are relevant to the Wolds are passed to the Director.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he intends to take to integrate the Wolds prison into the rest of the Prison Service.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from D. Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 18 October 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about what steps he intends to take to integrate Wolds prison into the rest of the Prison Service.

The first step was taken on 1 April this year, when the Prison Service Agency became responsible for all prisons, both directly managed and contracted. Since than a number of further steps to integrate the Wolds have been taken, including incident reporting, mutual support on difficult prisoners and performance measurement. It is also intended that the Area Manager will assume part of the supervisory role in relation to the Wolds.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to designate part of the Wolds prison for sentenced prisoners.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from D. Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 18 October 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about what plans he has to designate part of Wolds prison for sentenced prisoners.

We consider that there would be advantages if some sentenced prisoners were introduced to Wolds, and have reached agreement in principle with Group 4. Both the Prison Service and the contractor are considering how best this should be implemented.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether working copies of the consolidated agreement between the Home Office and the contractor, Group 4, for the running of the Wolds prison are held on site by the controller and the director.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from D. Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 18 October 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about copies of the consolidated agreement for the management of Wolds remand prison.

Both the Director and Controller have consolidated copies of the agreement.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what percentage of prisoners at the Wolds prison are currently held at their own request under rule 43.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from D. Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 18 October 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the percentage of prisoners at Wolds remand prison currently held at their own request under Rule 43.

On 14 October 0·6 per cent. of prisoners (2 prisoners out of 323) were held at their own request under Rule 43.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what penalties are provided for in the contract with Group 4 to manage the Wolds prison in respect of failure to provide a library service and a bail unit; if these services are in operation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from D. Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 18 October 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about penalties in the contract with Group 4 for the management of Wolds prison, and about the library service and the bail unit.

The contract with Group 4 permits the Prison Service to withhold in whole or in part the agreed monthly fee for any month in which the management of the prison was unsatisfactory in any respect. The library at Wolds is in operation, and a probation officer for the bail information scheme is in post.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what changes have been made in the chain of command at Wolds prison since Group 4 took over running it; and what assessment he has made of its effectiveness in the event of a serious incident.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from D. Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 18 October 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the management of serious incidents at Wolds remand prison.

Incidents at contracted prisons, like those at directly managed prisons, are now routinely reported to the Incident Management Suite Unit at Prison Service Headquarters. It is intended that the suite should be used in the future for the management of serious incidents at all prisons.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the deputising arrangements at the Wolds prison for use in the absence of the controller were last reviewed.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from D. Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 18 October 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the deputising arrangements for the Controller at Wolds remand prison.

These are currently under review.

Prison Population

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the Department's projections for the size of the prison population in each of the years 1994 to the year 2000.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Projections of long-term trends in the prison population to 2001 were published in the Home Office *Statistical Bulletin* 6/93 on 30 March 1993, on the basis of the legislation then in force. These projections have been revised on an interim basis, reflecting the

changes introduced by the Criminal Justice Act 1993 and taking account of the most recent data. The revised projections for 1994 onwards are:

	Number
1994	48,800
1995	50,500
1996	51,100
1997	52,100
1998	53,200
1999	54,300
2000	55,400
2001	56,600

These projections are based on an estimate of the effect of the Criminal Justice Act 1993 and are therefore subject to a considerable margin of uncertainty. Further revised projections will be published next March following the full annual updating exercise.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the *(a)* certified normal accommodation and *(b)* actual population at each prison in England and Wales; and what were the total figures, at the latest available date.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from D. Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 18 October 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about Prison Service accommodation and population.

I attach a table showing the certified normal accommodation (CNA) and actual population in each establishment in England and Wales on 11 October 1993.

Establishment CNA and population on 11 October 1993

Establishment	CNA	Population
Acklington	676	643
Albany	313	297
Aldington	133	105
Ashwell	404	392
Askham Grange	129	106
Aylesbury	241	238
Bedford	170	226
Belmarsh	841	688
Birmingham	638	719
Blakenhurst	523	523
Blantyre House	95	94
Blundeston	410	322
Brinsford	446	451
Bristol	374	432
Brixton	518	615
Brockhill	156	124
Bullingdon	635	610
Bullwood Hall	125	106
Camp Hill	406	342
Canterbury	128	194
Cardiff	328	426
Castington	300	278
Channings Wood	594	546
Chelmsford	217	326
Coldingley	222	237
Cookham Wood	120	116
Dartmoor	560	506
Deerbolt	432	347
Dorchester	136	204
Dover	316	185
Downview	287	283
Drake Hall	255	193
Durham	364	526
East Sutton Park	85	76
Elmley	635	590
Erlestoke	206	203
Everthorpe	228	224
Exeter	317	413
Featherstone	599	580
Feltham	874	797
Finnamore Wood	112	81
Ford	536	459
Frankland	339	317
Full Sutton	604	522
Garth	512	508
Gartree	258	246
Glen Parva	854	741
Gloucester	207	254
Grendon	190	170
Guys Marsh	300	173
Haslar	145	142
Hatfield	180	179
Haverigg	345	331
Hewell Grange	136	163
High Down	549	521
Highpoint	679	650
Hindley	317	309
Hollesley Bay	425	299
Holloway	517	492
Holme House	649	586
Hull	269	417
Huntercombe	240	164
Kingston	104	96
Kirkham	620	589
Kirklevington	74	68
Lancaster	186	261
Lancaster Farms	260	324
Latchmere House	131	117
Leeds	700	1,111
Leicester	194	343
Lewes	267	333
Leyhill	410	410
Lincoln	444	591
Lindholme	622	608
Littlehey	543	525
Liverpool	931	1,273
Long Lartin	362	333
Low Newton	199	250
Maidstone	513	524
Manchester	291	308
Morland	641	629
Morton Hall	168	169
The Mount	484	464
New Hall	205	157
North Sea Camp	204	191
Northallerton	146	22
Norwich	463	440
Nottingham	218	209
Onley	456	458
Parkhurst	286	232
Pentonville	559	651
Portland	424	340
Prescoed	40	33
Preston	324	550
Pucklechurch	56	66
Ranby	331	329
Reading	182	167
Risley	773	693
Rochester	303	169
Rudgate	300	262
Send	113	111
Shepton Mallet	158	181
Shrewsbury	168	290
Spring Hill	210	206
Stafford	532	511
Standford Hill	384	308
Stocken	396	389
Stoke Heath	300	266
Styal	180	199
Sudbury	509	425
Swaleside	504	500

Establishment	CNA	Population
Swansea	213	277
Swinfen Hall	167	166
Thorn Cross	240	187
Thorp Arch	166	164
Usk	201	187
The Verne	552	538
Wakefield	662	649
Wandsworth	838	811
Wayland	580	556
Wellingborough	284	279
Werrington	110	106
Wetherby	120	139
Whatton	217	213
Whitemoor	534	495
Winchester	361	392
The Wolds	320	321
Woodhill	492	493
Wormwood Scrubs	527	732
Wymott	110	78
TOTAL	46,361	46,471

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners were held *(a)* two to a cell and *(b)* three to a cell, on the most recent date for which figures are available.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from D. Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 18 October 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about cell sharing.

On 30 September 1993, the number of prisoners held two to a cell intended for one person was 7,740, and the number held three to a cell was 93.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the expected capacity of prisons in England and Wales in the years 2000, 2005 and 2010.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from D. Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 18 October 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the expected capacity of prisons in England and Wales into the next century.

Our current projection indicates that the Certified Normal Accommodation of prisons in England and Wales will be 54,000 places in the financial year 2000-01, assuming that a small proportion of accommodation will be out of use for essential building and repair work. This projection reflects the plans for additional capacity included in the 1992 Public Expenditure Survey. It therefore includes only two of the six new prisons announced by the Home Secretary earlier this month.

We have not made any projection of accommodation levels beyond that year. A revised projection should be available early next year and this will include all years up to 2001-2.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the change in the prison population for each month of 1993.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from D. Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock dated 18 October 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about monthly changes in the prison population in 1993.

The table below gives monthly changes based on the population on the last Friday of each month.

Month	Change
January	+884
February	+1,249
March	+368
April	+116
May	+659
June	+301
July	+926
August	+489
September	+533

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the average monthly change in the prison population in the years 1988 to 1992.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from D. Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 18 October 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about monthly changes in the prison population in recent years.

The following table gives the average monthly change in the prison population for the years 1988 to 1992.

Month	Average change 1988 to 1992
January	1,044
February	692
March	124
April	-130
May	-220
June	66
July	176
August	-98
September	-112
October	-276
November	-220
December	-2,194

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* sentenced prisoners and *(b)* people on remand were held in prisons in England and Wales each month in 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1992-93 up to the latest date available.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from D. Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 18 October 1993:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the population of *(a)* sentenced and *(b)* remand prisoners in Prison Service establishments for each month in 1990-91, 1991-92 and 1992-93.

The information for 1991 is published in Prison statistics England and Wales (Table 1.2 from the 1991 edition, Cm 2157) and I enclose a copy of the table. Information on the monthly population in Prison Service establishments for 1992 up to August 1993 (the latest date for which information is available) is given in the attached table.

Table 1.2
Population in custody: by sex and type of custody, annual averages and month end figures, 1986-91
England and Wales: Males and Females

Number of persons

	Males							Females						
	Remand prisoners			Sentenced		Non-criminal	Population in custody	Remand prisoners			Sentenced		Non-criminal	Population in custody	Males and females Population in custody
	Untried		Convicted unsentenced	Young offenders	Adults			Untried		Convicted unsentenced	Young offenders	Adults			
	Prison service establs.	Police cells[1]						Prison service establs.	Police cells[1]						
Annual averages															
1986	8,210	78	1,362	8,949	26,409	233	45,241	320	41	70	237	976	5	1,648	46,889
1987	8,743	469	1,479	8,557	27,677	266	47,191	331	68	72	205	1,092	4	1,772	48,963
1988	8,395	'951	1,587	8,156	28,850	221	48,160	403	'27	77	190	1,086	6	1,789	49,949
1989	8,204	'100	1,727	7,056	29,543	214	46,843	372	'3	93	176	1,117	6	1,767	48,610
1990	7,324	'447	1,749	6,121	28,201	197	44,039	300	—	84	143	1,066	4	1,597	45,636
1991	7,254	'669	1,845	5,723	28,551	294	44,336	291	'1	97	136	1,030	6	1,561	45,897
Month end figures															
1989 January	8,594	'275	1,681	7,298	29,343	211	47,402	380	'26	88	186	1,096	9	1,785	49,187
February	8,436	'195	1,726	7,386	29,787	226	47,756	364	'7	105	183	1,131	16	1,806	49,562
March	8,545	71	1,678	7,227	29,721	235	47,477	394	—	82	178	1,111	9	1,774	49,251
April	8,407	'108	1,689	7,218	29,784	234	47,440	375	2	94	172	1,134	8	1,785	49,225
May	8,120	'131	1,675	7,117	29,612	227	46,882	374	—	102	175	1,121	4	1,776	48,658
June	7,943	226	1,845	6,997	29,737	254	47,002	378	4	98	173	1,106	1	1,760	48,762
July	8,102	64	1,870	7,045	29,887	214	47,182	377	—	99	175	1,115	6	1,772	48,954
August	8,389	20	1,833	6,952	29,255	229	46,678	395	—	79	173	1,153	3	1,803	48,481
September	8,287	68	1,781	6,965	29,531	220	46,852	366	—	102	196	1,159	2	1,825	48,677
October	8,190	32	1,784	6,922	29,633	172	46,733	382	—	100	156	1,111	6	1,755	48,488
November	7,840	4	1,676	6,979	29,740	184	46,423	350	—	94	203	1,086	2	1,735	48,158
December	7,593	—	1,486	6,559	28,483	160	44,281	336	—	70	144	1,087	—	1,637	45,918
1990 January	8,033	—	1,727	6,359	28,636	177	44,932	359	—	84	134	1,117	2	1,696	46,628
February	8,041	—	1,772	6,338	28,892	186	45,229	325	—	90	144	1,105	2	1,666	46,895
March	7,970	—	1,822	6,391	28,890	188	45,261	304	—	98	132	1,089	4	1,627	46,888
April	7,565	'392	1,602	6,103	28,105	175	43,942	303	—	81	123	1,067	2	1,576	45,518
May	7,154	'662	1,679	6,127	27,964	187	43,773	280	—	67	153	1,090	2	1,592	45,365
June	7,033	'628	1,726	6,252	28,027	187	43,853	280	—	77	154	1,099	3	1,613	45,466
July	7,121	'458	1,707	6,297	28,249	208	44,040	284	—	47	132	1,095	3	1,581	45,621
August	7,134	'844	1,748	6,114	28,013	212	44,065	296	—	85	143	1,052	8	1,584	45,649
September	7,174	'752	1,824	5,967	27,965	205	43,887	306	—	89	153	1,044	9	1,601	45,488
October	6,968	'691	1,909	5,940	28,230	218	43,956	301	—	105	151	1,036	4	1,597	45,553
November	6,823	'634	1,962	5,940	28,096	213	43,668	297	—	97	146	1,031	5	1,576	45,244
December	6,878	'299	1,515	5,619	27,344	204	41,859	267	—	83	136	966	3	1,455	43,314
1991 January	7,180	'423	1,868	5,577	27,709	303	43,060	291	—	94	138	985	2	1,510	44,570
February	7,246	'443	1,999	5,776	28,054	271	43,789	261	—	105	146	1,022	—	1,534	45,323
March	7,072	'523	1,771	5,787	28,147	273	43,573	272	—	94	136	1,029	2	1,533	45,106
April	7,329	'366	1,796	5,730	28,160	299	43,680	282	—	88	128	1,024	2	1,524	45,204
May	7,385	'400	1,818	5,761	28,310	315	43,989	322	—	90	116	1,020	5	1,553	45,542
June	7,074	'605	1,811	5,693	28,531	368	44,082	286	—	101	110	1,038	9	1,544	45,626
July	6,964	'829	1,848	5,757	28,922	317	44,637	298	—	100	136	1,084	10	1,628	46,265
August	7,134	'925	1,901	5,696	28,788	268	44,712	308	—	89	130	1,055	16	1,598	46,310
September	7,462	'1,040	1,829	5,798	28,910	272	45,311	311	—	112	134	1,034	11	1,602	46,913
October	7,514	'966	1,894	5,755	29,198	278	45,605	291	'8	124	144	1,043	5	1,615	47,220
November	7,302	'985	1,970	5,827	29,401	286	45,771	291	'4	102	161	1,033	7	1,598	47,369
December	7,380	'520	1,635	5,520	28,487	278	43,820	284	—	62	154	992	7	1,499	45,319

[1] Up to 1987 all those in police cells are assumed to be untried remand prisoners. For 1988 onwards estimates have been made of the numbers convicted unsentenced and included with the corresponding prison service establishment figures (see table 1.4). In 1988 the average total population in police cells was 1,047 males and 30 females, in 1989 107 males and three females, in 1990 661 males and in 1991 1,086 males and two females.

Prison population[1] by type of custody: England and Wales—January 1992-August 1993

	Untried	Convicted Unsentenced	Total Remand	Sentenced	Total[2]
1992					
January	8,583	2,078	10,661	35,585	46,566
February	8,679	2,068	10,747	36,540	47,590
March	8,626	2,052	10,678	36,751	47,746
April	8,638	2,008	10,646	36,721	47,738
May	8,299	1,995	10,294	36,057	46,696
June	8,381	2,023	10,404	36,065	46,832
July	8,029	1,913	9,942	36,603	46,875
August	8,207	1,921	10,128	35,929	46,350
September	8,123	1,897	10,020	35,589	45,835

	Untried	Convicted Unsentenced	Total Remand	Sentenced	Total[2]
October	7,436	2,169	9,605	34,019	43,905
November	7,190	2,269	9,459	33,333	43,064
December	6,718	1,772	8,490	31,845	40,606
1993					
January	7,175	2,258	9,433	31,793	41,561
February	7,435	2,498	9,933	32,461	42,882
March	7,289	2,707	9,996	32,661	43,195
April	7,472	2,525	9,997	32,796	43,391
May	7,586	2,595	10,181	32,805	43,585
June	7,857	2,775	10,632	33,046	44,246
July	7,810	2,762	10,572	33,653	44,830
August	8,603	2,804	11,407	33,616	45,633

[1] Includes prisoners held in police cells.
[2] Includes non-criminals.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what forecast has been made of the change in the size of the prison population relative to the total capacity of prisons in England and Wales.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from D. Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 18 October 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the prison population and the total capacity of prisons in England and Wales.

The table below compares projections of average population with estimates of the average number of certified normal accommodation (CNA) places available for use to the year 2000-01.

	Population	CNA
1993-94	46,000	48,900
1994-95	49,400	50,300
1995-96	50,700	52,200
1996-97	51,300	52,500
1997-98	52,300	53,100
1998-99	53,400	53,800
1999-00	54,500	53,800
2000-01	55,700	53,800

The population figures reflect projections which have been revised on an interim basis, reflecting the changes introduced by the Criminal Justice Act 1993. The accommodation figures assume that a small proportion of accommodation would be out of use for essential building and repair work. The current projections reflect plans for additional capacity included in the 1992 Public Expenditure Survey. They therefore include only two of the six new prisons announced by the Home Secretary earlier this month.

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the projected capacity of prisons in England and Wales for each of the years 1994 to the year 2000.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from D. Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 18 October 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the projected capacity of prisons in England and Wales.

Our current projections for the financial years up to 2000-01 are as follows:

	Capacity
1993-94	48,900
1994-95	50,300
1995-96	52,200
1996-97	52,500
1997-98	53,100
1998-99	53,800
1999-2000	53,800
2000-2001	53,800

The figures shown are for average certified normal accommodation places, and assume that a small proportion of accommodation would be out of use for essential building and repair work. The projections reflect plans for additional capacity included in the 1992 Public Expenditure Survey. They therefore include only two of the six new prisons announced by the Home Secretary earlier this month.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what preparations he is making to deal with potential prison overcrowding; and what plans there are to use *(a)* police cells, *(b)* temporary buildings or portakabins and *(c)* prison ships or barges.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from D. Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 18 October 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about preparations to deal with prison overcrowding.

The Prison Service is making every effort to deal with the increasing prison population without recourse to police cells. There are no immediate plans to use temporary buildings or accommodation barges, although both have been actively considered. The approach currently being taken is to seek to use existing Prison Service capacity to the fullest extent possible, having close regard to the safety of staff and inmates. This approach includes work to reclaim, where possible, inmate accommodation currently being used for other purposes.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the numbers of inmates of the Wolds and Blakenhurst prisons, respectively; and what plans he has to bring them up to their full complement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from D. Lewis to Mr. Doug Hoyle, dated 18 October 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the number of inmates at Wolds and Blakenhurst prisons.

Group 4 are contracted to hold a maximum of 320 prisoners in Wolds remand prison. The roll at unlock on 14 October was 323.

Blakenhurst has a target to fill at the rate of approximately 100 prisoners per month, giving a current target of 500 by 26 October. Despite difficulties with the water supply which caused a delay in taking prisoners in August and September, the roll at unlock on 14 October was 531.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the prison population in March 1990; what is the population now; what is the current monthly level of change; and what plans he has to use police cells.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from D. Lewis to Mr. Doug Hoyle, dated 18 October 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the prison population and police cells.

The prison population on 30 March 1990 was 47,304 and on 15 October 1993 was 46,935. The monthly change (on the basis of last Friday in the month figures) so far this year has been as follows:

	Number
January	+884
February	+1,249
March	+368
April	+116
May	+659
June	+301
July	+926
August	+489
September	+533

We are making every effort to avoid any recourse to police cells. To this end we are making adjustments to the way the Prison Service's estate is used and we are taking action to ensure that all possible inmate accommodation is made operational.

Grendon Prison

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has for a further prison run on the lines of Grendon.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from D. Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 18 October 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about plans for a further prison run on the lines of Grendon.

Proposals for a second therapeutic community run on Grendon lines have in the past received endorsement from both HM Chief Inspector of Prisons and Lord Justice Woolf. We are giving careful consideration to these proposals and the Director of Health Care, Dr. Rosemary Wool, is chairing a task force the terms of reference of which are:

> to determine the strategy for treating/managing those prisoners who are suffering personality disorder and the need for further "Grendon style" therapeutic regimes.

The task force has a membership drawn from the Department of Health, Home Office, special hospitals and independent specialists and has been giving careful consideration to the type of facilities required, the category of prisoners to be provided for, the physical location of any additional facilities and whether another facility wholly dedicated as a therapeutic community is required, or alternately whether units in a number of other prisons would be a more suitable option.

The task force is due to report in January 1994 and until their report is received it would be premature for me to comment further.

Prison Escort Services

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners who have been transported by the Group 4 prison escort service have arrived late at their destinations.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from D. Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 18 October 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question asking how many prisoners who have been transported by Group 4 Court Services Ltd have arrived late at their destination.

Of the prisoners delivered by Group 4 Court Services Ltd in the East Midlands and Humberside by the end of September, 1,690 had arrived late at their destinations. To that date Group 4 had been responsible for 42,658 prisoner movements. Of the late deliveries, the majority were late for reasons beyond the control of the Contractor.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of prisoner escorts are carried out by private hire coach and private hire taxi.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from D. Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 18 October 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the proportion of prisoner escorts carried out by private hire coach and private hire taxi.

The information requested is not held centrally and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many complaints have been received about the Group 4 prison escort service since Group 4 took over the service in the east midlands and Humberside in April.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from D. Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 18 October 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the number of complaints received about Group 4 Court Services Ltd since they took over the court escort and custody service in the East Midlands and Humberside in April.

By 7 October a total of 141 complaints had been received; 13 by the Prisoner Escort Monitor, and 128 by Group 4 Court Services Ltd. Of the latter, 82 were from prisoners and 46 from other sources. By that date Group 4 had been responsible for 50,352 prisoner movements. The number has steadily declined as the service has settled down from a peak of 36 complaints in April. In September only seven complaints were received.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the security arrangements for escorting each category of prisoner between prisons; and what are the average costs per mile.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from D. Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 18 October 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about security arrangements for escorting each category of prisoner between prisons and the average costs per mile.

In general terms prisoners may be escorted between prisons using a variety of vehicles including contract taxis, coaches, mini-buses, cellular vehicles and secure vans and accompanied by an appropriate number of officers. Category B prisoners, those on remand and category C prisoners may be handcuffed. Handcuffs are not used when category D inmates are escorted to open prisons and are not used routinely on women prisoners.

Other security arrangements include searching of inmates and vehicles, depending on the analysis of the escape risk of each individual prisoner. Special arrangements, including police support, are made for transferring category A prisoners.

Given the wide variety of arrangements for escorts between prisons there is no central record of average costs per mile. This information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many legal actions are pending against Group 4 in relation to its prison escort service.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from D. Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 18 October 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the number of legal actions pending against Group 4 in relation to the court escort and custody service.

I am not aware of any such action.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many staff Group 4 employs to operate the court escort service for the Hull and east midlands region.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from D. Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 18 October 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the number of staff employed by Group 4 in the court escort and custody service in the East Midlands and Humberside.

Group 4 Court Services Limited employ 359 staff to operate the court escort and custody service in the East Midlands and Humberside.

Prison Offences

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prison officers have been seriously assaulted in 1993; and if he will provide details.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from D. Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 18 October 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the number of officers who have been seriously assaulted in 1993.

Central records provisionally show that in the first nine months of 1993 there were 1,915 cases proved at adjudication where the charge was an actual assault on a member of staff or other person (not including an inmate). There were a further 166 cases proved of attempted assault. No other relevant details are held centrally.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many alleged offences in prisons have been referred to the police, and in how many cases prosecutions have ensued, since the abolition of boards of visitors adjudications.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from D. Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 18 October 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the referral to the police of alleged offences by prisoners.

The full information you request is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. In a survey for the year starting in April 1992, 98 prisons gave the following information:

547	alleged offences by prisoners were referred to the police
121	were still current at the time of the survey
176	had gone to court
187	had not been pursued by the police
54	had not been pursued by the CPS
9	cases had no information recorded on the outcome.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what were the numbers of assaults on prison officers per 100 prisoners at each prison in England and Wales for each quarter since 1986.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from D. Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 18 October 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the numbers of assaults on prison officers per 100 prisoners at each prison in England and Wales for each quarter since 1986.

The available information is for the number of assaults proved at adjudication under the prison discipline system. Data are not available prior to April 1989 as assaults on prison officers, staff,

inmates and others (other than gross personal violence to an officer) were grouped together in a single category. The information for April to December 1989, for 1990 and 1991 was published in successive volumes of "Statistics of offences against prison discipline and punishments, England and Wales" (Cm. 1236 for 1989, Cm. 1651 for 1990, Cm. 2066 for 1991). For convenience I enclose copies of the relevant tables.

Provisional information for 1992-93 and for the six months April to September 1993 is enclosed. I regret that more detailed information could only be provided at disproportionate cost.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many breaches of prison discipline occurred *(a)* in the 12 months before and *(b)* in the 12 months after the abolition of boards of visitors adjudications.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service,who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from D. Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 18 October 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about breaches of prison discipline in the twelve months before and after the abolition of boards of visitor adjudications.

The disciplinary role of the boards ceased with effect from 1 April 1992. In the twelve months from April 1992 to March 1993 there were 89,163 proven offences compared with 89,050 in the previous twelve months.

Market Testing

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what management consultants have been used to advise on market testing and privatisation in the Prison Service; for what purposes; and at what cost.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from D. Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 18 October 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question asking what management consultants have been used to advise on market testing and privatisation in the Prison Service; for what purposes; and at what cost. Since the launch of the White Paper "Competing for Quality" the following consultants have been used to assist in our market testing work:

Coopers Lybrand
Identification of potential Home Office and Prison Service candidates for testing.

Handley-Walker PLC
Technical and evaluation advice for the market test of warehousing and distribution.

Further Education Staff College
Advice on competitive tendering of prison education.

PDP
Review of the operational specification used in the tendering of prisons management.

PA
Analysis and evaluation of tenders for the management of Blakenhurst and Manchester prisons.

LEK
Development of an analytical framework for the selection of prisons for market testing.

Government Actuaries Department
Analysis and evaluation of tenders for the management of Manchester prison.

Mr. L. Massey
Analysis and evaluation of tenders for the management of Blakenhurst and Manchester prisons.

Mr. G. Lister
Analysis and evaluation of tenders for the management of Manchester prison.

The total cost of these contracts was £263,000.

Mentally Ill and Addicted Prisoners

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the current estimate of the number of people who are *(a)* mentally ill, *(b)* drug misusers and *(c)* alcohol addicted in prisons in England and Wales.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from D. Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 18 October 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the numbers of mentally ill, drug misusers and alcohol addicted prisoners.

A study by Professor J. Gunn, Dr. T. Maden and Dr. M. Swinton[1] of the Institute of Psychiatry, completed in 1991, suggested that of the sentenced population 19·2 per cent. had some form of psychiatric disorder and 19·6 per cent. had been substance misusers prior to coming into prison.

A parallel research study has recently commenced to provide a psychiatric profile of the unsentenced prison population.

[1] Gunn, Maden and Swinton, "Mentally Disordered Prisoners", Home Office, 1991.

Short Prison Sentences

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people in prisons in England and Wales have a sentence of six months or less; and what proportion of those are fine defaulters.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from D. Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 18 October 1993:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your recent Question about how many people in prisons in England and Wales are serving a sentence of six months or less and what the proportion of those are fine defaulters.

The latest available provisional information is for 31 August 1993 when there were 3,642 prisoners in Prison Service establishments in England and Wales serving sentences of six months or less.

Fourteen per cent. of the population serving up to six months were fine defaulters.

Penal Change Programme

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consultations he has had with the Prison Officers Association concerning the practicability and cost of his programme for penal changes, announced in Blackpool in October.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: My right hon. and learned Friend has agreed to meet representatives of the Prison Officers Association next month, but the conduct of industrial relations in the Prison Service is a matter for the director

general. It will be for the latter to arrange for Prison Service trade unions to be consulted about any matters arising from the implementation of the policies he announced in so far as they may affect the Prison Service and are appropriate for consultation.

Penal Costs

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average cost per person per month of *(a)* keeping someone in prison and *(b)* sentencing someone to community-based penalties.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: In 1991-92, the most recent year for which figures are available, the average monthly net operating cost of holding a person in prison establishments was £1,915 and the cost of community sentences was between £95 and £110 per month.

Reoffenders

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the percentage of (i) adult and (ii) juvenile offenders who reoffend within two years of receiving *(a)* a custodial sentence and *(b)* a non-custodial sentence.

Mr. Maclean: The information is not available in the form requested. The latest available information on reconvictions is shown in the table:

Percentage of offenders given probation or community service orders in 1987 and those discharged from prison in 1987 who were reconvicted of a 'standard list' within two years.

Offender	*Those discharged from prison service establishments per cent.*	*Those commencing a probation order[1] per cent.*	*Those commencing a community service order[1] per cent.*
All males	57	56	55
All females	40	37	41
Males aged under 21	71	66	65
Females aged under 21	51	41	43

[1] *Source* "Reconvictions of those given Probation and Community Service Orders in 1987"—Home Office Statistical Bulletin 18/93.

Fine Defaulters

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people are in prison in England and Wales as a result of fine defaults.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from D. Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 18 October 1993:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your recent Question about population of fine defaulters in Prison Service establishments.

On 31 August 1993 there were 500 fine defaulters (477 males and 23 females) in Prison Service establishments in England and Wales.

Prison Custody Officers

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prison custody officers work at *(a)* the Wolds prison and *(b)* Blakenhurst prison.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from D. Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 18 October 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the number of prisoner custody officers at Wolds and Blakenhurst.

There are 122 certificated prisoner custody officers at Wolds remand prison and 266 at HMP Blakenhurst.

Woolf Report

Ms. Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list progress made to date on each of the recommendations of the Woolf report and timetables for future implementation.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from D. Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 18 October 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the progress made on the recommendations of the Woolf Report and timetable for future implementation.

You will know that Lord Chief Justice Woolf made twelve major recommendations and each of these have been a key priority for the Prison Service. A summary of the progress made is set out below.

Improve Security

The Prisons Security Act is now in force.

The long-term programme for refurbishing prisons to improve security standards is underway.

Many of the recommendations from the Lakes Hadfield Report have now been implemented.

Security audits have been instituted in prisons.

X-ray machines have been installed in all prisons holding category A prisoners.

Revised guidance on procedures for escorting prisoners has been distributed to all establishments.

A new style escort chain is being trialled.

The anti-bullying strategy for the Prison Service was launched in July of this year.

A standardised intelligence system is now in place in every prison security department.

Improve co-operation between Services

A Criminal Justice Consultative Council has been created.

A Criminal Justice Liaison Committee has been set up in each of the 15 prison areas. The links between the Probation Service and the Prison Service are being strengthened with the development of contracts between governors and chief probation officers.

Measures have been taken to reduce the use of remanding purely for psychiatric assessment.

There has been an increase in the number of prisoners transferred as in-patients to hospital for the treatment of mental disorder.

Increase delegation and improve accountability

From 1 April 1993 I have been personally responsible for the day to day management of the Prison Service.

The Prison Service's Framework Document sets out our goals and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). The Service is given specific targets by Ministers every year in relation to each of the KPIs.

Much greater delegation to governors has taken place this year with budgetary and personnel responsibilities already devolved.

On 1 April 1994 governors of prison establishments will have a new contract which in essence is a specification detailing standards of service delivery.

The strategy for involving the private sector in managing some of our prisons is established with the Wolds and Blakenhurst being fully operational. Manchester has been market tested and further prisons will be named for future market testing.

Improve quality of jobs

A Better Jobs Programme has been initiated throughout the Service.

A comprehensive review of prison officer induction training and development training for existing staff has been undertaken.

There has been significant progress in involving prison officers in suicide awareness, induction, sentence planning and personal officer schemes.

Recognise status and requirements of unconvicted prisoners

A model regime for local prisons and remand centres was issued in November 1992.

New guidance on prison bail schemes was issued in August 1992 and there has been an extension of bail schemes and hostel provision.

Provide active and relevant programmes

There are now 500 NVQ schemes in place in establishments throughout England and Wales. This number is to be extended to 700 during the course of 1994.

There are 180 construction industry training courses running in establishments throughout England and Wales.

80 prison establishments have now run pre-release courses.

During the remainder of this year and into next year 48 establishments will have job search courses running with job clubs in 10 establishments.

15 establishments are running sex offender programmes and about 400 prisoners benefit from these programmes each year.

All female establishments have received new regime guidance.

Every establishment has received guidance on the nature and balance of regime activities.

A review of personal officer schemes has been undertaken.

Many establishments now offer anger management courses and cognitive skills programmes are currently being developed.

The regime monitoring system which measures inmate activity has been extended and improved.

In November 1992 an admissions guide on reception and induction arrangements was issued to all establishments.

All prisoners who were sentenced to 4 years or more after October 1992, and sentenced category A prisoners now have sentenced plans prepared for them. By the end of 1993 sentenced planning will be extended to all newly sentenced prisoners serving one year or more.

In October 1992 new guidance was issued for establishments holding juvenile offenders.

Provide Code of Standards

The Prisons Board aims to approve a Code of Standards for the Prison Service by the end of 1993.

Improve relationships with prisoners

A prisoners' information pack has been issued.

The Board of Visitors' role has changed with their responsibility for adjudications being removed.

A Prison Ombudsman will be appointed.

A series of measures has been taken to improve standards of diets and food distribution in establishments.

A major research project has been commissioned to examine how racial incidents are recorded and dealt with.

A model prisoner compact has been approved by the Board and will be issued to all establishments.

Provide access to sanitation

During 1993-94 £17·5 million will be spent on simple sanitation schemes. This is in addition to other funding for refurbishment schemes.

More than 80 per cent. of places now have access to sanitation.

End overcrowding

Twelve new prisons have been opened since 1991 providing 6,994 places.

Approval has recently been given for a further six new prisons.

Divide large wings into smaller units wherever possible

Whenever major wing refurbishment schemes are considered the requirment to create smaller units is considered.

Develop community prisons

Work has commenced on selecting suitable areas where the clustering of prisons can be piloted.

The opportunities for prisoners to maintain their family ties has been improved with an increase in the frequency and flexibility of duration of visits; further extension of financially assisted visit schemnes is projected for early 1994; and the provision of cardphones has now been extended to all prisons.

The Prison Service remains committed to the policies set out in the White Paper. Further progress will be made as quickly as possible.

Sentences

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the percentage of people sentenced in the courts who received *(a)* a custodial sentence and *(b)* a non-custodial sentence each month from January 1992 to the latest available date.

Mr. Maclean: Information on sentencing for both the magistrates court and the crown court for 1992—which is provisional—is given in the tables A to C. Data provided by the Lord Chancellor's Department for committals for trial at the crown court are given in table D.

Table A

Persons sentenced at magistrates courts for all offences by month, type of offence and type of sentence England and Wales 1992[1]

	Total sentenced		*Custodial sentences*		*Non-custodial sentences*	
	Number	*Percentage*	*Number*	*Percentage*	*Number*	*Percentage*
Indictable offences						
January	23,544	100	1,341	6	22,203	94
February	20,673	100	1,172	6	19,501	94
March	22,047	100	1,255	6	20,792	94
April	20,117	100	1,157	6	18,960	94
May	17,867	100	975	5	16,892	95
June	20,402	100	1,040	5	19,362	95
July	20,295	100	1,067	5	19,228	95
August	18,301	100	1,017	6	17,284	94
September	20,454	100	1,035	5	19,419	95
October	20,699	100	483	2	20,216	98
November	19,886	100	609	3	19,277	97
December	17,131	100	645	4	16,486	96

	Total sentenced		Custodial sentences		Non-custodial sentences	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Total	241,416	100	11,796	5	229,620	95
Summary non-motoring offences						
January	41,146	100	438	1	40,708	99
February	35,672	100	359	1	35,313	99
March	40,817	100	380	1	40,437	99
April	37,268	100	314	1	36,954	99
May	36,018	100	266	1	35,752	99
June	42,138	100	336	1	41,802	99
July	41,937	100	322	1	41,615	99
August	36,881	100	300	1	36,581	99
September	41,214	100	277	1	40,937	99
October	39,647	100	143	0	39,504	100
November	39,799	100	187	0	39,612	100
December	32,540	100	164	1	32,376	99
Total	465,077	100	3,486	1	461,591	99
Summary motoring offences						
January	61,977	100	612	1	61,365	99
February	54,875	100	536	1	54,339	99
March	61,195	100	593	1	60,602	99
April	57,310	100	496	1	56,814	99
May	52,930	100	436	1	52,494	99
June	62,771	100	494	1	62,277	99
July	64,265	100	545	1	63,720	99
August	58,781	100	507	1	58,274	99
September	63,925	100	450	1	63,475	99
October	61,495	100	306	0	61,189	100
November	59,806	100	368	1	59,438	99
December	50,443	100	355	1	50,088	99
Total	709,773	100	5,698	1	704,075	99
All offences						
January	126,667	100	2,391	2	124,276	98
February	111,220	100	2,067	2	109,153	98
March	124,059	100	2,228	2	121,831	98
April	114,695	100	1,967	2	112,728	98
May	106,815	100	1,677	2	105,138	98
June	125,311	100	1,870	1	123,441	99
July	126,497	100	1,934	2	124,563	98
August	113,963	100	1,824	2	112,139	98
September	125,593	100	1,762	1	123,831	99
October	121,841	100	932	1	120,909	99
November	119,491	100	1,164	1	118,327	99
December	100,114	100	1,164	1	98,950	99
Total	1,416,266	100	20,980	1	1,395,286	99

[1] Provisional.

Table B

Persons sentenced at the Crown Court for all offences by month, type of offence and type of sentence England and Wales 1992[1]

	Total sentenced		Custodial sentences		Non-custodial sentences	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Indictable offences						
January	7,990	100	3,622	45	4,368	55
February	7,623	100	3,412	45	4,211	55
March	8,094	100	3,742	46	4,352	54
April	6,490	100	3,000	46	3,490	54
May	6,554	100	2,960	45	3,594	55
June	7,035	100	3,202	46	3,833	54
July	7,919	100	3,637	46	4,282	54
August	5,495	100	2,468	45	3,027	55
September	6,496	100	2,889	44	3,607	56
October	5,802	100	2,273	39	3,529	61
November	6,268	100	2,538	40	3,730	60
December	5,351	100	2,210	41	3,141	59

	Total sentenced		Custodial sentences		Non-custodial sentences	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Total	81,117	100	35,953	44	45,164	56
Summary non-motoring offences						
January	315	100	79	25	236	75
February	273	100	54	20	219	80
March	300	100	68	23	232	77
April	240	100	52	22	188	78
May	190	100	41	22	149	78
June	266	100	52	20	214	80
July	294	100	68	23	226	77
August	176	100	43	24	133	76
September	221	100	50	23	171	77
October	218	100	36	17	182	83
November	197	100	30	15	167	85
December	161	100	34	21	127	79
Total	2,851	100	607	21	2,244	79
Summary motoring offences						
January	141	100	43	30	98	70
February	117	100	43	37	74	63
March	142	100	49	35	93	65
April	91	100	36	40	55	60
May	123	100	52	42	71	58
June	112	100	38	34	74	66
July	131	100	50	38	81	62
August	105	100	36	34	69	66
September	127	100	40	31	87	69
October	104	100	18	17	86	83
November	111	100	25	23	86	77
December	83	100	18	22	65	78
Total	1,387	100	448	32	939	68
All offences						
January	8,446	100	3,744	44	4,702	56
February	8,013	100	3,509	44	4,504	56
March	8,536	100	3,859	45	4,677	55
April	6,821	100	3,088	45	3,733	55
May	6,867	100	3,053	44	3,814	56
June	7,413	100	3,292	44	4,121	56
July	8,344	100	3,755	45	4,589	55
August	5,776	100	2,547	44	3,229	56
September	6,844	100	2,979	44	3,865	56
October	6,124	100	2,327	38	3,797	62
November	6,576	100	2,593	39	3,983	61
December	5,595	100	2,262	40	3,333	60
Total	85,355	100	37,008	43	48,347	57

[1] Provisional.

Table C
Persons sentenced at all courts for all offences by month, type of offence and type of sentence England and Wales 1992[1]

	Total sentenced		Custodial sentences		Non-custodial sentences	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Indictable offences						
January	31,534	100	4,963	16	26,571	84
February	28,296	100	4,584	16	23,712	84
March	30,141	100	4,997	17	25,144	83
April	26,607	100	4,157	16	22,450	84
May	24,421	100	3,935	16	20,486	84
June	27,437	100	4,242	15	23,195	85
July	28,214	100	4,704	17	23,510	83
August	23,796	100	3,485	15	20,311	85
September	26,950	100	3,924	15	23,026	85
October	26,501	100	2,756	10	23,745	90
November	26,154	100	12	23,000	88	
December	22,482	100	2,855	13	19,627	87
Total	322,533	100	47,749	15	274,784	85

	Total sentenced		Custodial sentences		Non-custodial sentences	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Summary non-motoring offences						
January	41,461	100	517	1	40,944	99
February	35,945	100	413	1	35,532	99
March	41,117	100	448	1	40,669	99
April	37,508	100	366	1	37,142	99
May	36,208	100	307	1	35,901	99
June	42,404	100	388	1	42,016	99
July	42,231	100	390	1	41,841	99
August	37,057	100	343	1	36,714	99
September	41,435	100	327	1	41,108	99
October	39,865	100	179	0	39,686	100
November	39,996	100	217	1	39,779	99
December	32,701	100	198	1	32,503	99
Total	467,928	100	4,093	1	463,835	99
Summary motoring offences						
January	62,118	100	655	1	61,463	99
February	54,992	100	579	1	54,413	99
March	61,337	100	642	1	60,695	99
April	57,401	100	532	1	56,869	99
May	53,053	100	488	1	52,565	99
June	62,883	100	532	1	62,351	99
July	64,396	100	595	1	63,801	99
August	58,886	100	543	1	58,343	99
September	64,052	100	490	1	63,562	99
October	61,599	100	324	1	61,275	99
November	59,917	100	393	1	59,524	99
December	50,526	100	373	1	50,153	99
Total	711,160	100	6,146	1	705,014	99
All offences						
January	135,113	100	6,135	5	128,978	95
February	119,233	100	5,576	5	113,657	95
March	132,595	100	6,087	5	126,508	95
April	121,516	100	5,055	4	116,461	96
May	113,682	100	4,730	4	108,952	96
June	132,724	100	5,162	4	127,562	96
July	134,841	100	5,689	4	129,152	96
August	119,739	100	4,371	4	115,368	96
September	132,437	100	4,741	4	127,696	96
October	127,965	100	3,259	3	124,706	97
November	126,067	100	3,757	3	122,310	97
December	105,709	100	3,426	3	102,283	97
Total	1,501,621	100	57,988	4	1,443,633	96

[1] Provisional.

Table D

Proportionate use of immediate custody for defendants sentenced at the Crown Court following committal for trial

England and Wales 1992-1993

Month	1992	1993
January	48	42
February	48	46
March	49	47
April	50	49
May	49	50
June	49	51
July	48	52
August	48	54
September	48	
October	42	
November	42	
December	43	

Right to Silence

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department on how many occasions accused persons in criminal cases have exercised their rights to silence in each six-month period over the last three years; and if he will list such information he has available on the dates, courts, and charges when verdicts of not guilty have been given in such cases over that period.

Mr. Maclean: This information is not collected centrally.

Crime Statistics

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the five categories of crime that have *(a)* increased and *(b)* decreased most since 1979, excluding consequences of criminalisation and decriminalisation.

Mr. Maclean: The five largest increases in recorded crime, i.e. notifiable offences recorded by the police in England and Wales, between 1979 and 1992 were:

	Per cent.
Perverting the course of justice	+915
Theft or unauthorised taking from mail	+531
Aggravated burglary in a building	+377
Other criminal damage value £20+ not endangering life	+338
Robbery or assault with attempt to rob	+324

The five largest decreases in recorded crime were:

	Per cent.
False accounting	−67
Unlawful sexual intercourse with girl over 12 but under 16	−56
Theft by an employee	−54
Abstracting electricity	−49
Indecency between males	−33

Classifications with small numbers of offences and those largely affected by legislation and definitional changes have been excluded.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his estimate of changes in the incidence of crimes against the person and of crimes against property since 1979.

Mr. Maclean: Recorded crimes against the person and crimes against property both increased by 120 per cent. between 1979 and 1992.

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what percentage of crimes committed in the London borough of Lewisham in each year since 1985 were crimes related to *(a)* theft from residential property, *(b)* theft from commercial property, *(c)* theft from vehicles, *(d)* murder and *(e)* drugs.

Mr. Maclean: The available information relates to notifiable offences recorded by the police and is contained in the table:

Notifiable offences recorded by the police—certain offences as a percentage of all offences in Lewisham

Percentages

	Burglary in a dwelling	*Burglary in other building*	*Theft from a vehicle*	*Homicide*	*Drug trafficking*
1985	16	8	16	0·03	0·2
1986	18	6	19	0·04	0·1
1987	15	7	21	0·05	0·1
1988	19	6	19	0·01	0·2
1989	20	6	19	—	[1]—
1990	21	7	15	0·03	0·2
1991	19	7	16	0·02	0·2
1992	20	7	14	0·04	0·1

[1] Not available

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many crimes were reported to police in the London borough of Lewisham in each year since 1985; and what percentage in each year resulted in a conviction.

Mr. Maclean: The available information relates to notifiable offences recorded by the police and is given in the table. It is not possible to link recorded crime statistics with convictions, as the information collected on convictions is compiled on a different basis.

Number

	Offences recorded
1985	25,943
1986	27,005
1987	26,384
1988	25,210
1989	26,002
1990	27,959
1991	29,775
1992	31,380

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many violent crimes were committed in *(a)* south-east London as a whole and *(b)* Lewisham, for each year since 1985.

Mr. Maclean: The information requested is contained in the table:

Offences of violent crime[1] recorded by the police

Number

	South-east London (No. 3 Area)	*Lewisham*
1985	5,792	1,326
1986	6,039	1,444
1987	6,776	1,728
1988	7,060	1,689
1989	8,058	1,961
1990	9,163	2,224
1991	10,980	2,821
1992	11,199	2,646

[1] Includes violence against the person, sexual offences and robbery.

War Crimes Act 1991

Mr. Temple-Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people are being investigated under the War Crimes Act 1991; what is the cost of these investigations to date; what prosecutions have been brought; how many prosecutions are likely to be brought; and if he will consider abandoning these investigations and/or prosecutions in whole or in part.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Forty-four cases are currently under investigation by the Metropolitan police war crimes unit. The cost of investigations to date is estimated at £3·8 million. No prosecutions have yet been brought under the Act, and I cannot anticipate when, or if, sufficient evidence will be available for any prosecutions to be brought. However, the police and prosecution authorities cannot ignore evidence of war crimes which has been and may be uncovered.

Drink Driving

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will estimate changes in the incidence of drink driving, over the limit drink driving and deaths associated with over the limit drink driving since 1979.

Mr. Maclean: The information available relates to the incidence of drink driving when a driver is over the prescribed alcohol limit.

Estimates of fatal casualties involving illegal alcohol levels are published by the Department of Transport. The

table give the number of positive or refused breath tests and revised estimates of the number of fatal casualties in accidents involving illegal alcohol levels:

	Positive/ Refused Breath tests England and Wales (Thousands)	*Fatal casualties Great Britain[1] (Numbers)*
1979	84·4	1,640
1980	89·2	1,450
1981	80·6	1,420
1982	88·6	1,550
1983	98·4	1,110
1984	87·6	1,170
1985	95·7	1,040
1986	97·8	990
1987	111·4	900
1988	111·7	790
1989	108·0	810
1990	102·4	760
1991	90·3	660
1992	87·1	[2]610

[1]Department of Transport figures
[2]Provisional

Exclusion Orders

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many appeals against exclusion orders are outstanding.

Mr. Howard: There are none.

Daylight Saving

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what assessment he has made of the gains and losses of continuing the practice of returning to Greenwich mean time from autumn to spring;

(2) on what issues he has received representations on the use of Greenwich mean time in winter.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The 1989 Green Paper "Summer Time—A Consultation Document" (Cm 722) considered possible losses and gains from returning to Greenwich mean time in winter, in particular as to: the incidence of road traffic accidents; crime; leisure pursuits; energy consumption; communications; travel; trade; agriculture; the construction industry; and tourism. Representations we have received since the Green Paper have focused on that range of issues.

South African Citizens

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many South African citizens have enetered the United Kingdom in each of the past five calendar years.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The number of admissions of South African citizens into the United Kingdom were 123,000 in 1988, 132,000 in 1989, 150,000 in 1990, 138,000 in 1991, and 156,000 in 1992.

Driving Disqualifications

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if disqualifications from driving imposed by *(a)* courts in the United Kingdom and *(b)* in courts of other member states of the European Community are enforced in the Isle of Man.

Mr. Maclean: No. Disqualifications imposed by courts in the United Kingdom, or by courts in other member states of the European Community, are not recognised in the Isle of Man.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce legislation that provides for disqualifications from driving, imposed by courts in the Isle of Man, being enforced in the United Kingdom; if he will seek to extend such disqualifications to member states of the European Community; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: We have no plans at present to introduce such legislation.

Young Offenders

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many juveniles were *(a)* cautioned and *(b)* prosecuted by the police in (i) London and (ii) Lewisham for each year since 1990; and how many of those prosecuted were committed by the courts;

(2) how many juveniles convicted of a crime in *(a)* London and *(b)* Lewisham had committed an offence which was drug related, in each year since 1985.

Mr. Maclean: Information available centrally on juveniles aged 10 to under 17 years in the Metropolitan police district—including the City of London—and courts within the Lewisham area is given in the table.

It is only possible to distinguish centrally offenders who have committed drug offences as opposed to drug-related offences.

Table A1 Number of juveniles aged 10 to under 17 cautioned and prosecuted and committed for trial at magistrates' courts within the Metropolitan Police District[1] and the Lewisham area by type of offence 1990

Area/type of offence	*Cautioned*	*Prosecuted (=100 per cent.)*	*Committed for trial*	
			Number	*Per cent.*
Metropolitan Police District[1]				
Indictable offences	8,583	4,221	327	8
Summary non-motoring offences	3,234	1,468	—	—
All offences (excluding summary motoring)	11,817	5,689	327	6
Lewisham juvenile court				
Indictable offences	[2]—	112	—	—
Summary non-motoring offences	[2]—	35	—	—
All offences (excluding summary motoring)	[2]—	147	—	—
Greenwich juvenile court				

Area/type of offence	Cautioned	Prosecuted (=100 per cent.)	Committed for trial Number	Committed for trial Per cent.
Indictable offences	[2]—	238	—	—
Summary non-motoring offences	[2]—	66	—	—
All offences (excluding summary motoring)	[2]—	304	—	—
Greenwich Petty Sessional Division				
Indictable offences	[2]—	21	12	57
Summary non-motoring offences	[2]—	2	—	—
All offences (excluding summary motoring)	[2]—	23	12	52
Woolwich Petty Sessional Division				
Indictable offences	[2]—	10	5	50
Summary non-motoring offences	[2]—	10	—	—
All offences (excluding summary motoring)	[2]—	20	5	25

[1] Includes the City of London.
[2] Not applicable.

Table A2 Number of juveniles aged 10 to under 17 cautioned and prosecuted and committed for trial at magistrates' courts within the Metropolitan Police District[1] and the Lewisham area by type of offence 1991

Area/type of offence	Cautioned	Prosecuted (=100 per cent.)	Committed for trial Number	Committed for trial Per cent.
Metropolitan Police District[1]				
Indictable offences	8,092	4,050	310	8
Summary non-motoring offences	2,733	1,310	—	—
All offences (excluding summary motoring)	10,825	5,360	310	6
Lewisham juvenile court				
Indictable offences	[2]—	76	4	5
Summary non-motoring offences	[2]—	18	—	—
All offences (excluding summary motoring)	[2]—	94	4	4
Greenwich juvenile court				
Indictable offences	[2]—	210	—	—
Summary non-motoring offences	[2]—	57	—	—
All offences (excluding summary motoring)	[2]—	267	—	—
Greenwich Petty Sessional Division				
Indictable offences	[2]—	45	14	31
Summary non-motoring offences	[2]—	11	—	—
All offences (excluding summary motoring)	[2]—	56	14	25
Woolwich Petty Sessional Division				
Indictable offences	[2]—	11	4	36
Summary non-motoring offences	[2]—	3	—	—
All offences (excluding summary motoring)	[2]—	14	4	29

[1] Includes the City of London.
[2] Not applicable.

Table A3 Number of juveniles aged 10 to under 17 cautioned and prosecuted and committed for trial at magistrates' courts within the Metropolitan Police District[1] and the Lewisham area by type of offence 1992[2]

Area/type of offence	Cautioned	Prosecuted (=100 per cent.)	Committed for trial Number	Committed for trial Per cent.
Metropolitan Police District[1]				
Indictable offences	8,644	3,823	269	7
Summary non-motoring offences	3,065	1,254	1	0
All offences (excluding summary motoring)	11,709	5,077	270	5
Lewisham juvenile court				
Indictable offences	*	107	3	3
Summary non-motoring offences	*	24	—	—
All offences (excluding summary motoring)	*	131	3	2
Greenwich juvenile court				
Indictable offences	*	188	1	1
Summary non-motoring offences	*	102	—	—
All offences (excluding summary motoring)	*	290	1	0
Greenwich Petty Sessional Division				
Indictable offences	*	28	4	14
Summary non-motoring offences	*	6	—	—
All offences (excluding summary motoring)	*	34	4	12

Area/type of offence	Cautioned	Prosecuted (=100 per cent.)	Committed for trial Number	Committed for trial Per cent.
Woolwich Petty Sessional Division				
Indictable offences	*	8	2	25
Summary non-motoring offences	*	3	—	—
All offences (excluding summary motoring)	*	11	2	18

[1] Includes the City of London.
[2] Provisional.
* Not applicable.

Table B

Number of juveniles aged 10 to under 17 years convicted of drug offences in the Metropolitan Police District[1] and Lewisham area 1985 to 1992[2]

Year	Metropolitan Police District[1]	Lewisham Juvenile Court	Greenwich Juvenile Court	Greenwich Petty Sessional Division	Woolwich Petty Sessional Division
1985	114	8	4	—	—
1986	116	8	3	1	1
1987	67	1	3	—	—
1988	80	1	3	—	—
1989	108	6	6	—	—
1990	107	1	7	1	—
1991	86	3	3	—	—
1992[2]	67	3	3	—	—

[1] Including City of London.
[2] Provisional.

Prison Dental Services

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department who is responsible for the provision of dental care in each of Her Majesty's prisons; and how this service is monitored.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to reply.

Letter from D. Lewis to Ms Liz Lynne, dated 18 October 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to the Parliamentary Question on this subject which you tabled for written answer on Monday 18 October.

Dental surgeons are appointed to provide dental treatment at each establishment by the Prison Service. The surgeon undertakes work as part of the services he or she provides for the Family Health Services Authority (FHSA) as part of the NHS commitment. The dental surgeon remains subject to General Dental Services Regulations and the FHSA's powers to inspect and monitor performance. The head of health care at each establishment is responsible to the governor for the routine supervision of the service.

Risley Training Prison

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the future of Risley as a training prison, with particular reference to the integrated regime.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from D. Lewis to Mr. Doug Hoyle, dated 18 October 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the future of Risley as a training prison and in particular its integrated regime.

You may be aware of the decision to accommodate 384 vulnerable prisoners in refurbished blocks at Wymott. This was announced by the then Home Secretary in Autumn 1992, in accordance with recommendations made by the Chief Inspector of Prisons. The change was scheduled for November 1993, but is being implemented slightly earlier as a consequence of the recent riot. The transfer of vulnerable prisoners will create additional accommodation in prisons in the north west and midlands. A significant proportion of these prisoners will be drawn from Vulnerable Prisoner Units at Liverpool and Risley.

The integrated regime at Risley has been successful in allowing Vulnerable Prisoners to share daytime activities with selected prisoners from the main prison. Clearly, the future development of the integrated regime will depend on the number of vulnerable prisoners remaining at Risley. The Prison Service intends to provide a full regime for those prisoners transferred to Wymott based on a core programme for sex offenders to address their offending behaviour.

For the present Risley will continue in its present role as a training prison. The development of its future role as a local prison serving the courts is being discussed and plans are being considered for a multi-functional community prison along the lines envisaged in the Woolf Report. Such plans will aim to provide decent conditions and a regime of purposeful activity for all prisoners.

Inland Revenue (Information)

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department in what circumstances the immigration and nationality divisions of his Department disclose information to the Inland Revenue without the consent of the individual concerned.

Mr. Charles Wardle: When the Inland Revenue requests it in accordance with procedures agreed with the Inland Revenue.

Hull Prison

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department for what purpose the special unit at HMP Hull created to house category A inmates was built; when it opened and how many inmates it was designed to hold; how many inmates it held at opening; how many it has held to date; how many it held 12 months ago and how many it holds at present.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from D. Lewis to Mr. Richard Burden, dated 18 October 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the Special Unit at Hull Prison.

The Special Unit opened in 1988 to hold long-term adult male prisoners in category A and B who have a history of disruptive and aggressive behaviour.

The Unit is located on A Wing in Hull which can accommodate 20 prisoners under normal prison conditions. However, given the special role of the Unit, the number of prisoners held would not normally exceed ten.

On opening, the Unit held four prisoners. To date 47 prisoners have been located in the Unit, for varying lengths of time and some prisoners have left and returned for a further period. In October of last year, ten prisoners were held on the Unit and the Unit currently holds five prisoners.

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what monitoring has taken place of the workings of the special unit for category A inmates at HMP Hull, what evaluation has been made of its success; and what plans he has for the future of the unit.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from D. Lewis to Mr. Richard Burden, dated 18 October 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the Special Unit at Hull Prison.

A report evaluating the Hull Unit was completed at the end of 1991. It was prepared by Professor Norman Jepson and the late Mr. Kenneth Elliott, formerly of Leeds University. The report covers the first 2½ years of the Unit. A further assessment, to study whether the existence of this Unit and the other Special Units have had a beneficial effect on the management of long-term prisoners who present persistent control problems in the context of the long-term prison system as a whole, is currently being undertaken by Professor Keith Bottomley. His report is due at the end of the year and will subsequently be published. He will draw on all previous work which has been undertaken and will also have access to work carried out by the Unit's psychologist.

We will wish to consider Professor Bottomley's report before making an informed judgement on the long-term future of Hull and the other Special Units.

Sheehy Report

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he now intends to take following publication of the Sheehy report.

Mr. Charles Wardle: My right hon. and learned Friend hopes to make an announcement shortly.

Fire Hazards

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people were *(a)* killed and *(b)* injured in bedsitter fires in each of the last five years.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The number of casualties in fires, attended by local authority fire brigades in the United Kingdom, which started in bedsitting rooms of dwellings in multiple occupation, is given in the table for the years 1987 to 1991.

Fire-related deaths and injuries from fires starting in bedsitting rooms of dwellings in multiple occupancy, attended by local authority fire brigades, United Kingdom.

Year	Fire related deaths	Fire related injuries
1987	40	254
1988	41	261
1989	37	229
1990	36	305
1991	28	252

Source: Home Office Fire Statistics, based on reports from local authority fire brigades.

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what plans he has to implement EC fire regulations in respect of offices and businesses;

(2) what discussions he has had with EC institutions with regard to EC fire regulations in respect of offices and businesses during the last year.

Mr. Charles Wardle: We are presently considering revised proposals for Fire Precautions (Places of Work) Regulations to implement the fire safety requirements of European Council directives 89/391/EEC and 89/654/EEC in the light of the recent efficiency scrutiny report on the implementation and enforcement of EC law in the United Kingdom. Those regulations, if implemented, will apply to most places of work with one or more employees.

The Home Office has had no discussions with EC institutions about those proposals or the fire safety provisions of other health and safety directives during the last year.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Licence Applications

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what proportion of his Export Control Organisation's time is taken up by *(a)* licence applications for sensitive destinations and *(b)* licensing for individual goods for non-sensitive destinations.

Mr. Needham: There are no figures setting out the proportion of time taken up by licensing in different areas and they could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. However, I would refer my hon. Friend to chapter 9 of the Export Control Organisation's annual report for 1992 in the House Library. This gives a breakdown of the work carried out by each of the licensing sections.

Within these sections the number of staff at grades AA-SEO is as follows:

	Number
Sensitive Destinations Section (SDS)	11
COCOM Licensing Section (CLS)	6
Military and Atomic Licensing Section	13
Industrial Free World Licensing	5

These sections are managed by two G7 officers.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what information he has received from British Nuclear Fuels in regard to *(a)* the volume of radioactive waste that will be created from facility contamination and *(b)* the proposed disposal strategy for the decommissioning waste arising as a result of provisional commissioning of the thermal oxide reprocessing plant with uranium nitrate feedstock, in the event that consent for fuel commissioning of THORP is not subsequently granted.

Mr. Eggar: This is a matter for British Nuclear Fuels plc and Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution, acting jointly with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make it his policy to assist the European Commission in its preparation of its reports on *(a)* re-evaluation of the requirements for reprocessing and *(b)* the preparation of an inventory of nuclear waste holdings in each member state of the European Community.

Mr. Eggar: My Department has received no such request for assistance from the European Commission.

AEA Information

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the future arrangements for the provision of information services by the AEA library to hon. Members and the general public.

Mr. Eggar: This is a management matter for the Atomic Energy Authority.

Nuclear Industry

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps he is taking to implement his Department's interest in implementation of the British Nuclear Fuels-Nuclear Electric fixed price contracts.

Mr. Eggar: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) on 9 March 1993, *Official Report*, column *500.*

Environmental Awareness

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on how his Department plans to meet its target to promote environmental awareness and best practice as set out in his departmental MINIS 93, part Four, environmental section, page 15.

Mr. McLoughlin: Plans for achieving my Department's environmental objectives are shown on pages 3 to 9 of the environmental section, part 4 of the departmental MINIS 93.

The Department has published a number of practical guides on matters relevant to the environmental performance of business, including waste minimisation, alternatives to ozone-depleting substances and export opportunities, and more are planned. A more general booklet, "The environment—a business guide" endorsed by the Advisory Committee on Business and the Environment (ACBE) was launched on 13 October with the aim of helping smaller firms in particular to improve their environmental performance. A copy has been placed in the Library of the House.

The Department supports or participates in a wide range of seminars and exhibitions to raise awareness of environmental issues and continues to operate a telephone environmental inquiry point—freephone 0800 585794—which provides a comprehensive information and signposting service to business. It is also supporting a number of local environmental self-help initiatives including five local business and environment clubs established under a programme recommended by ACBE.

Together with the Department of the Environment, my Department is also funding the development and administration in the United Kingdom of the European Community eco-labelling scheme, which aims to encourage environmentally sound product and process design, and the European Community eco-management and audit scheme which will encourage the adoption of best environmental management practice.

Export Controls

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the role played by his Department in co-ordination of United Kingdom participation in negotiating in EC instruments relating to export controls and an export licensing policy compatible with single market obligations.

Mr. Needham: My Department is co-ordinating the United Kingdom's contribution to the continuing negotiations on the proposed EC regulation covering export controls on certain dual-use goods and technologies. Other Government Departments and agencies which have an interest in export control matters have also participated fully.

The Government's aim in the negotiations is to enhance enforcement of export controls in the context of the single European market, to ensure that the United Kingdom's ability to apply export controls in line with national foreign and security policy is maintained, and to protect the interest of United Kingdom exporters. The House will be informed of the outcome of the negotiations.

Nuclear Safeguards

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps he has taken to implement policies to put into effect obligations entered into on nuclear safeguards on United Kingdom facilities since 1979; and how he has ensured such policies have not put the United Kingdom at an unnecessary disadvantage in regard to competitor countries.

Mr. Eggar: Arrangements for the application of International Atomic Energy Agency and Euratom safeguards in the United Kingdom have been negotiated pursuant to the terms of INFCIRC/263 and the Euratom

treaty. These site-specific inspection arrangements are confidential to the operator, HM Government and the international inspectorates.

Judgments on what are considered to be appropriate inspection procedures for United Kingdom facilities take into account, as far as possible, accepted international practice at similar plants in other countries. In furtherance of this goal of maintaining common standards, the United Kingdom has played an important role in developing internationally accepted approaches for safeguarding major nuclear facilities, for example at centrifuge enrichment plants and large-scale reprocessing plants.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what response Her Majesty's Government have made to the Commission proposal for a Council decision approving the amendment by the Commission of Commission regulation (Euratom) No. 3227/76 of 19 October 1976 concerning the application of the provisions on Euratom safeguards, Com (93) 294 final of 24 June.

Mr. Eggar: I refer the hon. Member to my answers given to him on 31 March, *Official Report,* columns *210-11,* and 21 May, *Official Report,* column *344,* concerning the original Commission proposal to amend regulation (Euratom) 3227/76 of 19 October 1976. A revised version of the proposal detailed in Com(93) 294 final of 24 June, was approved by the Council with United Kingdom support. The text of the amendment was published in EC *Official Journal* No. L 191/75, a copy of which has been placed in the Library of the House.

Dr. Tom Thorpe

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the reasons for the departure of Dr. Tom Thorpe from the energy technology support unit at Harwell.

Mr. Eggar: Mr. Tom Thorpe has not departed from the energy technology support unit but continues to work in the unit's strategic studies department, which he joined in June 1989.

Insurance

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to meet officials of the Association of Insurance and Risk Managers in Industry and Commerce.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: I have accepted an invitation to meet members of the association to discuss matters such as insurance related to terrorism, environment and employment.

Assisted Areas Status, Southend

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will extend to all hon. Members whose constituencies are included in the Southend travel-to-work area, an invitation to meet him regarding assisted area status for south-east Essex.

Mr. Sainsbury: Decisions on the new assisted areas map were made after the careful consideration of each area's circumstances and are not subject to appeal. I received seven submissions from Southend during the review, all of which were given full consideration. I am not, therefore, meeting any delegations to discuss assisted area status.

Atomic Energy Authority Police

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what joint consultation procedure exists between the police committee of the Atomic Energy Authority police, and that force's Police Federation, and the representative bodies of other ranks at which matters relating to police pay and conditions of service are discussed; what is the membership of the joint body; and on how many occasions it has met in the past five years.

Mr. Eggar: The information requested was provided in my answer to the hon. Member of 28 June 1993, *Official Report,*columns *369-70.*

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the President of the Board of Trade who serves on the police committee of the Atomic Energy Authority police; and how often it has met over the past five years.

Mr. Eggar: The police committee of the Atomic Energy Authority Constabulary (AEAC) is chaired by the AEA's managing director for corporate services and includes senior managers from AEA and British Nuclear Fuels sites and in particular those sites protected by the AEAC. The AEAC chief constable and deputy chief constable also attend meetings of the police committee. The committee has met twice a year during the past five years.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if a Minister from his Department will meet with representatives of the Atomic Energy Authority Police Federation to discuss the ramifications of *(a)* the Sheehy report, *(b)* the White Paper on police and *(c)* matters of general concern to federation members which are not operational matters reserved for the chief constable.

Mr. Eggar: No. Regular meetings take place between representatives of the Atomic Energy Police Federation and AEA management through the Atomic Energy Authority Constabulary joint consultative committee to discuss matters affecting the force.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the President of the Board of Trade to what extent Home Office police regulations are applied to members of the Atomic Energy Authority police.

Mr. Eggar: Home Office regulations do not apply to members of the Atomic Energy Authority Constabulary (AEAC). Their conditions of service are governed by the UKAEA staff conditions memoranda. However, these include many special provisions which apply only to members of the constabulary and which are based on the Home Office police regulations. Broadly, these provisions cover such matters as pay and allowances, duty, overtime, leave, housing, uniform and equipment.

Clean Coal Technology

Ms Walley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will give details of research *(a)* current and *(b)* planned to begin within the next 12 months in respect of clean coal technology; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Over 80 projects with a value of £144 million are currently under way in my Department's coal research and development programme. My Department is

contributing £28 million to this project portfolio. Over the next 12 months we expect to initiate at least 30 projects on clean coal technology involving British Coal, United Kingdom industry, universities and overseas organisations such as the European Community and United States Department of Energy. Since the end of May of this year we have announced the start of 34 projects committing £7·2 million of Government funding.

To ensure there is adequate support for R and D on clean coal technology the Government announced in the coal White Paper increased support for coal R and D rising from approximately £3 million per annum to £7 million per annum for the period 1993-94 to 1995-96. This will enable research in developing advanced power generation technology and other coal science activities to continue at the Coal Research Establishment, universities and in industry and help ensure that full advantage can be taken of international collaboration.

Companies House

Mr. Morgan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what proposals he has to *(a)* publish and *(b)* consult on the study by SRU Ltd. on the future of Companies House; what assessment he has made on the impact on employment in Wales of any major alteration in the status of Companies House itself as the primary registrar of companies.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The SRU Ltd. report represents advice to Ministers, and I have no plans to publish it at present. During the preparation of the report, there was consultation on a number of issues with Companies House staff and with users of the registry's services, and there will be further consultation when we come to a view on the options before us.

Until a clear picture emerges of what Companies House would look like, no accurate assessment can be made of the impact on employment.

Timeshares

Mr. Pickthall: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what action he has taken on the Office of Fair Trading report on timeshare of June 1990; and if he proposes to press for EC regulations on the subject.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Timeshare Act 1992 provides a mandatory cooling-off period for timeshare contracts entered into in the United Kingdom or under United Kingdom law.

The United Kingdom Government consider that regulation at Community level is also required. The EC Commission submitted a draft timeshare directive to the Council of Ministers in July 1992. Negotiation of the draft directive is continuing and a common position is hoped for in the near future.

Trade Regulation

Mr. Spearing: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the nature of the evidence he has received concerning statutory regulation of trade, manufacture, or commerce that constitutes obstruction to their success; and what is the purpose of each respective instrument currently available to him.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: A wide variety of evidence on the impact of regulation on business has been received from a number of sources in business, local authorities, pressure groups and academia. The purpose and effect of all regulatory instruments having an impact on business are currently being examined as part of the Government-wide review of all such regulation. The review aims to establish whether regulation is achieving what it was intended to and how necessary protections can be assured in a way that is least obstructive to trade and industry.

Gas-fired Power Stations

Mr. Spearing: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the approximate base load in thermal units of gas he expects to be generated by gas-burning electricity power stations from 1994 onward, the consequential depletion rate of known gas reserves in percentage of those known supplies, and the period he expects such supplies to be available.

Mr. Eggar: The Government's coal review, published in March 1993 as Cm 2235 "The Prospects for Coal", contains a range of estimates of electricity generation from gas-fired power stations over the period 1993-94 to 1997-98 (table 11.3). The Department's Energy Paper No. 59 contains projections of the use of gas in power stations over a longer period up to 2020 (table 4.4). Drawing on these projections, the coal review contains estimates of the period over which United Kingdom gas reserves might meet overall gas demand (paras 7.12 to 7.14).

WALES

National Health Service Provider Units

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of the numbers of provider units which have not made price lists for treatments available to purchaser units for the present financial year; what sanctions against late provision of treatment price lists he has authorised; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The provision of contract price lists is a matter for commissioners and providers within a timetable agreed for the national health service in Wales as a whole.

Asbestos

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has in regard to the areas of land in Wales contaminated by asbestos wastes; what representations he has received from owners of small businesses or domestic properties erected on land now found to be contaminated by asbestos; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The 1988 Welsh Office survey of contaminated land in Wales identified three former asbestos waste tips covering, in total, 3·5 hectares. Remedial work has already been carried out at two of these sites.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales has received no representations from owners of small businesses or domestic properties.

Building regulations require precautions to be taken to avoid danger to health and safety caused by substances found on, or in, the ground to be covered by buildings.

Ophthalmology

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what were (i) the average waiting times and (ii) the year end waiting list for *(a)* in-patient and *(b)* out-patient treatment in ophthalmology for each health authority and for Wales in each year since 1985.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The available information is given in the following tables, which relate to hospital providers in each area. For in-patients median waiting times are available and for out-patients the notional time to clear the out-patient waiting list is given. Further information is available from the Welsh Hospital Waiting List Bulletin 1993 No. 2, a copy of which is available in the Library of the House.

Median waiting time (days) for in-patients admitted from the waiting list during the calendar year[1]

	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	[2]1991-92
Clwyd	80	63	49	46	56	55	114
East Dyfed	34	38	43	85	83	158	[4]—
Gwent	196	124	97	117	155	203	[4]—
Gwynedd	65	58	47	66	82	97	86
Mid Glamorgan	39	76	34	47	53	56	48
Pembrokeshire	(26)	(33)	(29)	(36)	(33)	(36)	126
Powys[3]	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
South Glamorgan	77	86	92	111	112	106	129
West Glamorgan	167	170	121	192	213	135	[4]—
Wales	71	75	51	72	77	89	94

[1] For patients admitted from the waiting list during the calendar year. A median waiting time is such that approximately half the patients waited less than this time to be admitted and half waited longer; median waiting times based on fewer than 50 cases are given in parentheses.
[2] A new information system for collation of hospital activity data was introduced from 1 April 1991. Figures for 1991-92 financial year are therefore not directly comparable with those for earlier years. Only districts for which reliable information has been received from hospitals have been included for 1991-92.
[3] There are no in-patient ophthalmology services provided by hospitals in Powys.
[4] Denotes not available.

Notional time (days) to clear out-patient waiting list at 31 March

	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
Clwyd	30	61	54	76	71	52	81	80	43
East Dyfed	54	40	24	56	28	35	54	69	52
Gwent	46	58	19	37	42	27	20	47	54
Gwynedd	41	73	44	64	109	57	50	65	102
Mid Glamorgan	163	122	101	74	119	77	67	93	98
Pembrokeshire	18	15	19	20	24	22	32	78	92
Powys	31	49	45	45	105	117	146	50	120
South Glamorgan	31	18	33	38	68	68	84	129	167
West Glamorgan	215	164	103	125	92	37	82	203	208
Wales	74	70	50	62	73	51	62	94	100

The notional time to clear a waiting list is calculated by dividing the total waiting list at 31 March each year by the average daily number of new out-patients seen during the previous 12 months.

Provider Based Waiting Lists as at 31 March

	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
In-patients:									
Clwyd	744	425	260	284	356	429	626	907	1,126
East Dyfed	201	181	158	418	674	1,080	1,738	1,370	1,016
Gwent	746	659	572	767	868	1,307	1,081	1,196	1,247
Gwynedd	90	181	251	390	611	654	568	633	500
Mid Glamorgan	548	718	510	359	397	397	587	617	996
Pembrokeshire	—	—	—	—	—	6	17	6	—
Powys[1]	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
South Glamorgan	372	421	399	552	633	550	769	875	641
West Glamorgan	382	512	624	738	964	1,190	1,382	902	842
Wales	3,083	3,097	2,774	3,508	4,503	5,613	6,768	6,506	6,368
Out-patients:									
Clwyd	421	790	728	1,074	1,043	753	1,114	1,255	846
East Dyfed	503	399	272	606	360	440	625	950	810
Gwent	858	1,113	386	662	864	620	451	1,081	1,309
Gwynedd	332	616	452	711	1,302	646	596	648	1,010
Mid Glamorgan	1,979	1,590	1,302	1,098	1,787	1,569	1,371	1,928	2,203
Pembrokeshire	44	39	62	75	84	96	146	394	487
Powys	47	73	76	72	186	243	297	108	239
South Glamorgan	660	383	739	925	1,523	1,564	1,896	2,440	3,440
West Glamorgan	2,533	2,142	1,392	1,766	1,377	621	1,195	2,624	3,263
Wales	7,377	7,145	5,409	6,989	8,526	6,552	7,691	11,428	13,607

[1] There are no in-patient ophthalmology services provided by hospitals in Powys.

Drawing Office

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with staff in the Welsh Office Drawing Office in relation to market testing in-house bids, the application of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 and management reviews of the Drawing Office operation.

Mr. Redwood: My officials have had substantial consultations both with staff and their trade union side representatives about these issues.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on public access to the central register of air photography for Wales following the market-testing exercise in respect of the Welsh Office Drawing Office.

Mr. Redwood: The central register of air photography for Wales is not included in the market test of the Drawing Office and public access to the register is not affected.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with contractors and their representative organisations in relation to the application of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 to private contractors tendering for the Welsh Office Drawing Office functions via the market-testing procedure; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: None.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish the tender specifications for the market testing of the Welsh Office Drawing Office.

Mr. Redwood: The tender specifications will be issued to those invited to bid, including the in-house team, in the near future.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the future location of Welsh Office land use records in the light of the market-testing procedure for the Drawing Office.

Mr. Redwood: The land use records unit is not included in the market test of the Drawing Office.

Urban Safety Management

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received in relation to the designation of the canton urban safety management study as a pilot urban safety management scheme for Wales.

Sir Wyn Roberts: South Glamorgan county council has submitted a proposal and my right hon. Friend has received the hon. Member's letter of support of 20 September.

Cardiff Bay

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what communications he has received from the Wales regional office of the National Rivers Authority with respect to the classification of the proposed impoundment at Cardiff bay as a sensitive water in the at risk of eutrophication category, under the urban waste water directive of the European Community; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The National Rivers Authority has yet to submit to my right hon. Friend its proposed list of candidate sensitive areas for Wales in connection with the implementation of the EC urban waste water treatment directive. The NRA has provided its current working list of candidate eutrophic sensitive areas which includes Cardiff bay, assuming the barrage is constructed. A copy of the list has been placed in the Library of the House pursuant to the reply my hon. Friend the Minister for the the Environment and Countryside gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Brighton, Kemptown (Mr. Bowden) on 27 July, column *905*.

Wales Engineering Centre

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the Wales engineering centre proposal; what consultations he has undertaken; and if he will place a copy of the Brodie report in the Library.

Mr. Redwood: The initiative to establish the Engineering Centre for Wales was taken in response to the need to raise the image and status of science, engineering and technology and to create awareness of the important contribution these subjects make to wealth creation. It is being driven forward by the Engineering Council, the Royal Academy of Engineering, the Welsh Office and the Welsh Development Agency.

At an early stage, the views of about 100 representatives of industry, academia, various agencies and professional institutions were sought at a workshop held in March 1992. Since then, the views of the centre's key customers have continually been canvassed for consideration in the planning process.

I have arranged for a copy of my Department's engineering skills consultation paper to be placed in the Library of the House.

Welsh Church Act Funds

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had in relation to the administration of Welsh Church Act funds in the light of his local government reorganisation proposals; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: I have consulted the two local authority associations and the Church in Wales. The Wales Council for Voluntary Action has submitted a proposal about the future of the funds: I have yet to reach a decision on this.

Radioactive Sulphur, Wylfa

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the leak of radioactive sulphur 35 from the Wylfa nuclear plant on 31 July and 1 August.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Sulphur-35 was released to the atmosphere on 2 August 1993 during shutdown of reactor 1 following equipment failure during refuelling on 31 July. The release was in excess of the weekly authorised limit and was graded as a category 1 incident on the international nuclear event scale—anomaly beyond the authorised operating regime.

The authorising departments considered the release to have resulted in negligible off-site consequences and monitoring of foodstuffs found no activity above European Commission maximum permitted levels. The authorising departments are conducting an extensive investigation into the incident.

Wrexham Maelor Hospital

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give details of the source and scope of the fund that is providing the expenditure for a revolving door at the Wrexham Maelor hospital.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The revolving door at Wrexham Maelor hospital is included within the expansion of the hospital currently under way, which is funded from the major capital building programme for hospital and community health services.

Training and Enterprise Councils

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the chairman of the West Wales training and enterprise council in relation to *(a)* the deadline for publication of all TEC accounts and *(b)* the latest estimate for the publication date of the 1992-93 accounts for West Wales TEC.

Sir Wyn Roberts: My officials wrote to all TECs on 24 June 1993 to remind them of their contractual obligations under the TEC operating agreement for the submission of annual reports and audited accounts. This letter was subsequently followed up informally by officials.

A copy of the TEC's 1992-93 annual accounts is available in the Library of the House.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Family Credit

3. **Mr. Barry Porter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the annual spending on family credit; and what was the spending on family income supplement in 1979.

Mr. Burt: Family credit expenditure for 1992-93 was £864 million. This is 13 times more in real terms than the £24 million spent on family income supplement in 1978-79.

Fraud

7. **Mr. Heald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what progress his Department has taken to reduce the level of fraudulent claims for social security benefits.

Mr. Lilley: Record fraud savings of £558 million were made last year when the Benefits Agency caught over 270,000 people cheating the system. Through a range of measures already introduced or planned for the future we are cracking down on opportunities for fraud.

19. **Mr. Clifton-Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what extra investment in anti-fraud work his Department is making over preceding years.

21. **Mr. Milligan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what extra investment in anti-fraud work his Department is making.

Mr. Burt: To help step up the fight against fraud we have allocated an extra £10 million to the Benefits Agency this year, to be continued in succeeding years. We have also introduced new incentives to encourage local authorities to crack down on housing benefit and council tax benefit fraud.

Pensioners (Incomes)

12. **Mr. Lewis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what percentage of pensioner households had an income below half of the contemporary average in 1990-91.

Mr. Hague: In 1990-91, an estimated 34 per cent. of pensioners had income below half the national average before housing costs; and estimated 37 per cent. after housing costs.

16. **Mr. Lidington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proportion of pensioners have some form of second income to add to the basic state pension.

Mr. Hague: Eighty-five per cent. of pensioner units had income on top of state benefits in 1990-91, the latest year for which information is available. State benefits include both basic state pension and income-related benefits.

Benefits

17. **Mr. Knapman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to promote a debate on the balance between selective and universal benefits.

Mr. Scott: Through my hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security's Mais lecture in June and "The Growth of Social Security" published in July we have fuelled a widespread debate on the British social security system. In due course, we will put forward specific proposals for reform. These will be subject to extensive debate in Parliament and elsewhere.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the number of recipients of *(a)* housing benefit, *(b)* income support, *(c)* family credit and *(d)* invalidity benefit by region and the percentage of the eligible regional population receiving this benefit in each of the last three years for which figures are available.

Mr. Burt *[holding answer 22 July 1993]:* I wrote to the hon. Member on 24 August 1993. The information is as follows:

Pursuant to my reply of 22 July in which I said I would let you have such information as is available. I am now pleased to be in a position to give you a reply.

Information on the eligible population for each benefit on a regional basis is not available. Such information as is available is in the tables attached.

Housing Benefit Recipients without Income Support

(000)

Region/year	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*
Northern	171	151	140
Yorkshire and Humberside	143	126	158
East Midlands	104	99	117
East Anglia	50	53	59
South East	445	451	458
South West	118	107	112
South Midlands	91	181	181
North West	260	194	182
Scotland	238	239	237

Region/year	1990	1991	1992
Wales	89	84	86
Great Britain	1,709	1,685	1,730

Income Support Recipients

(000)

Region/year	1990	1991	1992
North Eastern	674	688	753
London North	638	735	891
South Western	274	310	357
Wales	248	257	287
Midlands	665	699	800
North Western	643	669	731
Scotland	481	487	519
London South	558	641	749
Great Britain	4,180	4,487	5,088

Family Credit Recipients

(000)

Region/Year	1990	1991	1992
North Eastern	59	63	82
London North	35	38	52
South Western	26	28	37
Wales	22	22	29
Midlands	59	66	84
North Western	56	58	74
Scotland	40	43	54
London South	29	32	45
Great Britain	327	350	457

Invalidity Benefit Recipients

(000)

Region/Year	1989	1990	1991
Northern	110	117	126
Yorkshire and Humberside	107	118	125
East Midlands	61	66	74
East Anglia	24	26	29
South East	192	205	219
South Western	60	66	72
West Midlands	90	97	106
North Western	185	200	220
Scotland	158	169	181
Wales	132	137	147
Overseas	7	7	7
Great Britain	1,126	1,209	1,306

Sources:

Housing Benefit/Community Charge Benefit annual 1 per cent. sample, May 1990-1992.

Income Support Statistics Annual Enquiry, May 1990-1992.

Family Credit 5 per cent. sample of awards, October 1990-1992.

Invalidity Benefit 1 per cent. sample of claimants, April 1989, March 1990-1991

Notes:

1. All figures have been rounded to the nearest thousand.
2. The regions given for Income Support and Family Credit are the Social Security Administrative Regions used by the Department prior to 1988. The regions given for Housing Benefit and Invalidity Benefit are the Standard Statistical Regions.
3. Figures are given for each benefit. People receiving one benefit may also receive one or more of the others.
4. Figures come from "Point in time" surveys carried out on different dates; care should be taken in comparing figures between benefits.
5. Invalidity Benefit figure includes overseas recipients.
6. Figures for the eligible regional population for each benefit are not available.

Goode Report

18. **Mr. Heppell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement about the findings of the Goode committee report on occupational pensions.

Mr. Hague: The Government will be giving careful consideration to the committee's detailed recommendations.

Child Support Agency

20. **Mr. Connarty:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what assessment he has made of the first three months operation of the Child Support Agency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: The Child Support Agency is a new business operating under new legislation.

In its first three months of operation the agency issued 177,000 maintenance application forms to parents with care of children, sent 38,500 maintenance inquiry forms to absent parents and made 4,000 maintenance assessments.

We are closely monitoring its performance and I am satisfied that the start it has made in introducing these new arrangements will ensure that parents meet their responsibilities for child maintenance whenever they can afford to do so.

"The Growth of Social Security"

22. **Mr. Matthew Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what representations he has had about his Department's publication of "The Growth of Social Security"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: "The Growth of Social Security" was intended to stimulate and inform public debate on the social security programme. The Department has received a substantial number of comments and representations reflecting a wide range of opinion.

Incomes

23. **Mr. Boyce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how the incomes of the poorest and richest 10 per cent. of households have changed in real terms, after housing costs, between 1979 and 1990-91.

Mr. Burt: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Bristol, East (Ms Corston) on 26 July 1993, *Official Report*, column *460*.

Ms Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the percentage change in income during the period 1979 to the latest date for which information is available before and after housing costs, of each percentile group in the population.

Mr. Burt *[pursuant to his reply, 27 July 1993, c. 1010]*: I am advised that a figure was omitted from the table included in my reply. The correct information is:

Real increases in income between 1979 and 1990-91 for each decile group in the income distribution are provided in the table; greater disaggregation would not give statistically reliable results. These figures relate to the United Kingdom and are based on income equivalised for household size and composition.

Percentage changes in real income by decile group 1979—1990-91

Decile Group Medians	Income before housing costs	Income after housing costs
Decile 1	−1	−14
Decile 2	6	0
Decile 3	11	7
Decile 4	17	16
Decile 5	23	22
Decile 6	27	28
Decile 7	31	33
Decile 8	36	38
Decile 9	43	45
Decile 10	58	62

Note: All estimates are subject to sampling error.

Pensions

24. **Mr. French:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people currently contribute to *(a)* a final salary occupational pension scheme, *(b)* a money purchase occupational pension scheme and *(c)* a personal pension; and what is his estimate of the corresponding figures in five years' time.

Mr. Hague: The Government Actuary provisionally estimates that in 1991, 8·4 million people made personal contributions to final salary occupational pension schemes; and 0·7 million made personal contributions to money purchase occupational pension schemes. Figures on the number of people who are making additional voluntary contributions to occupational pensions schemes are not available.

In the financial year 1991-92, 2 million people made personal contributions to appropriate personal pensions in place of the state earnings-related pension scheme, and a further 3 million made contributions to other personal pensions.

The information on the corresponding position in five years time is not available.

Sources:

Occupational Pension Schemes: The Provisional Results of the 1991 Government Actuaries Department Survey of Occupational Pension Schemes.

Personal Pensions: Inland Revenue, Statistics and Economics Office.

Mr. Booth: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proportion of pensioners currently have an occupational pension; and how many had one in 1979.

Mr. Hague: The information requested is in the table.

Percentage of pensioners with income from occupational pensions

	1979	1990-91
Pensioner couples	65	70
Single pensioners	32	56
All pensioner units	43	61

Source:

Family expenditure survey and GAD survey of occupational pension schemes.

Notes:

1. Pensioners units are defined as single people above state pension age and couples in which the husband is above state pension age.
2. 1990-91 denotes estimates from a combined sample of the 1990 and 1991 family expenditure surveys (FES). One quarter of the 1991 FES sample has been omitted because of inadequate data on community charge benefit receipt following the delayed issue of community charge bills in April 1991. As a result the sample size in that year is too small to provide reliable estimates of pensioners' incomes. For this reason the remaining data for 1991 have been combined with that for 1990.

Pension Age

25. **Mr. Brandreth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what the cost to public funds would be of equalisation of the state pension at 60 years.

Mr. Hague: Equalising the state pension at 60 would cost, at today's prices, over £4·5 billion by 2025.

Income Support

26. **Mr. Wilson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many recipients of income support there are in the Cunninghame, North constituency.

Mr. Burt: Information of this kind is not collected for individual parliamentary constituencies. However, I understand from the Benefits Agency that there are 65,441 income support recipients recorded by offices located within Cunninghame, North.

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many men aged between 60 and 65 years were claiming income support in the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Burt: The latest available figures show that there were 176,000 men aged between 60 and 65 years successfully claiming income support.

Notes:

1. Source: Income Support Statistics Quarterly Inquiry, November 1992.
2. The figure has been rounded to the nearest thousand.
3. The figure includes men aged 60 but excludes those aged 65 and does not include men receiving income support as partners.

Housing Benefit

27. **Mr. Raynsford:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what consideration he has given to reducing the taper for housing benefit assessment.

Mr. Burt: I have no plans, at this time, to cut the housing benefit taper.

Invalidity Benefit

28. **Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the latest estimate of the number of people currently in receipt of invalidity benefit.

Mr. Scott: The estimated average number of people who will be receiving invalidity benefit at any one time during the year 1993-94 is 1,585,000.

Source: The departmental report, 1993.

Mr. Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many men aged between 60 and 65 years were claiming invalidity benefit in the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Scott: On 4 April 1992, the latest date for which figures are available, there were 285,000 men aged between 60 and 65 receiving invalidity benefit.

Notes: Based on a 1 per cent. sample of claimants, rounded to the nearest thousand.

Pensioners (Shares)

29. **Mr. Dunn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what estimate he has as to the number of pensioners who own shares.

Mr. Hague: We estimate that in 1990-91, the latest year for which figures are available, 1·5 million pensioner units received income from stocks and shares.

Expenditure, North Yorkshire

Mr. Robert Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what were his Department's capital and total expenditures in North Yorkshire for the last financial year and for each of the previous three years.

Mr. Burt: Information is not available in the form requested. Such information as is available is in the table. The figures are for administrative spending in the North Yorkshire district by the Benefits Agency and the Contributions Agency since they were established in 1991.

	1991-92 £	*1992-93* £
Capital spending	30,953	47,128
Total administrative expenditure	4,427,095	5,029,952

Child Benefit

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what information he has as to the level of child benefit or equivalent paid to the mother of one child in each other EC country.

Mr. Burt: The information is in the table.

Comparison of weekly rate of child benefit in EC Member States—For first child at age:

£

	4	*11*	*16*
Belgium	9·39	12·66	14·65
Denmark	10·53	7·93	7·93
France[1]	Nil	Nil	Nil
Germany	4·94	4·94	4·94
Greece[2]	0·76	0·76	0·76
Ireland	3·54	3·54	3·54
Italy[3]	—	—	—
Luxembourg	7·69	9·57	13·32
Netherlands	6·75	9·42	12·10
Portugal	2·78	2·78	2·78
Spain[4]	3·92	3·92	3·92
UK	9·65	9·65	9·65

Source: MISSOC 1992.

The conversion to sterling has been calculated using the OECD averages of purchasing power parities during 1992.

[1] Child benefit paid only for second and subsequent children.

[2] Progressively reduced to £0·52 per week if gross family income is more than £6,796 per annum.

[3] No specific amount; child benefit is means-tested.

[4] No benefit if family income is more than £5,661 per annum.

Family Resources Survey

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security for what purposes his Department has commissioned a family resources survey; by whom the questions were devised; by whom the data gathered will be analysed; and how and when it will be published.

Mr. Burt: The new family resources survey (FRS) has been commissioned to provide better information about the characteristics and finances of households. The improved data will enable better monitoring of the social security programme and expenditure forecasting. In particular, it will be better geared to provide information on low-income households as the basis for households below average income statistics than the family expenditure survey which is currently used.

The questionnaire content was agreed in consultation with DSS analysts and other interested Departments and finalised with the survey's field contractors after pilot studies.

The field contractors began collecting data for the new FRS last October. After the removal of information identifying individual respondents by the contractors, the data are passed to the analytical services division of DSS.

It is envisaged that a summary statistical bulletin with provisional data will be published, as a publication of the Government Statistical Service, in the second half of 1994.

Absent Fathers

Mr. Chisholm: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many women have been asked to name an absent father at benefit offices in *(a)* Edinburgh and *(b)* Scotland as a whole; how many have demurred; and how many have had income support deducted as a penalty.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Mrs. Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive, who has written further to the hon. Member.

Letter from R. Hepplewhite to Mr. Malcolm Chisholm, dated 16 August 1993:

As Chief Executive of the Child Support Agency I wrote to you on 26 July in response to your Parliamentary Question about the number of women in Edinburgh who had been asked to name an absent father and how many had demurred.

My letter said that between 5 April and 30 June 1993, 37 parents with care of children had been interviewed in Edinburgh in connection with their applications for child maintenance. I also said that, of these, 24 had declined without good cause to co-operate in providing details of the absent parent. However, I have subsequently established that of the 37 interviewed, 12 named the absent parent and only one parent declined without good cause to co-operate. The other figures given are unchanged.

I am sorry for any confusion my earlier reply may have caused.

National Insurance Contributions

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many successful prosecutions have taken place of self-employed individuals found to be evading national insurance contribution payments; and what has been the value of the revenue recovered in each year since 1984-85 *(a)* in each region and *(b)* nationally.

Mr. Hague: The administration of national insurance is a matter for Miss Ann Chant, the chief executive of the Contributions Agency. She will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from A. Chant to Mr. Alan Milburn, dated 27 July 1993:

As Chief Executive of the Contributions Agency I am responsible for answering questions about relevant operational matters. I have been asked to reply to your question about how many self-employed individuals have been successfully prosecuted for the evasion of National Insurance contributions (NICs), and the value of the revenue recovered in each year since 1984-85.

When arrears of self-employed (Class 2) contributions are discovered it is the aim of the Agency to obtain current compliance and payment of the arrears at the smallest cost to public funds. If necessary, the Agency will pursue unpaid Class 2 NICs by either civil or criminal prosecution. In my answer to your other separate question about the self-employed I have supplied, in annexes which will be tabled in the Library, details of the number of proceedings undertaken by the Agency and the amounts involved.

We do not keep separate figures for the number of *successful* prosecutions nor for amounts of money collected in relation to these proceedings, because some cases are resolved before litigation has run its full course or alternatively the money may be collected by instalments. These cases are regarded as an effective part of the litigation process.

I regret that I have been unable to give you the precise information that you requested in your question but I hope that my reply has proved helpful.

Public Bodies

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the names, occupations and current employers of those who currently hold positions in each public body to which he makes appointments; if he will make a statement on the considerations taken into account when making such appointments and if he will list details of the posts and salaries or allowances payable which have changed since the publication of "Public Bodies 1992."

Mr. Burt *[pursuant to his reply, 25 June 1993, c. 322-23]*: The earlier reply contained incorrect information. The correct information is in the table.

	Chair	*Members*
Disability Appeal Tribunals	325 male	908 male
	79 female	677 female
Social Security Appeals Tribunals	479 male	2,269 male
	122 female	1,252 female
Medical Appeal Tribunals	88 male	464 male
	8 female	9 female

Disability

Ms Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will provide statistics on the basis of the latest analysis of households below average income, for the long-term sick and those on disability benefit to correspond with statistical data for pensioners, recipients of income support and unemployment given in tables A4 and A5 in the latest households below average income report.

Mr. Burt *[pursuant to his reply, 19 July 1993, c. 71-72]*: I am advised that the reply contained incomplete information. The correct information is as follows:

The households below average income (HBAI) dataset, the family expenditure survey (FES), does not identify all long-term sick or disabled people, and its identification of receipt of disability benefits is imperfect. The estimates are susceptible to these imperfections as well as sampling errors. The results reported in the tables may, therefore, reflect changes in the categories of long-term sick or disabled people identified in the FES, as well as changes in the incomes of such people.

Where figures are particularly uncertain due to sampling error and where the confidence intervals exceed pre-determined limits the estimates are bracketed or omitted. Further information about the effects of sampling errors can be found in appendix 5 of HBAI, a copy of which is in the Library.

The figures in the tables are presented in line with tables A4 and A5 in Households Below Average Income 1979 to 1990-91.

Changes in real income for long-term sick and those on disability benefits
Real changes in median incomes 1979 to 1990-91 (Percentage)
Income before housing costs

	Bottom quintile	*Second quintile*	*Third quintile*	*Whole group (mean)*
Before housing costs				
Long-term sick or receiving disability benefits	(4)	(14)	(*)[2]	26
Income after housing costs				
Long-term sick or receiving disability benefits	(*)[3]	(14)	(*)[4]	30

Notes:
[1] People who reported receipt of invalidity benefit, severe disablement allowance, attendance allowance or mobility allowance or people not in work who reported long-term sickness or disability.
[2]. 95 per cent. confidence interval is +9 to +30.
[3]. 95 per cent. confidence interval is −7 to +15.
[4]. 95 per cent. confidence interval is +12 to +36.

Money values of quintile medians for long-term sick and those on disability benefits in April 1993 prices (£ per week equivalised)

	Bottom quintile	*Second quintile*	*Third quintile*	*Whole group (mean)*
1979				
Before housing costs				
Long-term sick or receiving disability benefits	92	113	135	148
1990-91				
Long-term sick or receiving disability benefits	96	129	162	186
1979				
After housing costs				
Long-term sick or receiving disability benefits	76	96	117	128
1990-91				
Long-term sick or receiving disability benefits	79	109	144	166

Note:
1. All estimates are subject to sampling error—see table on income growth.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Wheat

Sir Ralph Howell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the average ex-farm price of wheat received by farmers in *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* France and *(c)* Germany in pounds sterling in 1979 and each year since 1984.

Mr. Jack: Information for Great Britain, France and Germany is set out in the following table. Comparable information for the United Kingdom is not available.

Ex-farm price of wheat

£ per tonne

	Great Britain[1]	*France*[2]	*Germany*[2]
1979-80	98·13	91·51	117·70
1983-84	124·33	98·48	123·90
1984-85	111·26	96·06	111·25
1985-86	112·20	114·74	129·24
1986-87	112·67	113·82	134·74
1987-88	111·20	100·32	116·40
1988-89	114·19	105·57	113·67
1989-90	112·23	106·28	116·26
1990-91	119·56	107·19	112·50
1991-92	122·31	107·53	122·66

[1] *Source:* Home Grown Cereals Authority—Actual prices (Years are from July-June).

[2] *Source:* Eurostat—by calendar year—1979 and 1984-92.

Blind and Partially Sighted People

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what arrangements her Department makes to ensure that blind and partially sighted people have access to information produced by her Department where it has not been published in alternative media such as Braille, large print or tape.

Mr. Jack: MAFF aims to respond positively and helpfully to all requests for information from blind and partially sighted people. The Department has recently set up a telephone helpline to offer callers unfamiliar with MAFF a clear route into the Department and the information it can provide. Helpline staff would welcome enquiries from visually impaired people at any time. As well as providing a new focal point for information from the Department, the helpline is an additional means of putting callers rapidly in touch with officials who can deal with enquiries on specialist issues. The Department has an equal opportunities unit which provides central advice on meeting special needs.

Computer Consultancies

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will list all the computer consultancies employed by her Department and agencies, since November 1991, the tasks for which they were engaged, and the total cost to her Department.

Mr. Jack: There follows a list giving details of the computer consultancies employed by the Department since November 1991 and the tasks on which they were engaged.

I am unable to provide precisely the total cost of consultancies in that period, since that would involve the officials in considerable effort. However, in recent years the annual budget for computer consultancies has varied between £5 million and £7 million.

Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food list of computer consultants employed since November 1991.

CONSULTANT AND TASK

Admiral—Development of computer systems for CAP Reform schemes.

AIMS Systems—Technical advice on Structured Design Methodology.

Ampersand—Development of computer systems for CAP Reform schemes.

Amtec—Advice on quality management.

Amtec—Support to market testing programme for IT Services.

Asterisk Systems—Development of computer systems for CAP reform schemes.

BIS—Technical advice on Strucutred Design Methodology at the Central Veterinary laboratory.

Brandt Computers—Development of Resource Management Strategy.

Bristol University—Development of computer system for National Food Survey.

Brook Systems—Project Management of Sample Mangement System.

Capita—Support to market testing programme for IT Services.

CCTA—Development of IT Strategy for National Institute of Agricultural Botany and National Meat Hygiene Service.

CCTA—Support to IT procurements.

Chris Cole Associates—Advice on strategy for structured cabling.

Cooper and Lybrand—Support to market testing programme for IT Services.

Cooper and Lybrand—Development of computer systems for CAP Reform schemes.

Corporate Computers—Advice on computer systems for National Food Survey.

CSS Trident—Implementation of Resource Management Strategy.

Digital Equipment Corp.—Advice on configuration management.

D M Shaw Associates—Advice on management of change.

D M Shaw Associates—Development of standards for post implementation review of computer projects.

D M Shaw Associates—Advice on quality management standards.

D P P International—Implementation of Resource Management Strategy.

Duhig Berry—Advice on project management techniques.

Electronic Facilities Design—Audit of Sample Management System project.

Electronic Facilities Design—Development of IT training strategy.

Ernst and Young—Development of Resource Management Strategy.

Exclusive Software—Conversion of programs to Ingres.

Exeter University—Development of computer systems for ADAS.

FI Group—Quality assurance of development of computer system for National Food Survey.

FI Group—Data conversion for Agricultural Census.

FI Group—Facilities management of Agricultural Census computer system.

Forvus Ltd.—Development of National Food Survey system.

Gateway Systems—Advice on data communications cabling.

Harwell Computers—Advice on IT system for licence identifications and management.

Hayes-Davies—Advice on quality management, customer satisfaction surveys.

Hoskyns—Development of computer system for Farm Woodlands Scheme.

Hoskyns—Assistance with Ingres database conversion project.

Hoskyns—Advice on project management tools.

Inference Ltd.—Implementation of computer system for relocation expenses.

Intersect Ltd.—Development of IT maintenance strategy.

ISM Consultants—Assistance with data communications strategy.

John Guest Ltd.—Advice on data management in the Fisheries Group.

Kermon Associates—Technical assurance on implementation of office systems.

Kermon Associates—IT security reviews.

LBMS—Development of computer system for CAP reform schemes.

LBMS—Business analysis/feasibility studies/system design.

LBMS—Advice on standards.

Logica—Development of knowledge based system in the Animal Health Group.

Midsummer Computing—Advice on geographical information systems.

MMT Ltd.—Development of computer system for Licensed Veterinary Inspections, Horticultural Inspection Recording.

MMT Ltd.—Advice on relational database management systems.

MMT Ltd—Project management for National Food Survey system.

Mouncey & Partners—Development of computer systems for emergencies planning, meat plant monitoring.

Mouncey & Partners—Development of IT sub-strategy for Fisheries Group.

Mouncey & Partners—Assistance with market testing programme of IT Services.

Mouncey & Partners—Technical assurance on accommodation planning IT project.

Mouncey and Partners—Feasibility study on milk quotas system.

Mouncey and Partners—Development of Grants and Subsidies Management System.

OFICE—Assistance with building cabling projects.

Opal Ltd.—Conversion of office systems.

Oracle—Development and implementation of Resource Management Strategy.

PA Consulting—IT sub-strategy studies.

PA Consulting—Advice on project costing and management for ADAS.

PA Consulting—Development of Animal Tracking Project for the Animal Health Group.

PA Consulting—ADAS Accounting Project.

PA Consulting—Development of Food Related Database Shells Project.

PACTUM Ltd.—Ingres program development for the Horticulture Inspection Recording System.

Perspective—Advice on quality audit.

Premier Computing—Implementation of Office Systems.

Price Waterhouse—Development of Resource Management Strategy.

Price Waterhouse—Development of IT strategy for Central Science Laboratories.

Prime Computer Systems—Advice on capacity planning.

Quanta Learning Systems—Development of IT training guides.

Reading University—Advice on relation of statistical software.

Ricardo Ltd.—Advice on end user support documentation.

SAC Ltd.—Advice on end user support methods.

Sapphire Ltd.—Support for IT systems in the Veterinary Medicines Directorate.

Sema Group—Development of Farm Survey System.

Sequent Computer Systems—Capacity planning.

Sherwoods Ltd.—Development of computer system for CAP reform schemes.

Shreeveport—Development of IT strategy for National Meat Hygiene Service.

Siemens Nixdorf—Implementation of office systems (Project Maiden).

South-West Health Authority—Implementation of Resource Management Strategy.

Touche Ross—IT security reviews.

Touche Ross—Project management for development of IT accounting system in National Institute of Agricultural Botany.

Touche Ross—Development of IT strategy for personnel management.

Triad Ltd.—Development of computer systems for CAP reform schemes.

Triad Ltd.—Development of computer system for Import Licence Identification and Management.

Triad Ltd.—Development of computer system for administration of pesticide approval applications.

Triad Ltd.—Implementation of Resource Management Strategy.

Zergo Ltd.—Security review of data communications network.

Stock-proof Fencing

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will make it her policy to introduce legislation compelling adjoining landowners to maintain stock-proof fencing against commons.

Mr. Jack: I see no need to introduce such legislation, since there is a general duty on landowners, whether adjoining common land or not, to contain their livestock and to ensure against straying.

Contracting Out

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list all those services or functions contracted out in her Department and agencies, since November 1991, in which the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 were not applied.

Mr. Jack: The application of TUPE depends on the nature of the work awarded and the contractors' own proposals for carrying out the work.

Since publication of the White Paper "Competing for Quality, Buying Better Public Services", the Department's market-testing programme has included the activities listed which have been contracted out under contractual arrangements which did not need to incorporate the 1981 regulations:

Building and Estates Management (Part)
General Recruitment (Up to Grade 7)
Library Services (Books and Journals)
Royal Navy Surface Surveillance (Fisheries Protection Contract)
Relocation Work (Central Science Laboratory)

Information relating to services or functions which are not on the Department's market-testing programme but which have been contracted out since November 1991 cannot be obtained except at disproportionate cost.

Houses

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will list the member states in the European Community which currently designate agricultural animal status or its equivalent to horses; and if she will make it her policy to adopt such a designation in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Jack: The practice of designating horses as agricultural animals varies among member states. The Government have no plans to adopt a comprehensive designation since this would, in itself, have no significance. What is significant is how horses are treated in specific pieces of national legislation.

Small Businesses

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will make a statement on the achievements of *(a)* her policies and *(b)* her Department in helping small businesses over the last 12 months as against the previous 12 months; and if she will publish the performance indicators by which her Department monitors those achievements and the statistical results of such monitoring.

Mr. Jack: The Government continue to help small businesses, through improvements to the business climate, through deregulation and through specific programmes of support and assistance.

This Department has continued to contribute significantly to the process. The completion and implementation of the common agricultural policy reform agreement

provides a framework for the development of a competitive agricultural industry for future years. It gives farmers the stability to plan ahead.

In other areas of its work also the Department continues to offer help and assistance. For example:

(i) special rules to enable small producers to claim arable area payments under simplified arrangements that do not require them to set aside land;

(ii) specific arrangements to enable meat from low-throughput abattoirs to be supplied to wholesalers as well as retailers and final consumers;

(iii) the group marketing grant which can assist individual farmers to band together to market their produce more effectively;

(iv) the prospective easing of salmonella controls for poultry producers with small breeding flocks; and

(v) the establishment of small business panels to enable Ministers to hear at first hand the views of small businessmen on the regulatory burden.

All the schemes operated by this Department are closely monitored. Reports on particular schemes are published from time to time.

Pesticides

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what research has been undertaken by her Department into the relationship between instances of pesticide contamination of humans and symptoms of depression amongst the farming community.

Mr. Soames: I would advise any farmers suffering symptoms of depression to seek the advice of their doctor in the first instance. Specialist advice on farming issues can be obtained through the nearest Ministry regional service centre.

Fur Farms

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what procedures are required by his Department for mink farmers to follow when mink are moved from one fur farm to another.

Mr. Soames: The Mink (Keeping) Regulations 1975, as amended, require that no mink shall be transported from place to place except in closed cages or other containers constructed in such manner and of such materials as to prevent their escape. There is no requirement to inform the Ministry of the transportation of mink.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information she has about the mink transported from Halifax to Appin in Scotland in September and October 1992; when her Department became aware of the movement; and what action was taken.

Mr. Soames: I have no information on this. There is no requirement to inform the Ministry of the transportation of mink.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessments she has received from *(a)* the Agricultural Development Advisory Service, *(b)* the National Rivers Authority and *(c)* English Nature as to whether the Isle of Wight is free from an established feral mink population; and what assessment her Department has made.

Mr. Soames: Although sightings of mink on the isle have been reported in the press, ADAS has not been presented with evidence to support any claims of a feral mink population, nor has it received any complaints of small animals and poultry, which are easy prey for mink, being taken. Its overall assessment is that, at present, there is no feral mink population on the isle.

A 15-month study of otters and mink in south-eastern Britain, including the Isle of Wight, carried out on behalf of the Hampshire Wildlife Trust and the National Rivers Authority, found no evidence of mink on the isle in late 1991 or again in 1993.

In its response to the Ministry's public consultation exercise, reviewing the Mink (Keeping) Order 1987, English Nature said:

"Although the mink is now well established in England, it is not yet established on the Isle of Wight."

A number of mink farms existed on the isle prior to the introduction of controls on the keeping of mink in 1962. Escapes from these farms could have led to the establishment of a feral mink population many years ago, although there is no evidence that this occurred. Hampshire has a well-established feral mink population and mink are capable of swimming the distance from the mainland. Therefore, there is always the possibility that mink could reach the isle and in the absence of adequate control by the owners and occupiers of land responsible for such control, establish a feral mink population.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will give details of the numbers of mink farms which have existed on the Isle of Wight since controls on mink keeping were introduced, with the size of such establishments.

Mr. Soames: Mink keeping controls were introduced in 1962. Since then only one mink farm owner has been licensed to keep mink at premises on the island. Details of mink farms provided in support of licence applications are confidential between the Ministry and the applicant.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information she has on outbreaks of botulism on mink factory farms; and how many resulting mink deaths have occurred on individual mink farms.

Mr. Soames: Botulism in animals is not compulsorily notifiable and therefore complete data are not available. We are aware of an outbreak on one mink farm in September 1992 which resulted in around 1,000 mink deaths.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many mink were *(a)* reared and *(b)* killed on fur farms in each of the last five years.

Mr. Soames: The Mink (Keeping) Order 1992, which requires that mink farms be licensed by Agriculture Departments, does not require returns of numbers of mink reared and killed to be made. Therefore no official figures are available.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food is she will give details of the size of mink cages most often found by officers of the state veterinary service when inspecting mink farms.

Mr. Soames: The majority of mink cages inspected by officers of the state veterinary service were of dimensions being greater than 38 cm in depth, 23 cm in width and 30·5 cm in height.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what work has been carried out to assess the impact on wildlife of the Isle of Wight were a feral mink population to become established; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: No studies have been carried out by the Ministry to assess the possible impact were a feral mink population to become established on the Isle of Wight. Experience in other parts of Britain has shown that feral mink can have a significant effect on local populations of birds and water voles if adequate measures are not taken by landowners and occupiers to control the feral mink.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment officers of the state veterinary service have been made of the extent to which the current cages used for fur farming meet the ethological needs of mink.

Mr. Soames: In monitoring welfare standards on fur farms the state veterinary service operates to the guidelines laid down in the relevant recommendations adopted by the Council of Europe.

Officers of the SVS note any signs of abnormal behaviour in the mink which may indicate that the cages do not meet the ethological needs of the animal. Such abnormal behaviour was observed in only a very small proportion of animals and on no occasion was it considered by officers to be associated with unnecessary pain or unnecessary distress.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will give details of reports of feral mink on the Isle of Wight of which her officials were aware in 1983, 1987, 1992 and February 1993.

Mr. Soames: The Ministry is aware of press reports and claims, from time to time, of feral mink on the Isle of Wight. In 1983 a dead mink was reported on the road at Chale and collected by a Ministry official and in 1992 a report was made to the Ministry of a mink being shot at Porchfield. Officials are aware of the recent reports in 1993 of evidence of mink on the River Medina. Their presence has not been confirmed. ADAS has advised the working group, set up by the Isle of Wight county council this year in response to these reports, on appropriate methods of capture and humane despatch of feral mink which can be employed by land occupiers and owners if this proves necessary.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what additional security precautions her officers have advised in order to ensure that mink are securely held in the mink farm on the Isle of Wight in addition to the general provisions of the Mink (Keeping) Orders.

Mr. Soames: The Mink (Keeping) Regulations 1975, as amended, set out the requirements for keeping mink under licence and allow for modifications to the requirements to be made where local conditions may make these appropriate.

The conditions of the licence issued to the Isle of Wight mink farm were drawn up on ADAS advice following inspection of the premises and with regard to the local conditions and the need to prevent mink escaping into the surrounding area. The details of particular licences to keep mink are confidential between the Ministry and the licensee.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the annual cost of *(a)* animal welfare inspections of mink farms by officers of the state veterinary service, *(b)* the administration of the Mink (Keeping) Orders by her Department and *(c)* annual inspections of mink farms by her officials over the last five years to ensure compliance with the security provisions of the Mink Keeping Orders.

Mr. Soames: Information on the annual cost of animal welfare inspections is not separately available.

The costs for administration and annual inspections for compliance with the Mink (Keeping) Regulations 1975, as amended and the issue of licences are as follows:

	MAFF Administration £	*Annual Inspections* £
1988-89	840	2,270
1989-90	910	2,920
1990-91	700	1,000
1991-92	520	1,710
1992-93	220	1,600

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action is taken by her officials when Arctic foxes are found to be present on licensed mink factory farms to ensure that the foxes cannot escape into the countryside.

Mr. Soames: The keeping of Arctic foxes is not subject to control. Ministry officials visiting licensed mink premises confine their security checks to the arrangements for the keeping of mink.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) on how many occasions in each of the last five years welfare inspections of Arctic fox farms were carried out by her officials;

(2) if she will make a statement on the accommodation for Arctic foxes witnessed by her officials during welfare inspections of fur farms.

Mr. Soames: In monitoring welfare standards on fur farms, the state veterinary service operates to the guidelines laid down in the relevant recommendations adopted by the Council of Europe.

Welfare inspections of Arctic fox farms were carried out by officers of the SVS on four occasions in 1989 and once in 1990. Of the two farms visited, the accommodation in one was found to be well constructed and in good condition. On the other farm improvements to flooring were recommended and this was satisfactorily carried out. I understand that both farms have since ceased to operate.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on how many occasions in each of the last five years officers of the state veterinary service monitored or observed the slaughter of Arctic foxes in fur farms; and if she will give details of the various methods of killing used.

Mr. Soames: Officers of the state veterinary service monitored the slaughter of Arctic fox once in the last five years. The method of slaughter used was by lethal injection.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) whether officers of the state

veterinary service have witnessed *(a)* the gassing of mink on fur farms and *(b)* the gassing of mink via a box connected to car or tractor exhausts; and if she will give details of precautions taken in the latter case to ensure that the mink die humanely;

(2) what assessment her officials have made of the humaneness of carbon monoxide gassing of mink; and what is the average time to unconsciousness and death noted by officials of the state veterinary service when observing the gassing of mink on fur farms.

Mr. Soames: Officers of the state veterinary service have witnessed the gassing of mink on fur farms by a variety of methods. Killing by exhaust gases from a car or tractor was not observed on any occasion.

The Department has carried out no specific research into the gassing of mink. However, research and observation in other countries have concluded that gassing by carbon monoxide as practised in Britain is humane.

Very few data are available on the average time to unconsciousness and death, but in the cases observed the time has varied between one and a half to seven minutes to unconsciousness with death supervening between three to 15 minutes later. No evidence of undue stress was observed prior to unconsciousness.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what research has been conducted into the areas recommended by the Farm Animal Welfare Council for research to determine the optimum enclosure for mink and fox in 1989.

Mr. Soames: The Farm Animal Welfare Council review of fur farming recommended that the industry should carry out research to determine the optimum enclosure for mink and fox. However, the fur farming industry in this country, being one of the smallest in Europe, has so far been unable to support such research and development.

The Council of Europe recommendation on fur farming also contains a recommendation that research should be undertaken in the area of, inter alia, the development of husbandry systems to improve the health and welfare of the animals. Such research is being carried out in other countries such as Denmark, Finland and the Netherlands, whose industries are large enough to bear the costs involved.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action is being taken by her Department in respect of the report by the Institute of Fisheries Ecology of evidence of a feral mink population on the River Medina in the Isle of Wight.

Mr. Soames: ADAS has advised the working group set up by the Isle of Wight county council this year in response to the institute's report on the methods of capture and humane despatch of feral mink. The county ecology officer is to hold courses for local landowners and occupiers who are responsible for feral mink control, to ensure that they are able to identify signs of mink and the ways of controlling them.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many times the mink farm on the Isle of Wight was inspected by his officials in each year since 1988 in connection with the security provisions of the Mink (Keeping) Orders.

Mr. Soames: The number of inspections made by ADAS on behalf of the Ministry was as follows:

	Number
1988	1
1989	1
1990	2
1991	1
1992	2

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what has been the annual income over each of the past five years from mink farm licence fees.

Mr. Soames: The annual income, on a financial year basis, from mink farm licences in England is as follows:

	£
1988-89	6,267
1989-90	4,715
1990-91	3,220
1991-92	2,530
1992-93	2,185

School Milk

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what representations he has made to the Council of Ministers to retain the subsidy for school milk;

(2) what representations he has made to ensure the continuation of the subsidy for school milk.

Mr. Jack: At the Agriculture Council on 20-21 September the United Kingdom, supported by several other member states, argued that the Commission's proposal for a 50 per cent. cut in the rate of school milk subsidy was too drastic a measure for achieving budgetary savings and would threaten the viability of a popular scheme which had played an important role in encouraging consumption of milk and milk products. In the light of these representations the Council agreed to limit the reduction in subsidy to 25 per cent. and to find the balance of the necessary savings by making technical adjustments aimed at improving the cost-effectiveness of the scheme. The Government are satisfied that this represents a sensible compromise which safeguards the viability of the scheme while at the same time taking account of the severe pressure on the Community budget.

Abattoirs

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the throughput in British abattoirs in each month since January 1992.

Mr. Jack: The throughput of abattoirs in the United Kingdom is published each week in a press notice entitled "United Kingdom Slaughter Statistics". Historical monthly figures, including those since January 1992, are given on the reverse of this press notice.

Agriculture Expenditure

Sir Ralph Howell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much of the overall expenditure on agriculture, fisheries and food, as shown in the public

expenditure White Paper is attributable to *(a)* agriculture, *(b)* fisheries, *(c)* food, *(d)* forestry, *(e)* coast defence and *(f)* all other non-agricultural activities including civil defence for each year since 1985-86.

Mr. Jack: The information available is contained in the 1991, 1992 and 1993 editions of the MAFF/IB departmental report, copies of which are available in the Library of the House.

Lupin Seed

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information she has received from the Advisory Committee on Novel Foods about the toxic components of lupin seed.

Mr. Soames: None. The committee is unable to report on this matter pending the completion of additional studies necessary for the safety assessment of two applications to use lupin products in food.

Cereals

Sir Ralph Howell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was *(a)* the total amount paid by each member state of the EEC in cereals co-responsibility levy for each year since the co-responsibility levy has been operative and *(b)* the total tonnage of cereals produced in each member state of the EEC, showing in each case how much per tonne the co-responsibility levy represented.

Mr. Jack: Information on the total amount paid by each member state in cereals co-responsibility levy, the total tonnage of cereals produced in each member state and the rate of the co-responsibility levy per tonne of cereals each year since 1986 is provided in the following tables.

EC Cereals Production 1986-87 to 1991-92[1]

('000 tonnes)

	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91	1991-92
Belgium	2,345	1,920	2,207	2,243	1,996	1,979
Denmark	7,968	7,271	8,067	8,808	9,606	9,169
Germany	25,590	23,770	27,112	26,113	37,580	39,289
Greece	5,263	5,071	4,587	4,534	4,042	5,607
Spain	15,974	19,814	23,146	19,3[illegible]	18,230	18,851
France	50,100	52,242	55,866	57,310	55,118	60,232
Ireland	1,831	1,992	1,979	1,872	1,970	2,093
Italy	17,796	17,436	16,563	16,207	16,286	18,202
Luxembourg	48	61	124	124	126	138
Netherlands	1,261	1,145	1,217	1,363	1,388	1,296
Portugal	1,593	1,563	1,295	1,643	1,200	1,543
United Kingdom	24,511	21,676	21,110	22,725	22,566	22,635
Total	154,280	153,960	163,273	162,289	170,108	181,035

Source: EC Commission's Cereals Bilans.
[1] Cereals marketing year runs from 1 July to 30 June.

Total EC payments of cereals co-responsibility levy (Basic and Additional) (Thousand ECU)

	1986[1]	1987[2]	1988[3]	1989[4]	1990[4]	1991[4]
Belgium	5,203	18,958	15,538	14,932	11,602	14,527
Denmark	1,841	12,081	14,621	40,509	29,315	50,376
Germany	16,749	77,866	148,822	104,688	87,409	151,123
Greece	877	4, 592	9,204	13,918	9,189	7,686
Spain	—	33,765	33,971	71,743	80,204	59,073
France	10,337	103,625	315,827	329,104	273,701	390,911
Ireland	766	5,106	9,434	10,816	7,540	11,851
Italy	10,074	37,430	33,589	66,053	60,661	62,174
Luxembourg	69	419	325	476	352	704
Netherlands	769	22,110	21,249	7,872	7,951	11,454
Portugal	—	—	—	—	—	—
United Kingdom	9,745	62,752	74,924	139,151	147,166	166,154
Total	56,430	378,704	677,504	799,262	715,090	926,033

Source: EAGGF—payments represent amount of cereals co-responsibility levy paid in each EAGGF financial year.
[1] 1 January—31 December.
[2] 1 January 1987—31 October 1987.
[3] 1 November 1987—15 October 1988.
[4] 16 October—15 October.

Cereals co-responsibility levy net rate 1986-87 to 1991-92[1]

	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91	1991-92
Intervention price (ecu/tonne)	179·44	179·44	179·44	174·06	168·55	168·55
Net rate[2] (ecu/tonne)	5·38	5·38	8·25	5·22	7·59	8·43

[1] 1 July to 30 June.
[2] Net rate of levy includes both basic and, where appropriate, additional levies. The basic co-responsibility levy was calculated as 3 per cent. of the

common wheat intervention price (5 per cent in 1991-92). The additional levy was charged in cases where the Maximum Guaranteed Quantity was exceeded. The basis of calculation was not consistent throughout this period.

Sir Ralph Howell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the tonnage and average price of grain exported from the United Kingdom *(a)* generally and *(b)* separately for each country to which grain was exported in each year since 1989.

Mr. Jack: The information sought cannot be produced without disproportionate cost to the Department. However, details for each type of grain covering total trade in volume and value, as well as a list of the major trading countries involved and their respective trade, can be found in the annual volumes of the "Overseas Trade Statistics for the United Kingdom" (MA 20) for 1989-91, while figures for 1992 can be found in the December 1992 issue of the monthly version (MM 20) of the same publication. Copies of these publications are in the House of Commons Library.

Details of grain classification within the Standard Industrial Trade Classification Division 04 are shown in the "Guide to Classification for Overseas Trade Statistics" (MA 21), which is also in the House of Commons Library. All the data itself can be found within table VI, section 0, 041-045.99 of the MA and MM 20s.

Sir Ralph Howell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what was the size of the United Kingdom harvest in *(a)* tonnes and *(b)* value, at actual and at 1989 prices in each year since 1979;

(2) if she will list the quantity and value of grain produced in the United Kingdom in each year since 1979 giving value in real and 1990 prices.

Mr. Jack: I assume that my hon. Friend's first question refers to the cereals harvest. As values are not available at 1989 prices, I have answered both questions together showing values in actual, 1990 prices and as deflated by the index of retail prices (1990=100). The information is set out in the table.

United Kingdom Cereal Production and Value of Output

	Quantity (thousand tonnes)	*Value (£ million)*	*Value at 1990 prices (£ million)*	*Value deflated by RPI (1990=100)*
1979	17,415	1,184	1,300	2,635
1980	19,480	1,463	1,548	2,758
1981	19,621	1,693	1,648	2,853
1982	21,910	2,062	1,888	3,200
1983	21,307	1,996	1,670	2,963
1984	26,602	2,420	2,319	3,421
1985	22,466	2,281	2,279	3,041
1986	24,489	2,153	2,139	2,776
1987	21,681	1,990	1,983	2,463
1988	21,162	1,821	1,907	2,148
1989	22,729	2,052	2,134	2,246
1990	22,583	2,055	2,055	2,055
1991	22,635	2,165	2,081	2,044
1992	22,063	2,221	2,050	2,022

Sir Ralph Howell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will give the average price of imported wheat into the United Kingdom for each year since 1979, showing the quantity of all imported wheat in each of these years.

Mr. Jack: The information sought on United Kingdom imports of wheat is as follows:

	Weight 000's Metric Tonnes	*Value £million*	*Average Price Per Metric Tonne £*
1979	2,601	257	98·63
1980	2,256	233	103·12
1981	1,772	208	117·51
1982	1,554	182	117·12
1983	1,326	180	135·86
1984	1,123	168	149·90
1985	1,614	230	142·60
1986	1,708	236	138·32
1987	1,719	224	130·16
1988	1,641	222	135·08
1989	859	124	144·80
1990	873	109	124·65
1991	746	96	128·98
1992	1,276	182	142·83

Source: Central Statistical Office.

Agricultural Support

Sir Ralph Howell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what has been the total of moneys received from the European Economic Community, in connection with agricultural support, subsidies or intervention payments of any kind, in each year since accession; and what has been the net cost of agricultural support, both national and community, after allowing for the moneys received from the European Economic Community.

Mr. Jack: Figures showing receipts from the EC budget and total United Kingdom public expenditure on agriculture in each year since 1972-73 are given in the table. The figures on total public expenditure include spending on the common agricultural policy; this is funded in the first place by the Exchequer and subsequently reimbursed, partly or in full, from the EC budget. The United Kingdom contributes to this reimbursement through its payments to the EC budget; as a net contributor the United Kingdom contributes more to the EC budget than it receives back.

Financial year	*United Kingdom receipts from the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund*[1] *£ million*	*Public expenditure in the United Kingdom under the CAP and on national grants and subsidies £ million*
1972-73	0·3	267
1973-74	77	392
1974-75	170	495
1975-76	260	512
1976-77	169	378
1977-78	169	460
1978-79	329	537
1979-80	412	677
1980-81	606	1,012
1981-82	742	972
1982-83	805	1,433
1983-84	1,221	1,729
1984-85	1,203	1,712
1985-86	1,282	2,165
1986-87	1,481	1,449
1987-88	1,128	1,630

Financial year	United Kingdom receipts from the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund[1] £ million	Public expenditure in the United Kingdom under the CAP and on national grants and subsidies £ million
1988-89	1,597	1,380
1989-90	1,229	1,258
1990-91	1,636	1,910
1991-92	1,810	1,959
[2]1992-93	1,683	2,066

Sources: Annual review of agriculture 1972 to 1987; Agriculture in the United Kingdom 1988 to 1992.

[1] Receipts do not always relate to expenditure in the year to which they are received.

[2] Forecast.

Sir Ralph Howell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will give the total net cost to the Exchequer of support for agriculture and the common agricultural policy, after deducting any relevant refunds and grants received in each year since 1990-91; and if she will also show the amount per head of the population of the United Kingdom which this net figure represents.

Mr. Jack: Figures showing the cost to the Exchequer of total agricultural support and of the CAP in the United Kingdom, since 1990-91, globally and per head of population, are shown in the table. Expenditure on the CAP is funded in the first place by the Exchequer and subsequently reimbursed, partly or in full, from the EC budget. The United Kingdom contributes to this reimbursement through its payments to the EC budget; as a net contributor the United Kingdom contributes more to the EC budget than it receives back.

	1990-91 Expenditure £ million	£/head[1]	1991-92 Expenditure £ million	£/head[1]	1992-93 Expenditure (estimate) £ million	£/head[1]
Exchequer expenditure on the CAP in the United Kingdom	1,849	32	1,871	32	1,993	34
Receipts from the EC in relation to agriculture[2]	1,636	28	1,810	31	1,683	29
Total Exchequer expenditure on agricultural grants and subsidies (EC and National)	1,910	33	1,959	34	2,066	36
Cost to the Exchequer of the United Kingdom's net contribution to the total Community budget (all EC expenditure including agriculture)[3]	2,185	38	943	16	2,100	36

Sources:
Agriculture in the United Kingdom 1992.
1992 Departmental Report of the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Department.
OPCS 1993 Annual Abstract of Statistics and Monthly Digest of Statistics (July 1993).

[1] 1990-91 population based on the OPCS 1990 population figure, 1991-92 and 1992-93 based on the OPCS 1991 population figure.

[2] Receipts do not always relate to expenditure in the year to which they are received.

[3] The bulk of contributions (excluding duties and levies) are based on estimates of domestic GNP, agreed well before the start of the year in question. A difference invariably arises between estimates and outturn figures, and adjustments to contributions are made in following year to correct over/under payments; this leads to consequential correction to the abatement in the year after that. The net contribution is subject to considerable variation as a result of this process.

Food Prices

Sir Ralph Howell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the average price paid to producers for *(a)* wheat, *(b)* beef, *(c)* milk, *(d)* eggs and *(e)* pork in 1960, 1979, 1980 and in each year since 1990, in actual prices, at constant 1960 prices and at constant 1990 prices.

Mr. Jack: The following table shows the average price paid to producers for wheat in the years 1960, 1979, 1980 and each year since 1990. The actual prices and the prices deflated by the retail prices index are given.

Year	Average price (£/tonne)	RPI (January 1987=100)	Price deflated by RPI
1960	27·43	12·6	217·34
1979	96·06	56·6	169·58
1980	99·30	66·8	148·57
1990	109·77	126·1	87·04
1991	116·46	133·5	87·24
1992	121·52	138·5	87·75

Sir Ralph Howell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what has been the price of *(a)* bread and *(b)* wheat in each year since 1988, with the annual increases in actual terms and real terms.

Mr. Jack: The information requested is given in the table.

	Average price	Percentage change from previous year (actual)	Percentage change from previous year (in real terms)[1]
Bread—large white sliced loaf	(pence/loaf)		
1988	46	+6·3	+1·3
1989	49	+5·0	−2·5
1990	50	+2·6	−6·3
1991	53	+6·3	+0·4
1992	54	+0·9	−2·7
Breadmaking wheat	(£/tonne ex-farm)		
1988	115·00	−9·7	−13·9
1989	110·50	−3·9	−10·8
1990	114·50	+3·6	−5·3
1991	126·40	+10·4	+4·3
1992	135·40	+7·1	+3·3

[1] Deflated by All Items RPI.

Sir Ralph Howell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the average price to the consumer of *(a)* a pint of milk, *(b)* a 2lb loaf of bread and *(c)* a pint of beer in 1970, 1980 and in each year since 1990.

Mr Jack: The annual averages of the prices used for calculating the retail prices index are given in the table.

Annual average price (pounds)

	Bread (800g white sliced loaf)	*Milk (1 pint pasteurised)*	*Beer (1 pint of draught beer)*
1970	0·090	0·047	[1]0·145
1980	0·330	0·160	[1]0·550
1990	0·500	0·310	1·090
1991	0·530	0·320	1·240
1992	0·540	0·340	1·310

[1] Bottled beer

Food and Agricultural Statistics

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how her Department was represented at the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe study group meeting on food and agricultural statistics in Europe held in Geneva on 5 to 9 July.

Mr. Jack: The Ministry was represented by two officials from its economics and statistics group.

Fishing Offences

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will list the names, port of registry, offence and penalties imposed on Spanish-registered ships found guilty in British courts of fishery offences in each year since 1991.

Mr. Jack: Since 1991 there have been six successful prosecutions against Spanish-registered fishing vessels. The details are as follows:

Vessel	*Port of Registry*	*Offence*	*Penalty*
1992			
Cantero Cuadrado	Gijon	Fishing without authority within British Fishery limits	£30,000 fine plus £60,000 for the value of the catch
Pakea Laurean	La Coruña	Fishing without authority in British Fishery limits	£20,000 fine plus £2,900 for the value of catch
		Use of undersize net	£2,000 fine and forfeiture of net
		Failure to complete logsheet	£1,000 fine
1993			
Vieirasa Neuve	Vigo	Undersize net	£750 fine
		Illegal net construction	£750 fine
Home do Mar	Vigo	Retaining cod[1]	£225 fine
		Failure to record cod in logbook	£90 fine
		Retaining undersized hake	£135 fine
		Retaining undersized megrim	£360 fine and £2,000 for the value of the catch plus costs of £1,000
Capredi Dos	San Sebastian	Retaining haddock[1]	£450 fine
		Retaining cod[1]	£450 fine
		Retaining saithe[1]	£150 fine and £500 for the value of the fish plus costs of £200
Playa de Aldan	Vigo	Illegal net attachment	£480 fine and forfeiture of net
		Retention of undersized megrim	£480 fine plus £1,000 for the value of the fish
		Retention of cod[1]	£600 fine plus £482 for the value of the fish
		Failure to record cod in EC logbook	£600 fine
		Under recording of megrim	£300 fine
		Under recording of hake	£300 fine
		Under recording of anglers	£300 fine
		Other	£600 for costs

[1] Spain does not have quotas for these species in the area of capture.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food is she will make it her policy to revoke or suspend British fishing licences on vessels found guilty in British or Irish courts of having a secret fish room, using undersized mesh nets, landing undersize fish or related offences.

Mr. Jack: Powers to revoke or suspend fishing licences under the Sea Fish (Conservation) Act 1992 can be used only in respect of breaches of licence conditions, for example, overfishing, or the failure to carry a logbook. The infringements mentioned in the question would not breach the conditions in any existing UK licences.

Agricultural Products

Sir Ralph Howell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the level of United Kingdom self-sufficiency in all agricultural products in 1979, 1985 and each year since 1990.

Mr. Jack: The information requested is set out in the following table.

Self-sufficiency

Per cent.

	All food and feed	*All indigenous food and feed*
[1]1979	56·9	71·4
[1]1985	60·1	79·3
[2]1990	56·5	72·1
[2]1991	57·9	73·7
[2]1992	56·5	72·1

Source:

[1] Annual Review of Agriculture 1981 and 1987.

[2] Agriculture in the United Kingdom 1992.

Northmoor Pumping Station

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what cost-benefit assessment of the proposal to replace the pumps at Northmoor pumping station has been carried out; what options were assessed and what was the benefit-cost ratio of each of the options.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 26 July 1993]:* The National Rivers Authority Wessex region carried out a cost-benefit assessment of its proposals to replace the pumps at Northmoor pumping station in accordance with prevailing Ministry guidelines. The three main options considered by the NRA were: installation of single speed pumps in the existing station; construction of a new station; and installation of new variable speed pumps in the existing station. The implications of taking no action were also considered. The quantifiable benefit: cost ratios of the three options were as follows:

	ratios
Single speed pumps in existing station	1·5:1
New station	1·2:1
Variable speed pumps in existing station	1·3:1

The last-mentioned option was the one put forward by the NRA as this gave the added gain of environmental benefits, by eliminating extreme fluctuations in controlled water levels.

Sugar

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the price in pound per tonne of raw bulk sugar in the United Kingdom in each month since August 1992.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 27 July 1993]:* Raw beet sugar is not generally traded. Raw cane sugar is imported at about the intervention price for raw sugar, which was 439·40 ecu per tonne for 1992-93—equivalent to £412 at current exchange rates.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 19 October 1993

ENVIRONMENT

Partnerships for Change

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the initiatives launched and outcome of the Partnerships for Change conference held in Manchester on 20 to 22 September; and if he will place in the Library a copy of his speech made to the conference.

Mr. Yeo: We are preparing a Partnerships in Practice guide to reflect the exchange of experience which took place at the Partnerships for Change conference and to draw out lessons about achieving sustainable development through partnership. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has arranged for a copy of his speech to the conference to be placed in the Library.

Energy Conservation

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representation Her Majesty's Government had at the symposium on the environmental benefits of energy conservation organised by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe in Moscow on 20 to 24 September.

Mr. Yeo: Four representatives from the United Kingdom energy efficiency industry were present at the symposium in Moscow on 20 to 24 September. There was no official from Her Majesty's Government present, but officials from the Energy Efficiency Office, who have regularly attended steering committee meetings of the UNECE, kept in touch with the United Kingdom industry representatives.

Environment Council

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what matters were discussed and what decisions taken at the Environment Council meeting in Luxembourg on 5 October; and if he will indicate the policy proposals put forward by the United Kingdom and the votes taken on each proposal.

Mr. Yeo: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave yesterday to my hon. Friend the Member for Windsor and Maidenhead (Mr. Trend).

Environment Management

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to meet the Engineering Employers Federation to discuss environmental management strategies.

Mr. Yeo: None, but my officials are in regular contact with the federation.

Environmental Assessment

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what meetings he has had in 1993 with the Environmental Auditors Registration Association; and what further meetings are planned with the EARA and the Institute of Environmental Assessment.

Mr. Yeo: None, but my officials are in regular contact with both organisations.

Leasehold Reform

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects the Advisory Service for Leaseholders seeking to enfranchise or extend their lease under the provisions of the Leasehold Reform, Housing and Urban Development Act 1993, to come into operation.

Sir George Young: The leasehold reform co-ordinating committee has now submitted firm proposals to me for a Leasehold Enfranchisement Advisory Service for England and Wales and I am urgently considering its request for Government financial assistance. I therefore hope to be able to make an announcement about the commencement of this service very shortly.

Transport and Security Services Division

Mr. Knapman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made towards establishing the transport and security services division of his Department as an executive agency.

Sir George Young: I am pleased to announce that the agency, which will be called Security Facilities Executive (SAFE), was established on 15 October 1993. It incorporates all the functions carried out by transport and security services division (TSSD) which comprised custody services, Government car service, interdispatch service, security furniture services and special services group. The divisional director, John King, has been appointed the chief executive following an open competition.

The aim and objectives of the agency are set our in a framework document, copies of which will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses. By setting demanding and realistic targets each year, I will be encouraging SAFE to maintain and improve its existing standards of performance. I am confident that the agency will rise to the challenge and continue to enhance the value for money that it offers whilst maintaining its enviable standards of excellence.

For 1993-94, the following have been set for the agency:

Category	*Measure*	*Target*
Financial	Outturn on the vote	A surplus of £1·8 million
	Outturn on net running costs	A deficit of £1·1 million
	Outturn on cost recovery in accruals terms	99 per cent.
Efficiency	Unit costs	No increase in real terms
Quality of Service	Regular customer surveys	Average rating of "good" or higher
Environment	Vehicle fuel efficiency	Annual average of 24 miles per gallon

Recycling

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made as to the proportion of *(a)* plastics, *(b)* paper, *(c)* steel and *(d)* glass produced each year since 1980, which has subsequently been recycled.

Mr. Yeo *[holding answer 18 October 1993]:* The following table, drawn mainly from the Department of the Environment's "Digest of Environmental Protection and Water Statistics", shows the known amounts recycled since 1980 (as a percentage of consumption):

per cent

	Plastics	*Paper and Board*	*Steel Cans*	*Glass*
1980	[1]—	29	—	2
1981	[1]—	28	—	3
1982	[1]—	27	—	4
1983	[1]—	25	—	7
1984	[1]—	26	—	9
1985	[1]—	27	—	13
1986	[1]—	27	—	12
1987	[1]—	26	—	14
1988	[1]—	26	8	16
1989	[1]—	27	8	17
1990	2	31	9	20
1991	5	32	10	21
1992	6	32	12	26

[1] Not available.

Packaging

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what measures are being taken by his Department to encourage the use of reduced quantities of *(a)* metals, *(b)* plastic and *(c)* paper in packaging; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo *[holding answer 18 October 1993]:* Over the past two years the Government have been conducting intensive discussions with a range of industries, including the packaging industry, to see what measures can be taken to reduce unnecessary packaging and improve the recycling rates of different packaging materials.

On 27 July we invited all sections of the packaging industry—manufacturers and fillers of packaging and retailers—to draw up a plan for raising current levels of recovery to between 50 and 75 per cent. by the year 2000.

We are asking these businesses collectively to take their share of responsibility for what happens to packaging once it has served its original purpose, while at the same time minimising the use of packaging wherever possible and encouraging reuse wherever practicable.

We have set five objectives which any industry plan must meet:

First, there needs to be an effective organisation, spanning all the relevant business sectors, which can both draw up a plan and put it into action;

Secondly, there needs to be a commitment by business to meet the costs of new collection and processing capacity and of developing a mechanism for raising the necessary finances;

Thirdly, against the background of a build up in capacity to increase recovery levels to between 50 and 70 per cent. by the year 2000, to expand collection and processing capacity within the next year,

Fourthly, to encourage industry to increase demand for recycled material where it meets the appropriate standards;

Fifthly, to safeguard recycling infrastructure for plastic and paper and board, which are currently threatened by subsidised foreign imports.

We have invited leading figures in the industry to report back by the end of October on the action which they have taken to help collection and processing operations to continue, especially for waste paper, board and plastics. And we are asking them to present us with an effective plan for meeting all these objectives, before this Christmas.

Copies of two recent DOE press releases (Nos. 519 and 594) setting out our challenge to the packaging industry have been placed in the Library of the House.

Water Services

Mr. Bellingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when Her Majesty's Government intend to publish a response to the water regulator Ian Byatt's paper "Paying For Quality"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: In our document "Water Charges: the Quality Framework", my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and I have today responded to the Director General of Water Services' request for our perspective on the policy context of the review of water company price limits which he intends to complete next summer.

Our safety and environmental standards are already high, but it is right that where necessary they should be further improved to achieve sustainable use of our water. Our privatised companies are already investing £3 billion a year to this end. Their charges are low compared with elsewhere in Europe.

Charges will have to rise to finance further improvements. But they must also be sustainable. We expect that the water companies will continue to make significant efficiency improvements, and the law requires the Director General to be rigorous in identifying the scope for reduced costs.

But we must also strike the right balance between the pace of quality improvements and costs, so that people do not face excessive increases in bills in the short term. In Europe and at home, we have to ask whether our priorities are right, whether benefits justify costs, and whether today's consumers are being asked unnecessarily to pay for long-term benefits.

For our part, we shall look hard at costs in deciding how and when we place further obligations on water companies. We propose to make it a duty for the Environment Agency to do this. Meanwhile we expect the National Rivers Authority and the drinking water inspectorate to do so when they are not legally precluded from taking costs into account.

The Government are also inviting their EC partners to re-examine priorities, for example, in the detailed implementation of the urban waste water treatment directive, so as to focus on the most immediate environmental concerns. The European Commission has already begun a much-needed review of the drinking water directive and we welcome its assurance that its proposals will be fully costed in relation to the likely benefits.

The Director General sought certainty about the obligations that water companies would have to meet in the period 1995-2005. Such certainty facilitates efficiency and cost-reduction. But it is not reasonable to expect society to place itself under a 10-year moratorium on health, safety and environmental improvements: if, for example, a serious risk to health comes to light, we could not take immediate action. But price limits do not need to take account of possible obligations which have not yet been decided upon.

A copy of the response has been placed in the Library.

DEFENCE

Gulf Battle Honours

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold) of 24 February, *Official Report*, columns *657-58*, if he will make a statement as to which regiments and corps of the Army and squadrons of the RAF will be able to include the Gulf campaign in their battle honours.

Mr. Hanley: Her Majesty the Queen has graciously approved the award of the theatre honour "Gulf 1991" and the battle honours "Wadi al Batin" and "Western Iraq" to the Army regiments and corps listed. Her Majesty has also approved the emblazonment of the theatre honour "Gulf 1991" on the colours, standards, or guidons of those regiments and corps awarded this honour.

Her Majesty the Queen has also graciously approved the award of the battle honour "Gulf 1991" to the squadrons of the Royal Air Force listed. Squadrons which were involved in direct confrontation with the enemy and demonstrated gallantry and spirit under fire have been awarded the battle honour "Gulf 1991" with the right to emblazon the honour on their standards. Squadrons which operated in theatre and contributed to operations against the enemy have been awarded the battle honour "Gulf 1991" without the right to emblazon the honour on their standards.

Her Majesty the Queen has also graciously approved the retrospective award of the theatre honour "Falkland Islands 1982" to the Army Air Corps for its part in the Falklands campaign.

Army Regiments and Corps awarded the Theatre Honour "Gulf 1991" with the right of Emblazonment

The Life Guards
1st The Queen's Dragoon Guards
The Royal Scots Dragoon Guards (Carabiniers and Greys)
The Queen's Royal Irish Hussars
14th/20th King's Hussars
16th/5th The Queen's Royal Lancers
Grenadier Guards
Coldstream Guards
Scots Guards
The Royal Scots (The Royal Regiment)
The Royal Regiment of Fusiliers
The Royal Highland Fusiliers (Princess Margaret's Own Glasgow and Ayrshire Regiment)
The King's Own Scottish Borderers
The Staffordshire Regiment (The Prince of Wales's)
Queen's Own Highlanders (Seaforth and Camerons)
Special Air Service Regiment
Army Air Corps

Army Regiments and Corps awarded the Battle Honour "Wadi al Batin"

The Life Guards
1st The Queen's Dragoon Guards
The Royal Scots Dragoon Guards (Carabiniers and Greys)
The Queen's Royal Irish Hussars
14th/20th King's Hussars
16th/5th The Queen's Royal Lancers
Grenadier Guards
The Royal Scots (The Royal Regiment)
The Royal Regiment of Fusiliers
The Staffordshire Regiment (The Prince of Wales's)
Army Air Corps

Army Regiment awarded the Battle Honour "Western Iraq"

Special Air Service Regiment

Royal Air Force Squadrons awarded the Battle Honour "Gulf 1991", with the right of Emblazonment

Number 1 Squadron Royal Air Force Regiment	Scorpion/Spartan
Number 2 Squadron	Tornado GR1a
Number 6 Squadron	Jaguar
Number 7 Squadron	Helicopter SF
Number 9 Squadron	Tornado GR1
Number 12 Squadron	Buccaneer
Number 13 Squadron	Tornado GR1a
Number 14 Squadron	Tornado GR1
Number 15 Squadron	Tornado GR1
Number 16 Squadron	Tornado GR1
Number 17 Squadron	Tornado GR1
Number 18 Squadron	Helicopter SH
Number 20 Squadron	Tornado GR1
Number 27 Squadron	Tornado GR1
Number 31 Squadron	Tornado GR1
Number 33 Squadron	Helicopter SH
Number 41 Squadron	Jaguar
Number 54 Squadron	Jaguar
Number 208 Squadron	Buccaneer
Number 230 Squadron	Helicopter SH
Number 617 Squadron	Tornado GR1

Royal Air Force Squadrons awarded the Battle Honour "Gulf 1991", without the right of Emblazonment

Number 10 Squadron	VC10 AT
Number 20 Squadron Royal Air Force Regiment	Rapier
Number 24 Squadron	Hercules AT
Number 26 Squadron Royal Air Force Regiment	Rapier
Number 29 Squadron	Tornado F3
Number 30 Squadron	Hercules AT
Number 32 Squadron	AT/Comms
Number 34 Squadron Royal Air Force Regiment	Field/Ground Defence
Number 42 Squadron	Nimrod Maritime
Number 43 Squadron	Tornado F3
Number 47 Squadron	Hercules AT
Number 51 Squadron	Nimrod (R)
Number 51 Squadron Royal Air Force Regiment	Field/Ground Defence
Number 55 Squadron	AAR
Number 58 Squadron Royal Air Force Regiment	Field/Ground Defence
Number 66 Squadron Royal Air Force Regiment	Rapier
Number 70 Squadron	Hercules AT
Number 101 Squadron	AAR
Number 120 Squadron	Nimrod Maritime
Number 201 Squadron	Nimrod Maritime
Number 206 Squadron	Nimrod Maritime
Number 216 Squadron	AT/AAR

TRANSPORT

Manchester Airport Rail Link

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has had from the chairman of the Greater Manchester passenger transport authority in regard to the Manchester airport rail link-southern spur; what reply he is sending; what action he is taking; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: I have had a number of discussions with Councillor Clarke about the funding of this scheme. I understand that Manchester airport has now agreed to underwrite the expenditure needed for the scheme to go ahead.

M1/M62 Link Road

Mrs. Peacock: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the proposed M1/M62 link road.

Mr. MacGregor: Public consultation on proposals for an M1/M62 link road was held between February and June 1992. From the responses it became clear that earlier concern to achieve the economic benefits which were expected to derive from the introduction of a new road into the corridor was no longer a predominant local concern.

At the same time I have been making it clear that the road programme should, wherever possible, be concentrated on widening and improving the existing network rather than building new motorways. Each scheme has to be judged on its merits but here there is opportunity to pursue a solution which avoids driving a new route through green fields.

I have therefore decided not to proceed with development of plans for a new road but to investigate the possibilities for increasing the capacity of the relevant lengths of the two motorways.

Docklands Light Railway

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when a start will be made on construction of the docklands light railway extension to Greenwich and Lewisham.

Sir George Young: I have been asked to reply.

The Department of the Environment is responsible for the docklands light railway. While the private sector has already shown a welcome interest in building and running the Lewisham extension, we must ensure that proposals are consistent with our manifesto pledge to consider the best means of privatising the DLR as a whole.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Value Added Tax

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list for each relevant tax year the revenue he has derived from VAT relating to *(a)* building repairs, *(b)* non-domestic building and *(c)* civil engineering projects, with any convenient breakdown into category; and what is his estimate in each case of the consequential increase in price to the immediate client or consumer, and the approximate and total effect of such charges on (i) the retail price index and (ii) the rate of inflation.

Sir John Cope: When the tax regime for construction, buildings and land was revised on 1 April 1989 the increase in revenue was calculated to be £310 million in 1989-90 and £400 million in 1990-91. Since then no further revenue calculations have been made. The

assumption made at the time was that changes in VAT would have been fully passed on to clients. Since the clients affected by the tax changes were businesses the direct effect on the RPI and therefore on the rate of inflation would have been negligible and in any case is not possible to calculate.

SCOTLAND

Local Government Reorganisation

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will meet the regional council directors of police and fire services to discuss the implications for police and fire services arising out of the reorganisation of Scottish local government; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 18 October 1993]:* While my right hon. Friend has no immediate plans to meet officials of police and fire authorities to discuss the implications of local government reorganisation for these services, my noble and learned Friend the Minister of State has discussed the question of reorganisation with representatives of police authorities and forces at a meeting of the Police Advisory Board for Scotland. Scottish Office officials meet chief constables and firemasters regularly to discuss police and fire service matters. The existing number of police forces and fire brigades will be retained after reorganisation.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Security Equipment

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the guidelines or regulations applying to imports and exports of electro shock equipment.

Mr. Needham: The only export regulation for which I am responsible which applies to what might be regarded as "electro shock" equipment is the Export of Goods (Control) Order 1992. Under head 5001 *(d)* export without a licence is prohibited in respect of portable anti-riot devices for administering an electric shock or an incapacitating substance, and specialised components therefor. Under head 5001 *(f)* there is a similar prohibition in respect of riot control vehicles which have been specially designed or modified to be electrified to repel boarders. So far as imports are concerned, any weapon which is designed or adapted to emit an electric shock against another person would be regarded as a prohibited weapon under section 5(1) *(b)* of the Firearms Acts 1968-1992. Import of such weapons is restricted to those persons legally authorised to hold them in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what guidelines or regulations are applicable to exporters in respect of *(a)* manufacture and export of dum dum bullets, *(b)* export of tear gas, *(c)* design and construction of prisons for overseas Governments, *(d)* security equipment such as vehicles for overseas Governments and *(e)* Frag 12 exploding ammunition; and what particular guidance is given in respect of (i) Israel, (ii) other middle east Governments, (iii) Pakistan and (iv) Thailand.

Mr. Needham: Under the Export of Goods (Control) Order 1992, the export to any destination of ammunition, tear gas and certain vehicles and related equipment for military or paramilitary police use is prohibited without a licence from the Secretary of State. I have no responsibility for regulations in respect of the design and construction of prisons for overseas Governments, other than where goods controlled by the order are to be exported from the United Kingdom as part of such projects. In terms of these export controls my Department gives no specific guidance in respect of the countries mentioned by the hon. Member: guidance in respect of weapons of mass destruction is available in a booklet "Non-Proliferation Controls", a copy of which is in the Library of both Houses. Each export licence application is considered on its merits.

Compliance Cost Assessments

Mr. Jenkin: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what arrangements have been made to publish compliance cost assessments to show the cost impact on business of complying with proposals for legislation.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: It has been the Government's standard practice since 1 April to prepare and publish compliance cost assessments (CCA) for all legislative proposals which impact on business. We have now agreed formal procedures with the House authorities for doing so as follows:

In the case of primary legislation the CCA will form part of the explanatory memorandum to the Bill.

In the case of statutory instruments laid in draft before the House the CCA will form part of the published text of the draft instrument as a separate annex.

In the case of statutory instruments made without having been laid in draft the CCA will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses when the instrument is laid after having been made and a note that a CCA is available and where it can be obtained from included in the explanatory note.

In the case of private Members' Bills, where the Government consider it is appropriate to prepare a CCA it will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

In the case of private Bills the Government are still considering how the system can be extended to such Bills.

Patent Office

Mr. Flynn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will set out the arrangements he made for in-house bids for the market-testing programme at the Patent Office.

Mr. McLoughlin: The terms of reference of the market test were set out in a notice to all staff on 6 November 1992, following consultation with the local trade unions. this drew specific attention to the opportunity for making in-house bids.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Redundant Churches

Mr Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will enable denominations to dispose of redundant places of worship to suitable charities for less than full consideration.

Mr. Sproat: My right hon. Friend has today made a direction to this effect under section 4(11) of the Redundant Churches and Other Religious Buildings Act 1969 in favour of the Friends of Friendless Churches. He

made a similar direction in May in favour of the Historic Chapels Trust. Copies of the directions have been placed in the Library and I will arrange for this to be done also for any further such directions that he may make.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Veterinary Medicines Directorate

Mr Spring: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when the annual report and accounts for the Veterinary Medicines Directorate is due to be published.

Mrs Gillian Shepherd: The Veterinary Medicines Directorate annual report and accounts for 1992-93 was published on 29 July 1993. Copies are available in the House Library.

The report charts the continuing progress and success of the directorate as a next steps agency, and I would like to congratulate the chief executive and his staff on their considerable achievements during the year.

Habitat Creation Schemes

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if land put into habitat creation schemes can count towards set-aside quotas.

Mr. Jack: Current EC rules for the arable area payments scheme do not allow land withdrawn from production under any other scheme to count towards a producer's set-aside obligation. However, we are pressing for the rules to be changed to allow arable land which is in future withdrawn from production under agri-environment or forestry schemes to count towards set-aside. This would include land entered into the proposed 20-year habitat scheme and the proposed new nitrate-sensitive areas scheme, as well as the farm woodland premium scheme.

EDUCATION

Centre for Young Musicians

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to his answer of 16 July, *Official Report,* column *673,* what steps he is taking to ensure that children from all inner London boroughs have equal access to the Centre for Young Musicians regardless of parental means.

Mr. Forth: The Department is supporting the central costs of the Centre for Young Musicians at a cost of £100,000 a year for the years 1993-1996. The issue of access is a matter for the centre, relevant local education authorities, self-governing schools and city technology colleges, and parents.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Sir Peter Tapsell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 19 October.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 19 October.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Yugoslavia

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he received from Mr. Vuk Draskovic during their recent meeting on the question of *(a)* sanctions against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and *(b)* Kosovo and its status as part of Serbia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary and I saw Mr. Draskovic during his visit. There was an exchange of views at both meetings about matters relating to the former Yugoslavia, including Kosovo and the effect of sanctions on Serbia and Montenegro.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on what basis Her Majesty's Government issued an invitation to Mr. Vuk Draskovic to visit the United Kingdom recently; in what capacity Mr. Draskovic was invited; what was the cost to United Kingdom public expenditure of the visit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Mr. Draskovic was invited to the United Kingdom in his capacity as leader of the Serbian Renewal Movement (SPO). This was an officially sponsored visit which included Mrs. Draskovic and his private secretary, who is also an SPO deputy. Costs for the visit, excluding air fares which are yet to be finalised, come to £5,688.26.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how often the British embassy in Belgrade checks the purity of tap water; what is the reason for these checks; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The British embassy in Belgrade does not carry out tests on the purity of tap water, but consults the Canadian and United States embassies, which co-ordinate purity reports from the local department of public health. On every occasion these reports have indicated that the water is drinkable.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what precautions British citizens living in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia are advised to take to avoid hazards that arise out of the consumption of tap water contaminated as a result of the breakdown in purification processes.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: None. The British embassy in Belgrade assesses that local water purification processes are functioning normally and has therefore issued no advice to British citizens.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans Her Majesty's Government have to invite elected members of the Opposition or Government of Yugoslavia to Britain in an official capacity.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We hope that the Montenegrin Foreign Minister, Mr. Miodrag Lekic, will pay a short visit to London on 24 and 25 October. There are no plans at present for further visits.

Council of Europe

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the issues discussed and decisions taken at the Council of Europe Special Assembly held in Vienna in early October; and if he will place in the Library a copy of the United Kingdom submission to the Vienna meeting.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The agenda for the Council of Europe summit meeting in Vienna on 8 to 9 October had two broad themes: (I) The role of the Council of Europe in the new Europe and (II) action relating to the strengthening of democracy, respect for human rights and the rule of law.

I shall arrange to place in the Library a copy of the speech made by my right honourable noble and learned Friend the Lord Chancellor who led the British delegation.

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on issues discussed and matters decided at the annual conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna, in regard to nuclear safeguards and proliferation; and if he will place in the Library a copy of the United Kingdom documents submitted to the meeting.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The general conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency had a wide-ranging agenda covering all its activities. The Conference passed resolutions on a number of matters relating to safeguards and non-proliferation including the implementation of the safeguards agreement between the agency and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the implementation of United Nations Security Council resolutions 687, 707 and 715 relating to Iraq. A copy of the statement delivered to the plenary by the United Kingdom representative has been deposited in the Library of the House.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what response Her Majesty's Government have made to the proposals put forward by President Clinton on 27 September concerning the halting by the acknowledged nuclear weapons states of further production and stockpiling of plutonium and highly enriched uranium for military purposes.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: A preliminary meeting has been held at official level with the United States at which they set out their proposal. We shall naturally wish to consider very carefully the implications for our nuclear deterrent of the proposal for a cut-off convention. But we recognise the potentially valuable contribution which a multilateral convention prohibiting the production of plutonium and highly enriched uranium for explosive purposes could make to non-proliferation, and we will want to explore these potential benefits fully and positively in our approach to the issue. We are hopeful of being able to work towards a multilateral agreement of the kind proposed by the United States.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what response Her Majesty's Government have made to the conduct by China of a nuclear test on 5 October.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The Chinese nuclear test on October 5 confirms our belief that the most effective way of restraining nuclear testing is through negotiated and verifiable agreement. We have made clear we do not believe the Chinese test necessarily clouds the prospect for a successful conclusion to comprehensive test ban negotiations, in which we shall seek to play a full and constructive part.

Foreign Affairs Council

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the outcome of the Foreign Affairs Council held on 4 and 5 October.

Mr. Hurd: I attended the Foreign Affairs Council on 4 October. My hon. Friend the Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs also attended.

The Council discussed the Presidency's proposal for a new inter-institutional agreement (IIA) on budget discipline. After addressing the concerns of several delegations, they reached a favourable opinion on the text and joint declarations, and agreed further Council statements. The IIA will be submitted to ECOFIN for confirmation of the Council's agreement.

The Council reached general agreement on detailed arrangements to allow citizens of the union living in a member state of which they are not a national to vote and stand in European elections under the same conditions as nationals of that member state. These arrangements will be finally approved once the Maastricht treaty enters into force.

Sir Leon Brittan reported on his discussions in Washington on 27 September and on progress in the Uruguay round negotiations in Geneva. The Council discussed in detail a number of the non-agricultural dossiers in the negotiations, including textiles, subsidies, steel, civil aircraft, services, including audio-visual services, and the proposed Multilateral Trade Organisation. The Council agreed that the Commission's negotiating position took account of member states' concerns, and invited the Commission to continue with the negotiations. The Council also discussed the Community's trade policy instruments—the Commission is to make proposals for speeding up and making more transparent anti-dumping and countervailing procedures.

Lord Owen and Mr. Stoltenberg briefed Ministers on latest developments in former Yugoslavia following the Bosnian Parliament's rejection of the peace plan. Ministers agreed that the EC should urge all the parties to return to the negotiating table, while preserving those elements of the peace plan already agreed. Ministers also discussed Community assistance to the middle east peace process, on the basis of Commission proposals for a package of medium-term assistance to the region and for an updated agreement with Israel. Ministers agreed that both proposals should be remitted for expert-level study.

The Council discussed the Commission's opinions on the applications of Malta and Cyprus to join the Community. The Council broadly endorsed the opinions'

conclusions, and in particular the Commission's plans to begin talks with Cyprus and Malta to help them prepare for accession negotiations.

The Council again considered the draft regulation on dual-use goods—those goods which could have either a civilian or a military purpose. Ministers reiterated their wish to see progress made which accommodated member states' concerns, and asked officials to undertake further work.

Ministers signed new association agreements with the Czech Republic and Slovakia. These replace the association agreement signed with the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic in December 1991.

The situation in Russia was also discussed, and the Council issued a statement of support for President Yeltsin.

The Commission presented a paper on the Community's future relations with Switzerland. It was agreed that this would be discussed at the next Foreign Affairs Council in November.

Meetings were held with Austria, Finland, Norway and Sweden. The meeting registered agreement on a range of issues and took stock of progress so far. There will be further ministerial meetings with all four applicants next month.

Ministers also confirmed their decision made informally in New York earlier in the week in response to Nelson Mandela's call for the easing of sanctions, to lift some sanctions against South Africa. The Community will keep remaining sanctions under review.

The Commission formally presented to Ministers the first draft mandate for negotiations with African, Caribbean and Pacific countries on the mid-term review of the Lomé convention, which governs aid and trade with much of the developing world. The Community will consider its position over the next few months, before entering negotiations with the beneficiary countries in early 1994.

The Council also approved the Commission's negotiating mandate for an EC trade and co-operation agreement with Vietnam.

The Council agreed arrangements for publishing Council votes to follow up the Edinburgh European Council's decisions on openness. Specifically, the Council decided, by seven votes to five—United Kingdom, Belgium, Denmark, Luxembourg and the Netherlands—on a procedure which requires that decisions to publish are proposed by a member state and that a simple majority is required to block publication.

EMPLOYMENT

Labour Statistics

12. **Mr. Kynoch:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of people becoming unemployed return to employment within a month, three months, and six months, according to the latest available figures.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Of those becoming claimant unemployed about a quarter leave unemployment within a month, almost half within three months and nearly two thirds within six months. The majority leaving claimant unemployment go into jobs.

17. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the number of *(a)* men and *(b)* women registered as unemployed in the Greater London area on 1 October.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Claimant unemployment figures for 14 October will be published on 18 November.

Jobplan Workshops

14. **Mr. Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the operation of jobplan workshops.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The jobplan programme was launched in March of this year. By the 24 September 131,842 people had completed a jobplan workshop. More than 90 per cent. are leaving with a positive course of action to follow.

Enterprise Allowance

15. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people benefited from the enterprise allowance in 1992-93; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: The enterprise allowance scheme was replaced by the business start-up scheme in April 1991. In Great Britain, in 1992-93 some 41,000 people were helped to start a business.

Public Sector Recruitment

16. **Mr. David Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to rationalise recruitment services in jobs in the public sector.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Department has no plans for such rationalisation at present.

Manufacturing Industry, Wales

18. **Mr. Alex Carlile:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people were employed in manufacturing industry in Wales in 1983 and at the latest available date.

Miss Widdecombe: There were 213,000 employees in employment in manufacturing industry in Wales in June 1983 and 203,000 in June 1993.

Wage Levels

19. **Mr. Simpson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many workers in the east midlands earn half or less than half of the male median wage.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: We estimate that there are about 288,000 such workers.

Working Week

20. **Mr. Robathan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what recent representations his Department has received on the EC proposals for a 48-hour week.

Mr. David Hunt: Since the Social Affairs Council reached a common position on the working time directive in June, my Department has received many representations

welcoming the important improvements that we have secured, while supporting the Government's decision to challenge the basis of the directive in the European Court of Justice.

Jobclubs

21. **Sir Fergus Montgomery:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to extend the jobclub scheme in the north West; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: There are currently 188 jobclubs in the North West. The number of people helped through jobclubs in the North West in 1992-93 was 31,530. There are 35,235 jobclub places available in 1993-94. Plans have not yet been made for 1994-95.

Casual Workers

22. **Mr. Etherington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many casual workers he estimates there are in each of the standard regions of the United Kingdom.

Miss Widdecombe: The Labour Force Survey provides quarterly estimates of the numbers of employees in casual employment. The latest available figures are shown in the following table:

Number of employees in casual jobs Spring 1993
(not seasonally adjusted)

Thousands

Standard Region	*Casual employment*
South East	95
Greater London	29
Rest of South East	67
East Anglia	12
South West	21
West Midlands	28
East Midlands	20
Yorks and Humberside	27
North West	23
North	14
Wales	15
Scotland	19
Northern Ireland	[1]—
United Kingdom	279

Source: Labour Force Survey.
[1] Estimates below 10,000 not shown.

Northern Region

23. **Mr. Byers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what steps he is taking to increase employment in the Northern region.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Department's aim is to promote a free and flexible labour market to encourage employment in the Northern region as elsewhere. The Employment Service and the five Northern training and enterprise councils deliver a wide range of employment, enterprise and training programmes to help unemployed people in the Northern region find the best and quickest route back to employment.

Equal Opportunities

24. **Mrs. Helen Jackson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what progress he has made on achieving equality of opportunity in employment regardless of gender or ethnic background.

Miss Widdecombe: The Government are committed to equality of opportunity. The best employers already recognise the case for employing a work force which reflects the composition of the wider community. The Department continues to encourage all employers to make full use of the skills and potential of all sections of the working population.

Company Agreements

25. **Mr. Roy Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received from trade unions concerning decisions of major firms to abrogate previous agreements.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Government believe that employers must be free to decide, in the light of the circumstances and needs of their business, whether to bargain with a trade union. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has received a number of representations on this subject. We remain convinced that the voluntary approach is best.

School Leavers

26. **Mr. Raynsford:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many 1993 school leavers within the Greater London area are currently unemployed; how many 1992 school leavers are still unemployed; and what percentage each represents of the total number of school leavers each year.

Miss Widdecombe: Information is available only for 1992 and shows that while 7 per cent. of 16 and 17-year-old school leavers in Greater London became unemployed, more than 90 per cent. went into further education or employment.

Training for Work

27. **Mr. Hunter:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a further statement on the implementation of training for work.

Miss Widdecombe: Training for work began on 29 March and was warmly welcomed by TECs for the flexibilities that it gives them in helping long-term unemployed people. The programme provides attractive training opportunities and at July there were 137,000 taking part.

28. **Dr. Lynne Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many women workers in the west midlands earn half or less than half of the male median wage.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: We estimate that there are around 245,000 such workers.

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment he has made of the training for work programme; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: The national follow-up survey shows significant increases in the proportions of employment training leavers going into jobs and gaining qualifications. These improved results, together with the additional flexibilities we have built into training for work, show that our adult measures are effective.

Sellafield

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the latest health and safety report on Sellafield.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The latest report published on health and safety at Sellafield was about an investigation into a higher than normal aerial discharge of radioactivity from the B204 ventilation stack. The report concludes that the potential doses to the public were very low.

Employment Service

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he has completed his review of the Employment Service's framework document; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: The Employment Service has been a next steps agency since 2 April 1990. My Department recently completed a review of the agency's existing framework document, in accordance with the Government's commitment to evaluate next steps agencies. The new framework document was published on 1 October and I placed copies in the Library on that date.

Social Affairs Council

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the outcome of the EC Social Affairs Council held on 12 October.

Mr. David Hunt: I and the Minister of State for Employment attended the meeting of the Labour and Social Affairs Council on 12 October in Luxembourg.

The main discussion took place on the draft directive on the protection of young workers. I made it clear that, while the United Kingdom already has strict regulation to protect the health and safety of young workers, the Government could not accept unnecessary restrictions which would prevent the continuation of well-established and harmless patterns of work for young people below minimum school leaving age such as paperboys and girls. Nor could we accept special restrictions on the working hours of 16 and 17-year-olds which were not related to genuine health and safety needs.

In the event, the Council reached agreement at a political level on significant changes to the draft directive to reflect the United Kingdom's concerns. The United Kingdom Government will not be required to implement key parts of articles 8 and 9 of the draft directive dealing with daily and weekly hours of work, and restrictions on night work, for 16 and 17-year-olds for a period of four years after the directive is implemented—that is, a total of six years from final adoption. This exemption is renewable at the end of this period by a Council decision on the basis of a report from the Commission. The agreement reached also ensures that young people below school leaving age can continue, as now, to undertake light work such as newspaper deliveries from the age of 13.

This settlement is a satisfactory one for the United Kingdom, reflecting recognition by the Community of our high standard of health and safety provision overseen by the Health and Safety Commission and our particular national traditions.

The Council also discussed the draft directive on European Works Councils for which unanimity is required. We made it clear that the United Kingdom Government would, if necessary, vote against the text under discussion which is opposed by employers throughout Europe as being unnecessary, unworkable and damaging to European competitiveness. The Belgian Presidency noted that the draft directive would be taken forward by the other 11 member states under the social protocol provisions of the Maastricht treaty once these are in force.

There was also a brief discussion on the draft directive on non-standard employment, which requires unanimity. It was apparent that a number of member states had problems with the existing text and the Presidency decided that further consideration needed to be given to the draft directive before it could be further considered by the Council.

Finally, Commissioner Flynn made a brief presentation on the contents of his forthcoming Green Paper on the Future of European Social Policy and outlined a Commission proposal for a decision on a programme to combat social exclusion.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Employment Rights

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what further steps he will adopt to create equality of opportunity between the two main religious traditions in employment in the light of the report from the census 1991.

Mr. Atkins: Equality of opportunity in employment is a central objective of the Fair Employment Act (NI) 1989 which established the Fair Employment Commission and the Fair Employment Tribunal. A comprehensive review of employment equality is to be undertaken in 1995 by the Central Community Relations Unit and the consultation process has already begun. It would be premature to draw firm conclusions on the findings of the religion report of the census 1991 which are still being analysed.

Eastern Health and Social Services Board

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the total expenditure, less capital expenditure, of the Eastern health and social services board in each of the past five years; and what proportion of this expenditure was for management and administration in each year.

Mr. Ancram: The information is as follows:

Year	*Total revenue expenditure* £	*Administration as percentage of revenue expenditure*
1987-88	391,887,667	4·76
1988-89	427,129,689	4·80
1989-90	451,324,493	5·15
1990-91	503,603,666	5·59
1991-92	539,250,381	6·55

Roads

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans he has to improve the roads structure in the constituency of South Down with particular reference to the A class roads and the B8—Castlewellan to Newry road; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: In addition to a substantial programme of maintenance work, a number of minor improvement schemes will be completed on the A2, A22, A24, A25 and B8 during the 1993-94 and 1994-95 financial years. Work on the Church street-Scotch street scheme in Downpatrick is currently programmed to start in 1997-98 financial year subject to the completion of the statutory processes and the availability of the necessary funds.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Category A Prisoners

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what changes have been made to the written criteria for selecting prisoners for security category A since 1991; and on what grounds the criteria have been changed.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

' Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated October 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about changes to the criteria for selecting prisoners for security category A since 1991.

The Hadfield/Lakes report of the security audit of custody arrangements for category A prisoners and of an inquiry into DOC1 division noted that only some 20 per cent. of prisoners notified from prisons to Prison Service headquarters as potential category A prisoners were subsequently designated category A. The report concluded that Prison Service headquarters were applying a rigorous selection process but too many prisoners were being submitted by prisons for consideration. They recommended that the referral criteria be reviewed.

This recommendation was accepted. Fresh guidance has been included in the Prison Service manual on security to assist prison staff to identify more readily and selectively those prisoners who, because of the nature and circumstances of their offences or alleged offences, need to be notified to headquarters for consideration for category A.

Prisons

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he proposes to take to establish a more austere regime in prisons.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The Prison Service remains committed to the policy on regimes set out in the White Paper "Custody, Care and Justice". Our aims are to require sentenced prisoners to participate in a demanding, constructive and disciplined regime centred on work training and essential education; to challenge prisoners to confront their offending behaviour and to work with them to reduce the likelihood of their re-offending.

The programme of work to achieve these objectives set out in the corporate and business plans for the Prison Service, copies of which are in the House of Commons library. These include substantial development of regime activities and a continuing programme to improve the physical conditions in prisons.

New Prisons

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) where the six new prisons, recently announced at Blackpool, will be located;

(2) what is his timetable for opening six new prisons; and what is his estimate of the cost in this financial year and in 1994-95.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for these matters has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Alun Michael, dated October 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Questions about the proposals to build six new prisons and the new prison building programme.

The six new prisons to which the Home Secretary referred on 6 October are in addition to the current new prison building programme. The construction of the first two of these prisons was announced in the Autumn statement last year. On 2 September 1993 the Home Secretary announced that the design, construction, management and potential financing of the prisons would be contracted out to the private sector. I expect that the further four prisons which were announced on 6 October will be procured in the same way.

Sites at Fazakerley in Merseyside and at Bridgend in South Wales have been identified for the first two prisons. The proposal to build a prison on the Fazakerley site is the subject of a non-statutory public local inquiry beginning on 26 October 1993. We will be shortly submitting to the local planning authority a Notice of Proposed Development seeking outline planning clearance to build a prison on the site at Bridgend. Work is currently in progress to identify suitable sites for the other four prisons.

If we obtain planning clearance for new prisons on the sites of Fazakerley and Bridgend we expect that the two prisons would open in 1997-98. It is too early to indicate a timetable for the other four prisons.

It is also too early to indicate the cost of six prisons which will be assessed on the basis of value for money obtained for the complete financial package comprising both capital and operating costs. Outline proposals and expressions of interest in the first two prisons will be invited shortly.

Twenty new prisons have opened since 1983 and Doncaster prison is due to open next year. The attached table shows the total cost of constructing each establishment and the main construction firm.

Prison	*Location*	*Date of opening*	*Estimated total cost (includes capital costs, claims and property services agency's resource costs) (£K)*	*Main construction contractor*
Wayland	Thetford, Norfolk	January 1985	22,365	Carters of Norwich
Stocken	Oakham, Leicestershire	June 1985	17,182	Miller Construction
Thorn Cross	Warrington, Cheshire	July 1985	13,014	Shepherd Construction

Prison	Location	Date of opening	Estimated total cost (includes capital costs, claims and property services agency's resource costs) (£K)	Main construction contractor
Full Sutton	Full Sutton, Yorkshire	September 1987	40,020	Monk Construction
Littlehey	Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire	January, 1988	34,002	Bovis Construction
Mount	Bovingdon, Hertfordshire	March 1988	28,185	Wimpey Construction
Garth	Leyland, Lancashire	July 1988	45,110	Tarmac
Swaleside	Isle of Sheppey, Kent	May 1990	33,539	Mowlem
Belmarsh	South East London	April 1991	161,273	Wimpey Construction
Moorland	Hatfield Woodhouse, South Yorkshire	July 1991	55,219	Higgs and Hill
Whitemoor	March, Cambridgeshire	September 1991	54,100	Monk Construction
Brinsford	Featherstone, Staffordshire	November 1991	45,563	Taylor Woodrow
Elmley	Isle of Sheppey, Kent	February 1992	82,782	Mowlem
Bullingdon	Bicester, Oxfordshire	March 1992	64,339	Kier Construction
Wolds	Brough, North Humberside	April 1992	36,880	UK Detention Contractors (Consortium: Mowlem and Sir Robert McAlpine)
Holme House	Stockton-on-Tees, Cleveland	May 1992	66,184	Sir Robert McAlpine
Woodhill	Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire	July 1992	117,753	Higgs and Hill
High Down	Banstead, Surrey	August 1992	91,058	Alfred McAlpine
Lancaster Farms	Lancaster	March 1993	73,150	AMEC
Blakenhurst	Redditch, Worcestershire	May 1993	80,432	Tarmac
Doncaster	South Yorkshire	April 1994	94,730	Shepherd Construction

Parish Constables

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his timetable for implementing his proposal for parish constables; and what is his estimate of the cost in this financial year and in 1994-95.

Mr. Charles Wardle: It is our intention that 20 pilot schemes should be up and running by Christmas. Costs in this financial year should be *de minimis*. No estimate can be made about future costs at this stage.

Police Paperwork

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his timetable for the implementation of each of his 16 recommendations into cutting police paperwork.

Mr. Charles Wardle: My right hon. and learned Friend will publish the consultants' report and recommendations on 20 October. He is keen to see the recommendations in this area implemented as quickly as possible and expects to see substantial progress made in a matter of months. A fuller and more detailed timetable for implementation will require wider discussion between criminal justice system agencies.

DNA Testing

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his timetable for implementing his proposal for new rules on DNA samples; and what is his estimate of the cost in this financial year and in 1994-95.

Mr. Charles Wardle: My right hon. and learned Friend intends to introduce legislation to implement these proposals as soon as a suitable opportunity arises. The timetable thereafter will depend upon the speed of progress which such legislation makes. It is too soon to offer reliable estimates of the costs and savings to which the proposals will give rise.

Cautioning

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will give details of his plans to limit repeat cautioning; what rules will apply; what type of offences will be affected; and what criteria will govern decisions by the Crown Prosecution Service in relation to prosecution or caution;

(2) what is his timetable for implementing his proposal on repeat cautioning and cautioning for indictable offences; and what is his estimate of the cost in this financial year and in 1994-95.

Mr. Maclean: I intend to publish supplementary guidance to the police later this month and to allow interested parties two months in which to comment on it. I shall send a copy of the draft guidance to the hon. Member.

The guidance will leave the police with their existing discretion on whether to caution or prosecute, but it will strongly discourage, save in exceptional circumstances, the use of cautions for the most serious offences or for offenders who have been cautioned previously. In cases of doubt, it will continue to be open to the police to seek advice from the Crown Prosecution Service, whose decision whether prosecution is warranted will be governed by the code for Crown prosecutors.

It is too soon to offer a reliable estimate of the cost implications of these changes.

Police Bail

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what is his timetable for implementing the proposal for police to be allowed to attach conditions to police bail; and what is his estimate of the cost in this financial year and in 1994-95;

(2) what is his timetable for implementing his proposal for automatic custody for anyone convicted of serious offences who is subsequently accused of the same category of crime; and what is his estimate of the cost in this financial year and in 1994-95;

(3) what is his timetable for implementing a new power of arrest for breach of police bail; and what is his estimate of the cost in this financial year and in 1994-95;

(4) what is his timetable for implementation of the proposal to allow courts to revoke bail when new information comes to light; and what is his estimate of the cost in this financial year and in 1994-95.

Mr. Maclean: We intend to introduce legislation to implement these proposals as soon as a suitable opportunity arises. The timetable thereafter will depend upon the speed of progress which such legislation makes. It is too soon to offer a reliable estimate of the costs and savings to which the proposal will give rise.

Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he intends to publish the White Paper on the criminal injuries compensation scheme.

Mr. Maclean: It is intended that a White Paper setting out the Government's plans for the new tariff scheme will be published later this year.

Community Sentence Review

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he proposes to announce the conclusions of the review on community sentences.

Mr. Maclean: This review, originally expected to be concluded at the end of 1994—beginning of 1995, has been expedited for completion by summer 1994. In the meantime, further guidance will be issued to the probation service as and when conclusions are reached on significant matters which need not await full formal publication of the revised standards themselves.

Safer Cities Project

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he intends to announce his decision on the next phase of the safer cities project; and how much it is intended to give to each of the cities named in the new phase.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Ten local authority areas have been shortlisted for the first group of new projects in the second phase of the safer cities programme:

Blackburn
Burnley
Greenwich
Lambeth
Leeds
Manchester
Newcastle
Merthyr Tydfil
Plymouth
Sheffield

We plan to set up at least six new projects before the end of 1993-94.

Organisations with appropriate experience have been invited to bid to manage two or more of these projects. Tenders were invited in response to this invitation on 5 October and are currently being evaluated. My right hon. and learned Friend expects to be in a position to announce decisions about the areas chosen and the successful contractors to run the projects before the end of the year.

The running costs of individual projects will be met by payments to contractors under the terms of the invitation to tender and are subject to the outcome of the evaluation. The size of the grant budget available to these projects for local crime prevention activity has not yet been determined.

Squatters

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his timetable for implementing his proposal for faster court proceedings for evicting squatters; and what is his estimate of the cost in this financial year and in 1994-95.

Mr. Maclean: I intend to introduce legislation to implement this proposal as soon as a suitable opportunity arises. The timetable thereafter will depend upon the speed of progress which such legislation makes. It is too soon to offer reliable estimates of the costs and savings to which the proposal will give rise.

Terrorism

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what is his timetable for implementing his proposal for a new offence of gathering information for terrorist purposes; and what is his estimate of the cost in this financial year and in 1994-95;

(2) what is his timetable for implementing his proposal for a new offence of possession in relation to terrorist activities; and what is his estimate of the cost in this financial year and in 1994-95.

Mr. Howard: I intend to take the earliest legislative opportunity to create new offences of collecting information likely to be useful to terrorists and of possessing items intended for terrorist purposes. There are no resource implications for this financial year. Thereafter they are likely to be minimal.

Victims of Crime

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his timetable for implementing each of the 11 recommendations of the Royal Commission on Criminal Justice on victims of crime; and what is his estimate of the cost in this financial year and in 1994-95.

Mr. Maclean In its report the Royal Commission on Criminal Justice made 19 recommendations to help victims and other witnesses, 11 of which were specifically directed at government and have been accepted.

Some of those recommendations relate to measures which are already in place or are being implemented, while others may require legislation. It is accordingly too soon to set a timetable for implementation or to offer reliable estimates of costs.

New Criminal Legislation

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his timetable for ending the presumption in favour of bail for anyone accused of offending on bail; and what is his estimate of the cost in this financial year and in 1994-95.

Mr. Maclean: I intend to introduce legislation to implement a proposal removing the presumption of a right to bail for those charged with serious offences which appear to have been committed while on bail as soon as

suitable opportunity arises. The timetable thereafter will depend on the speed of progress which such legislation makes. It is too soon to offer a reliable estimate of the costs and savings to which the proposal will give rise.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what is his timetable for allowing retrials where juries have been nobbled; and what is his estimate of the cost in this financial year and in 1994-95;

(2) what is his timetable for implementing a new offence of witness intimidation; and what is his estimate of the cost in this financial year and in 1994-95;

(3) what is his timetable for barring those on bail from serving on juries; and what is his estimate of the cost of this proposal in this financial year and in 1994-95.

Mr. Maclean: We intend to introduce legislation to implement these proposals as soon as a suitable opportunity arises. The timetable thereafter will depend upon the speed of progress which such legislation makes. It is too soon to offer reliable estimates of the costs and savings to which the proposals will give rise.

Right to Silence

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his timetable for abolishing the right to silence; and what is his estimate of the cost in this financial year and in 1994-95.

Mr. Maclean: We intend to introduce legislation to allow adverse inferences to be drawn from a suspect's silence as soon as an opportunity arises. The timetable thereafter will depend upon the speed of progress which such legislation makes. It is too soon to offer reliable estimates of any costs and savings to which this proposal may give rise.

Young Offenders

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many additional secure places he intends to provide *(a)* for 15 and 16-year-olds on remand in fulfilment of his predecessors promise in February 1991, *(b)* for 15 and 16-year-olds on remand in addition to *(a)*, *(c)* for 15 and 16-year-olds sent to secure accommodation by a court following conviction, *(d)* for 10 to 14-year-olds on remand, *(e)* for 10 to 14-year-olds following conviction other than those sentenced to a secure training order and *(f)* for 12 to 14-year-olds made subject to a secure training order.

Mr. Maclean: The provision of local authority secure accommodation is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health. A programme is currently under way to create an additional 60 to 65 places in local authority secure units. This represents the number of new places estimated to be necessary to end the remands of 15 and 16-year-old boys to Prison Service establishments. The estimate is being kept under review.

Courts have no powers to send 15 or 16-year-old juveniles directly to local authority secure accommodation on conviction—although, if the appropriate criteria are met, they may send boys in this age group directly to young offender institutions run by the Prison Service, for whom no additional accommodation is presently required. Similarly, they have no powers to direct the removal of 10 to 14-year-olds to secure accommodation either on remand or following conviction.

The intention is that places in which the custodial element of the proposed secure training order for 12 to 14-year-olds should be served should be provided by agreements with suitable public, voluntary or private organisations. No final decision has been taken on the number of such places to be provided.

Parish Constables

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will outline his job description for a parish constable; what qualifications will be required; and what is the proposed level of pay for the job.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Pilot schemes currently under development will be based on the two most common "blueprints" for parish constables which the publish have suggested. In the "parish special constable" scheme, the parish special constable, like other special constables, will have the power and authority of a police constable and will be expected to provide assistance to the regular police. He or she will be under the operational control of the chief constable, but the parish or local council—or councils, if groups of small parishes are involved—will be consulted on some of the constable's duties through a service agreement between the parish and the chief constable. At this stage we do not propose that the selection criteria, training arrangements and employment conditions of the parish special constables will differ from those already provided for special constables.

In the "parish warden" scheme local parish or town councils will be asked to authorise a volunteer to assist both the community and the police by dispensing crime prevention advice, encouraging local watch schemes, and by acting as a channel for information, warnings and advice. The duties and qualifications of parish wardens will be resolved through discussion between the parish, the volunteer, and the local people.

Stop and Search

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his timetable for implementing his proposal for new stop and search powers for the police to stop terrorists; and what is his estimate of the cost in this financial year and in 1994-95.

Mr. Howard: I intend to seek new powers for the police to stop and search vehicles for counter-terrorist purposes at the earliest legislative opportunity. There are no cost implications for this financial year. Thereafter they would depend upon how the powers were exercised by the police but are unlikely to be significant within the overall budget of police forces.

Criminal Cases Review Authority

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his timetable for the setting up of a Criminal Cases Review Authority; and what is his estimate of the cost in this financial year and in 1994-95.

Mr. Maclean: The Government have accepted the recommendation of the Royal Commission on Criminal Justice for the establishment of a Criminal Cases Review Authority. We have put in hand the detailed preparatory work which will be necessary before the new system can

be put into place. At this stage, however, it is not possible to offer a precise timetable for the introduction of the new arrangements.

The costs of a new authority are one of the matters which are still being considered and it would be premature to offer an estimate of the financial resources that might be required in a particular financial year.

Police Bail

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the type of condition he intends police may apply to police bail.

Mr. Maclean: Under the Bail Act 1976 a court may attach conditions to the grant of bail if it considers that is necessary in order to ensure that, for example, a defendant surrenders to custody, does not commit an offence while on bail, and does not interfere with witnesses or otherwise obstruct the course of justice. I intend the police to be able to attach conditions for similar purposes to bail which they grant. I do not consider it appropriate to specify the precise nature of such conditions, which will vary according to the circumstances of the individual case.

Prisons (Drug Tests)

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his timetable for introducing urine testing for drugs in prison; and what is his estimate of the cost in this financial year and in 1994-95.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Alun Michael, dated 19 October 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about drug urine testing in prisons.

Detailed plans, including a timetable, for the introduction of drug urine testing are still being developed. There has been no estimate of the cost.

Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to alter the ruling that people who have had previous convictions for unrelated matters can have their award for compensation from the criminal injuries compensation scheme reduced or refused.

Mr. Maclean: Details of the rules of the new tariff scheme will be given in a White Paper to be published later in the year. It is expected that the basic rules for eligibility will remain largely as before.

Lenient Sentences

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his timetable for extending the Attorney-General's right of appeal for lenient sentences; and what is his estimate of the cost in this financial year and in 1994-95.

Mr. Maclean: We shall lay the necessary order before Parliament at the earliest appropriate opportunity. Our preliminary estimate is that the number of additional cases likely to justify referral to the Court of Appeal, and any additional costs, will be low.

Drugs

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he intends to publish the findings of research carried out for his Department by Sheffield university on drug use by young people.

Mr. Maclean: We intend to publish the report by Sheffield university by the end of this year.

Trespassers

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his timetable for implementing his proposal for new powers for the police to stop trespassers disrupting lawful activities; and what is his estimate of the cost in this financial year.

Mr. Charles Wardle: We intend to introduce legislation to implement these proposals as soon as a suitable opportunity arises. The timetable thereafter will depend upon the speed of progress which such legislation makes. It is too soon to offer reliable estimates of the costs and savings to which the proposals will give rise.

Rape Trials

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when, and through what process, he intends to abolish the judge's mandatory warning to juries in rape trials about the truthfulness of women; and from what date he intends the changes to apply.

Mr. Maclean: We intend to introduce legislation to abolish this requirement as soon as a suitable opportunity arises. The commencement date will, of course, depend upon the progress which such legislation makes.

British Citizenship

Sir Ivan Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to grant British citizenship to the wives and widows of service men who served in the defence of Hong Kong during the second world war; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: I have no power to grant British citizenship to this group of people unless they meet the residence requirements of the British Nationality Act 1981 or quality under the Hong Kong selection scheme; and I do not think that I would be justified in bringing forward legislation to dispense with the normal statutory provisions in their case. The Government have on many occasions given an assurance that these wives and widows may come to the United Kingdom with a view to settlement at any time. I readily repeat that assurance. It would then be open to them to apply in the normal way to be registered or naturalised as British citizens when they met the statutory requirements.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Pensions

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what information he has as to the percentage of gross domestic product spent on pensions in each EC country.

Mr. Hague: The latest information available on pensions expenditure in each member state of the EC is contained in the Eurostat publication "Digest of Statistics on Social Protection in Europe, Volumn 1: Old Age". This publication covers the years 1980-1988 and covers questions of definition and incomplete information which are important in interpreting the data.

The Eurostat study "Social Protection Expenditure and Receipts 1980-1991" includes revised and more recent information on that part of social protection expenditure which is directed to the elderly, but it does not allow the identification of expenditure on pensions.

Copies of both publications are in the House of Commons Library.

National Insurance

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what steps will be taken to ensure that the national insurance scheme will provide the same range of benefits to widowers and widows; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hague: We have no plans to extend the current widows' benefits provisions to widowers, but we will keep the position under review.

Benefit Investigations

Mr. Gapes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many claimants have had their benefit stopped for investigations; and how many were subsequently reinstated in each year since 1987.

Mr. Hague: The administration of benefit fraud is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. I understand that he has written to the hon. Member about this matter.

Letter from Mr. M. Bichard to Mr. Mike Gapes, dated 12 August 1993:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking, how many claimants have had their benefit stopped for investigations; and how many were subsequently reinstated in each year since 1987.

I regret that on this particular occasion I am unable to answer your question as the Sector Fraud organisation does not record information in this way.

I am able to say, however, that it is not general practice to "stop" a customer's benefit until it is certain that it is correct to do so. The decision to withdraw benefit has to be made by an Adjudication Officer and, as such, is not within the remit of any officer connected with the investigation of alleged fraud.

I must also point out that only a very small percentage of the Benefit Agency's customers will ever have any dealings with a member of the Sector Fraud organisation as the vast majority of customers are honest and trustworthy.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the Official Report and a copy will also be placed in the Library.

Invalidity Benefit

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many invalidity benefit claims were referred to the Benefits Agency medical service less than six months after winning an appeal against disqualification in *(a)* April, May and June 1992 and *(b)* April, May and June 1993;

(2) how many invalidity benefit recipients who were carrying out voluntary work activities were referred to the Benefits Agency medical service in April, May and June, broken down by *(a)* numbers disqualified and *(b)* numbers found incapable of work.

Mr. Scott: I understand from Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency, that the information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Supplementary Benefits

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what savings his Department has made as a result of the abolition of single payments in the former supplementary benefit system, for each year since 1988.

Mr. Scott: The supplementary benefit scheme was replaced in 1988 by income support and the social fund. The different nature and scope of the schemes means that direct comparisons cannot be made between them.

No precise estimate of any savings resulting from the abolition of supplementary benefit single payments can therefore be made.

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many appeals against disqualification from invalidity benefit were heard in *(a)* April, May and June 1992 and *(b)* April, May and June 1993; and how many were successful.

Mr. Scott: The information is not available in the form requested. However, in April, May and June 1992 a total of 1,311 appeals were heard against a variety of invalidity benefit decisions. Of these, 681 were decided in the appellant's favour. Information for the later period is not available.

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many claims for invalidity benefit were received from people previously in receipt of *(a)* sickness benefit, *(b)* income support and *(c)* statutory sick pay in the year 1992-93.

Mr. Scott: The information is not available. Such information as is available is in the table. Information about invalidity benefit recipients previously receiving income support is not available.

Spells of invalidity benefit commencing in the period 2 April 1990 to 30 March 1991 immediately in continuation of entitlement to:

	Recipients
Sickness benefit	87,000
Statutory sick pay	128,000

Notes:

(i) Based on a 1 per cent. sample of claimants, rounded to the nearest thousand.

(ii) 30 March 1991 is the latest date for which figures are available.

(iii) Figures exclude cases where there has been a break in incapacity of eight weeks or less.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list changes made to benefits for long-term sick and disabled people, since April 1988 together with an estimate for each year to 2000 of the cost or savings for each change.

Mr. Scott: For a list of changes I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Bristol, East (Ms Corston) on 26 July, c. *715-16.*

An estimate of the costs and savings in each case as requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Chisholm: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many claimants were in receipt of invalidity benefit in *(a)* Edinburgh, *(b)* Scotland and *(c)* the United Kingdom in each of the past five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Scott: I understand from Mr. Michael Bichard, the Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency, that the information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

For such information as is available I refer the hon. Member to the reply to the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. McAllion) on 20 July at columns *280-81*.

Community Action

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what national insurance arrangements have been made for community action participants.

Mr. Hague: Community action which was announced in the Budget statement on 16 March will commence on 27 July. Participants will not be liable to pay national insurance contributions while they are taking part in this new work experience project. Furthermore, their future contributory benefit entitlement will normally be protected by the award of "approved training" credits.

Income-related Benefits

Mrs. Angela Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he has plans to change the way contributions to personal pension schemes are taken into account in income-related benefits; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State plans to lay before Parliament amendments to the regulations on the treatment of such contributions in the income-related benefits. It has been the intention since 1988 that when assessing earnings for the income-related benefits a deduction should be made of half of any contributions to a private pension scheme, and administrative practice has been in line with this. But the current regulations do not correctly reflect this policy. In consequence awards have been made since July 1988 which are incorrect in law at a total cost of £8 million. Amendments to the income-related benefits regulations will be introduced to bring the legislation fully into line with existing policy and administrative practice.

Income Support

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what steps his Department is now taking to review the entitlement to income support of claimants in the light of the Court of Appeal's decision in the case of Percival White *v.* Chief Adjudication Officer; and what guidance has been issued to those adjudicating claims for income support in relation to inquiries initiated or procedures adopted in view of the court's ruling;

(2) what steps he has taken to assure nursing home residents, their relatives, and the proprietors of homes in which they reside affected by the judgment of the Court of Appeal in the case of the Percival White *v.* Chief Adjudicating Officer that, if income support claims are reviewed and payments discontinued alternative payments will be made by the district health authority responsible for providing the resident with in-patient treatment and care.

Mr. Burt: When the decision of the Court of Appeal has been published it will be studied carefully to ascertain whether any income support claimants, other than those involved in the case, will be affected. The decision confirms the existing policy and it is, therefore, expected that the number of people affected will be small. Most people whose care in a nursing home has been arranged by a health authority are already being assessed as patients. However, the vast majority of people in nursing homes are private residents and there is no question of their being regarded as in-patients.

General guidance can only be issued when the decision has been studied in detail. However, the Central Adjudication Services will give advice to adjudication officers who require assistance with similar cases.

I understand that the Department of Health issued advice to regional and district health authorities in 1991 on their responsibilities in this area.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list by premium the deductions made from the income support of claimants who are also subject to a deduction for voluntary unemployment.

Mr. Burt: Only recipients of the family premium were found to have deductions when benefit was reduced because of voluntary unemployment, but the numbers in the sample are too small to give a reliable estimate.

Source: Income Support Statistics Annual Enquiry, May 1992.

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how long the figure set as the level of fuel debt which leads to a deduction from and direct payment of income support has been in operation;

(2) what is the basis for the figure set as the level of fuel debt which can lead to a deduction from and direct payment of income support.

Mr. Burt: The minimum amount of fuel debt which can lead to direct payment to the fuel company is set at the level of the personal allowance for a single claimant aged not less than 25 years old.

The figure has been set since the introduction of income support in April 1988.

Child Maintenance

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many applications for child maintenance have been made by parents with care who *(a)* are or *(b)* are not in receipt of income support or family credit;

(2) in how many cases of the child support maintenance application forms returned to Child Support Agency centres, the parent with care has refused to authorise him to collect maintenance;

(3) if he will make a statement on the work of the Child Support Agency in its first three months at each of the four Child Support Agency centres presently operating;

(4) what was the average time taken by each Child Support Agency centre, during the first three months, to complete a maintenance assessment, from the date of maintenance inquiry form being sent to the absent parent;

(5) how many maintenance assessments have been carried out by each child support centre since the launch of the Child Support Agency in April;

(6) how many *(a)* maintenance application forms and *(b)* maintenance inquiry forms have been sent out by the Child Support Agency at each of the Child Support Agency centres; and how many in each case have been returned:

(7) how many of the maintenance assessments prepared by the Child Support Agency since April relate to children living with parents who are on income support and family credit.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Mrs. Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Ms R. Hepplewhite to Mr. Keith Bradley, dated 26 July 1993:

As Chief Executive of the Child Support Agency it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to your recent Parliamentary Questions to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking about various aspects of the work of the Child Support Agency in its first three months of operation.

I have attached as an annex to this letter a table providing information about the number of maintenance application and maintenance enquiry forms which have been issued, the number of these which have been returned and the number of maintenance assessments which have been completed.

You asked also for a breakdown of the number of applications and assessments made in relation to parents who are in receipt of benefit. As you will be aware, Alistair Burt, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security, pointed out in his reply of 13 July to a question from Frank Field MP reported at Column 482 of the Official Report that, after only three months' operation, it is too early to provide such a breakdown which is reliable enough for publication, and we do not currently collect information about the number of maintenance assessments made in relation to this group. It is also too early to provide reliable information on average clearance times, such as that which you have requested.

You asked also about the number of applications received where the parent with care has refused to provide authority for the collection of maintenance. Whilst information is not available in this form, you may wish to know that some 2,300 have so far been referred for interview in connection with the requirement to co-operate.

Although it is too early to draw any overall conclusions from the data so far available my view is that the Agency has made a steady start in introducing the new arrangements for ensuring that parents meet their responsibilities for child maintenance whenever they are able to do so.

I hope you will find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the Official Report and a copy will also be placed in the Library.

Annex

The number of Maintenance Application/Maintenance Enquiry Forms sent out by the Agency at each Agency Centre, the number returned and the number of assessments in the period 5 April to 30 June are as follows:

Maintenance Application Forms

	Issued	*Returned*
Hastings	51,000	24,500
Falkirk	37,000	18,000
Dudley	54,000	29,000
Belfast	35,000	18,500
TOTAL	177,000	90,000

Maintenance Enquiry Forms and assessments completed

	Issued	*Returned*	*Assessments made*
Hastings	9,500	3,500	920
Falkirk	7,000	3,000	780
Dudley	14,500	6,500	1,900
Belfast	7,500	3,000	400
TOTAL	38,500	16,000	4,000

Notes:

(i) These figures have been rounded and are provisional, so may be subject to amendment.

(ii) Birkenhead and Plymouth Centres are not yet operational and their caseloads are currently handled by Dudley and Hastings respectively.

Recovery of Payments

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to improve the performance of his Department in the recovery of overpayments of social security benefits.

Mr. Burt: The administration of benefits is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Mr. M. Bichard to Mr. Keith Bradley, dated 27 July 1993:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking what plans he has to improve the performance of his Department in the recovery of overpayments of social security benefits.

The report of the Efficiency Scrutiny into the Management of Departmental Debt in December 1989 identified a number of key issues concerning recovery of money owed to the Department, the major concern was the priority given in the Department to benefit delivery over revenue collection. In order to take forward the recommendations of the Efficiency Scrutiny an Information Study was conducted over a 6 month period ending in June 1991.

Following the recommendations made in the above reports various initiatives have been implemented in the overpayment recovery field. An Income Support recovery yield target for the financial year 1992-93 of £30 million was issued in August 1992. This was a 45 per cent. increase over the amount collected in 1991-92 and yet it was exceeded, the total recovery being £38·2 million. Further targets have been introduced for 1993-94 amounting to £54 million with recovery on non Income Support overpayments also being included.

The BA are actively pursuing the establishment of a Central Recovery Group to collect outstanding overpayments of Income Support where the customer is no longer in receipt of benefit.

In addition to the above BA staff have been issued with revised training material and a good practice guide aimed at assisting in the identification, calculation and recovery of overpaid benefit. The Overpayment Recovery Guide, a manual which assists staff in their recovery work, has been comprehensively rewritten and the letters which notify customers of overpayments and request repayment have been drafted in plain English. The procedure for referring cases for civil action, should recovery break down, has also been streamlined and is showing positive results.

Work is also proceeding to develop Information Technology to assist in the overpayment process.

I hope you will find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the *Official Report* and a copy will also appear in the Library.

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security in how many cases in each of the last five years civil enforcement action has been taken in either the county court or the sheriff's court to recover sums owed by way of social security benefits.

Mr. Burt: The administration of social security benefits is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member shortly and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Mr. M. Bichard to Mr. Keith Bradley, dated 29 July 1993:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking in how many cases, in each of the last five years, civil enforcement action has been taken in either the County Court or the Sheriffs' Court to recover sums owed by way of Social Security benefits".

The information you have requested is shown below.

Year ending 31 March

	County court	*Sheriff's court*
1989	311	113
1990	250	84
1991	249	57
1992	612	260
[1]1993	6,657	1,235

[1] The reasons for the 1993 figures being higher than previous years are that the work has been devolved from a central location to Area Offices which has led to increased efficiency. In addition, in July 1992, the process for referring cases was streamlined and the proceedings limit was reduced from £300 to £50.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the Official Report and a copy will also be placed in the Library.

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will provide a breakdown by benefit of the number of recipients of benefits other than income support, where deductions are being made for the recovery of overpayments under section 71 of the Social Security Administration Act 1992.

Mr. Burt: The administration of benefits is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Mr. M. Bichard to Mr. Keith Bradley, dated 27 July 1993:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking for a breakdown by benefit of the number of recipients of benefits, other than Income Support, where deductions are being made for the recovery of overpayments under section 71 of the Social Security Administration Act 1992.

I regret that I am unable to provide the exact information you requested. Overpayments are recovered by virtue of both sections 71 and 74 of the Social Security Administration Act 1992. The relevant section is noted on individual claims to assist in the adjudication process only. These details are not collated locally and therefore no central records can be maintained. Obtaining the information you requested could be done only at disproportionate cost.

However, you may be interested to know that recovery by deduction from non Income Support benefits to recover overpayments is currently being made on 21,142 claims. These overpayments are being recovered by virtue of both sections 71 and 74 of the 1992 Administration Act. I can advise that of these, 15,494 are for benefits administered by our District Offices with the following details for those benefits administered centrally;

	Number
Attendance Allowance	607
Family Credit	607
Invalid Care Allowance	3,146
Mobility Allowance/Disability Living Allowance	740
Disability Working Allowance	6

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy of this letter will appear in the official report and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what amounts have been recovered by way of overpayments of benefit in each of the last five years.

Mr. Burt: The administration of benefits is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Mr. M. Bichard to Mr. Keith Bradley, dated 27 July 1993:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking what amounts have been recovered by way of overpayments of benefit in each of the last five years.

I regret that I am unable to provide the information you requested for the last five years. Centrally collected information on Income Support overpayments is held only from April 1991, when the first central target was set for Income Support recoveries. Information for all the other non-Income Support Benefits is being kept from April 1993 and recovery performance will not be known until April 1994.

In 1991/92, £24·2m was recovered from overpayments of Income Support, against a target of £18m. This figure rose to £38·2m in 1992/93, against a target of £30m. A target of £54m has been set for 1993/94 for recovery of all benefits and the current year end outlook shows that this target will be exceeded.

I hope that you find this reply helpful. A copy of this letter will appear in the Official Report and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) how many invalidity benefit recipients were found *(a)* medically incapable of work, after examination, *(b)* capable of work, after examination, or *(c)* medically capable of suitable alternative work (i) in April, May and June 1992 and (ii) in April, May and June 1993;

(2) how many invalidity benefit recipients were referred to the Benefits Agency medical service *(a)* in April, May and June 1992 and *(b)* April, May and June 1993.

Mr. Scott: The administration of invalidity benefit is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Mr. M. Bichard to Mr. Keith Bradley, dated 27 July 1993:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to your recent Parliamentary Questions to the Secretary of State for social security asking (i) how many invalidity benefit recipients were referred to the benefit agency Medical Service *(a)* in April, May and June 1992 and *(b)*

April, May and June 1993 and (ii) how many invalidity benefit recipients were found *(a)* medically incapable of work, after examination, *(b)* capable of work after examination, or *(c)* medically capable of suitable alternative work (i) in April, May and June 1992 and (ii) in April, May and June 1993.

The complete range of information requested is not available. This is because for operational reasons, figures for Scotland and Wales are not available. The full range of information will be available from April 1994. The figures available also include sickness benefit recipients as separate figures are not held. The figures below therefore relate to England only.

(1a) Sickness benefit/invalidity benefit referrals to BAMS in April, May and June 1992 = 172,637.

(b) Sickness benefit/invalidity benefit referrals to BAMS in April, May and June 1993 = 170,788.

(2a) Sickness benefit/invalidity benefit recipients found medically incapable of work after examination:

(i) in April, May and June 1992 = 33,847

(ii) in April, May and June 1993 = 28,275

(b) Sickness benefit/invalidity benefit recipients found capable of work after medical examination:

(i) in April, May and June 1992 = 5,148

(ii) in April, May and June 1993 = 3,280

(c) Sickness benefit/invalidity benefit recipients found medically capable of suitable alternative work after medical examination:

(i) in April, May and June 1992 = 11,442

(ii) in April, May and June 1993 = 14,586

I hope that you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the Official Report and a copy will also be placed in the Library.

Equal Opportunities

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the districts of the Benefits Agency which have not received the equal opportunities validation symbol; and what are the reasons for their failure in each case.

Mr. Burt: The administration of Benefits Agency staff is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available, and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Mr. M. Bichard to Mr. Win Griffiths, dated 26 July 1993:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am, therefore, replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking if he will list the Districts of the Benefits Agency which have not received the equal opportunities validation symbol; and what are the reasons for their failure in each case.

The Disability symbol of 2 ticks and 2 dots was introduced by Employment Services for use by employers who wished to show their commitment to employing people with disabilities. All Districts within the Benefits Agency were encouraged to use the symbol and many in fact did so.

In June this year, the symbol was revised and criteria for its use were introduced. The Benefits Agency, in common with other Government Departments and Agencies, is currently looking at the implications of using the new symbol and complying with the criteria. This in no way affects the way we treat disabled people and our policies and procedures are in line with best practice and Civil Service policy on the employment of people with disabilities.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the Official Report and a copy will also be placed in the Library.

Sick Notes

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what steps are taken to ensure that sick note reminder forms BF60B are sent to claimants prior to the expiry date of the existing sick note.

Mr. Scott: The administration of sickness and invalidity benefit are matters for Mr. Michael Bichard the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Mr. M. Bichard to Mr. Jim Wallace, dated 27 July 1993:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking what steps are taken to ensure that sick note reminder forms BF60B are sent to customers prior to the expiry date of the existing sick note.

Guidance to Benefit Agency staff is that form BF60B should be issued if the current medical statement expires before the order book runs out. In both Lerwick and Kirkwall Benefit Offices, which deal with customers in your constituency, form BF60B would be issued to a customer at the same time as the renewal order book where the medical statement expires during the currency of that order book.

The computerisation of incapacity benefits is still developing. The latest improvement to the system, introduced on a rolling programme to District Offices from May 1993 to January 1994, will automatically issue form BF60B whenever an order book is issued that extends beyond the date of the current medical statement.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the Official Report and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 20 October 1993

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Dining Rooms

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chairman of the Catering Committee if he will publish a list of those organisations which have used dining rooms A, B and C in the past six months.

Mr. Colin Shepherd: No.

Office Accommodation

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chairman of the Accommodation and Works Committee how many hon. Members currently share an office.

Mr. Ray Powell: One hundred and thirty-six hon. Members are accommodated in double rooms, 27 in treble rooms and 12 in rooms of four Members. Twenty-one have desks in open plan accommodation in the Cloisters.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chairman of the Accommodation and Works Committee if he will issue a questionnaire to hon. Members to discover their office accommodation needs and their level of satisfaction with current office accommodation.

Mr. Ray Powell: It has been the objective of successive Select Committees responsible for Members' accommodation to work towards a situation where every Member who so wishes is able to have a room of his or her own. Progress towards that goal is a high priority for the Accommodation and Works Committee in consultation with the Serjeant at Arms and the Parliamentary Works Directorate. I shall therefore arrange for my hon. Friend's suggestion to be considered.

Commonwealth Parliamentary Association

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chairman of the Administration Committee in what circumstances the premises of the United Kingdom branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association would have to vacate its office at short notice to make way for a military guard of honour; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: Matters relating to Westminster Hall are the joint responsibility of the Lord Great Chamberlain, the Speaker and the Lord Chancellor.

Official Hospitality

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Lord President of the Council how much was spent on official hospitality in his Department in the financial year 1992-93.

Mr. Newton: The Privy Council Office, which includes the private office of the Lord Privy Seal and Lord President as well as the Judicial Committee and Privy Council proper, spent £10,885 in financial year 1992-93 on official hospitality.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Official Hospitality

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how much was spent on official hospitality in his Department in the financial year 1992-93.

Mr. John M. Taylor: In 1992-93 expenditure on official hospitality in the Lord Chancellor's Department was £20,697·44p.

WALES

Transport Funding

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will give all details of European regional development funds which have been allocated for transport initiatives in the last 12 months and which are proposed for the next 12 months.

Sir Wyn Roberts: No ERDF funds have been allocated to specific transport initiatives, but ERDF grant has part-financed various transport measures including provision of park and ride facilities, bus routes and new passenger rail services. It is too soon to indicate what schemes or initiatives might be submitted for approval in 1994.

Official Hospitality

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much was spent on official hospitality in his Department in the financial year 1992-93.

Mr. Redwood: The amount spent by the Welsh Office on official hospitality in 1992-93 was £38,382.

Valleys Programme

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when details of the latest programme for the valleys will be published.

Mr. Redwood: Details of the new programme for the valleys, launched by my predecessor on 1 April are set out in a brochure which I have published today. Copies have been sent to those Members in valleys constituencies. I have also placed copies in the Library of the House.

Under the previous programme for the valleys, launched in June 1988, 2,000 acres of derelict land were cleared in the biggest venture of its kind in Europe, 2·6 million sq ft of industrial floor-space was provided and £700 million of private sector investment was generated. In addition, 24,000 jobs were created or safeguarded.

My aim for the new programme will be to build on this success, to complete the process of restoring prosperity to the valleys area and to fulfil the aspirations of its people. The new programme has five key aims:

- to create more, better quality jobs;
- to improve training, education and transport;
- to improve the environment;
- to improve people's health;
- to improve the quality and choice of housing.

I expect total public expenditure under the new programme to exceed £1 billion.

HEALTH

Official Hospitality

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much was spent on official hospitality in her Department in the financial year 1992-93.

Mr. Sackville: In 1992-93, the Department of Health spent £246,374 on hospitality.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Official Hospitality

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much was spent on official hospitality in his Department in the financial year 1992-93.

Sir John Wheeler: £535,299.

Audit Review Group

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make available copies of the follow-up report of the audit review group.

Sir John Wheeler: I have arranged for copies of the report to be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

TRANSPORT

Railtrack

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the Government's intention with regard to the time scale for the privatisation of Railtrack.

Mr. Freeman: As we said in the White Paper "New Opportunities for the Railways", Cm 2012, the Government would like to see the private sector owning as much as possible of the railway in the longer term. No target date has been set for the transfer of Railtrack to private sector ownership.

Relief Road, Manchester

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what procedures he intends to implement in order to assess the environmental impact of the proposed Greater Manchester western and northern relief road.

Mr. Key: If the scheme goes ahead following the public consultation, the proposals will be assessed in terms of the impact on existing communities, air and water qualities, the landscape, agriculture, nature conservation, heritage values and recreation. An environmental statement, describing those impacts and the measures we intend to take in mitigation, will be published in accordance with EC directive 85/337.

Official Hospitality

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much was spent on official hospitality in his Department in the financial year 1992-93.

Mr. Norris: The Department of Transport, excluding its agencies, spent £231,547 on official hospitality during 1992-93.

Exhaust Pollution

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what studies have been done by his Department on the linkage of asthma and bronchial disorders to exhaust pollution in London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville *[holding answer 18 October 1993]:* I have been asked to repy.

The Department is funding a research project which will examine the effects of the December 1991 air pollution episode in London when the highest recorded peak of nitrogen dioxide occurred.

In addition, the Committee on the Medical Effects of Air Pollutants which was established by the chief medical officer last year has set up a sub-group on asthma which will make recommendations on research relating to asthma and air pollution.

The main agency through which the Government support biomedical and clinical research is the Medical Research Council which receives its grant in aid from the office of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to him by my right hon. Friend the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State on 10 March at column *616*, which stated that the MRC is sponsoring some research into factors contributing to the rise in asthma and has set up a working party to examine the aetiology of asthma under the chairmanship of Professor A. J. Newman Taylor. It is considering a range of possible contributory factors to current levels of asthma, including air pollution. The Department is represented on the working party and on the MRC committee on toxic hazards in the workplace and the environment, both of which will consider areas of need for further research.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Official Hospitality

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how much was spent on official hospitality in his Department in the financial year 1992-93.

Mr. Waldegrave: The expenditure by my Department, excluding expenditure in respect of the Prime Minister's office, on official hospitality in the financial year 1992-93 was £33,320.

Initiatives Programme

Mrs. Browning: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what arrangements he has made for making payments to projects approved under the Office of Science and Technology's White Paper initiatives programme.

Mr. Waldegrave: Payments associated with such initiatives began earlier this month. Parliamentary approval to this new expenditure will be sought in a supplementary estimate for the Cabinet Office: Office of Public Service and Science: science vote—class XVIII, vote 2. Pending that approval, urgent expenditure of up to £400,000 for agreed projects is being met by a repayable advance from the contingencies fund.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Blakenhurst Prison

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many disturbances have occurred at Blakenhurst since it opened; and if he will provide details.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 18 October 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about disturbances at HM Prison Blakenhurst.

The Prison Service does not classify incidents as 'disturbances', but records a range of different types of incident which disrupt the smooth running of establishments.

Since Blakenhurst began receiving prisoners on 26 May 1993, there have been four incidents of concerted indiscipline, and two rooftop demonstrations; all six incidents were passive throughout. These are the details:—

9 August 1993: 50 prisoners refused to return to their cells at the end of evening association. They were protesting about the quality of the food and about the imminent transfer to training prisons of a number of prisoners. They returned to their cells after 3½ hours.

13 September 1993: 62 prisoners refused to return to their cells after evening association. Their complaints included the timing of meals, lack of available work, poor choice of video entertainment and new restrictions on access around the houseblocks. The incident was resolved after 3½ hours.

20 September 1993: 60 prisoners refused to return to their cells at the end of evening association; they did so after one hour.

23 September 1993: a prisoner climbed onto the roof of the segregation unit to protest about his location in the unit. He remained there for 4 hours. No damage was caused.

24 September 1993: another prisoner climbed onto the roof of the segregation unit to protest about his location in the unit. He surrendered after 3 hours 50 minutes.

9 October 1993: ten prisoners refused to return to their cells after evening association. Four of the prisoners were due to be relocated in the segregation unit following an alleged assault on two staff members. The situation was resolved after 2½ hours.

Cautions

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people were cautioned by the police in *(a)* 1990, *(b)* 1991 and *(c)* 1992, (1) in total, (2) for indictable offences, (3) for indictable only offences, (4) for either way offences or (5) for summary offences.

Mr. Maclean: The information requested for the years 1990 to 1992—which is provisional—is given in the table.

Number of persons cautioned by type of offence 1990 to 1992[1]
England and Wales

	1990	*1991*	*[1]1992*
All offences	269,112	278,765	321,294
Total indictable	166,349	179,885	216,163
Indictable only	1,703	1,577	1,736
Triable either way	164,646	178,308	214,427
Summary offences (excluding motoring)	102,763	98,880	105,131

[1] Provisional.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what number and percentage of people cautioned in 1990, 1991 and 1992 had *(a)* no previous cautions, *(b)* one previous caution, *(c)* two previous cautions, *(d)* three previous cautions, *(e)* four previous cautions, *(f)* five previous cautions or *(g)* six or more previous cautions.

Mr. Maclean: The information is not available in the form requested. The latest available information on previous cautioning history of persons cautioned in England and Wales is shown in the table.

The past cautioning history of a sample[1] of 2,787 offenders cautioned in England and Wales in 1991

The number of previous cautions	*Percentage of the sample*
None	79·9
1	12·8
2	4·3
3	1·2
4	0·8
5	0·2
6 or more	0·8

[1] The sample was based on returns from all police forces in England and Wales for all offenders cautioned between 25 and 29 November 1991.

Theft

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will provide a table showing for each of the years 1979 to 1992 the total number of offences in the category of theft and handling stolen goods; and how many in each year were *(a)* shoplifting, *(b)* handling and *(c)* other categories of theft.

Mr. Maclean: The requested information is contained in the following table:

Notifiable offences of theft and handling stolen goods recorded by the police 1979-92
England and Wales *Number of offences*

Year	*Total*	*Theft from shops*	*Handling stolen goods*	*Other theft*
1979	1,416,143	203,122	45,290	1,167,731
1980	1,463,469	206,175	38,815	1,218,479
1981	1,603,151	225,342	40,793	1,337,016
1982	1,755,853	242,304	43,589	1,469,960
1983	1,705,924	235,512	44,871	1,425,541
1984	1,807,981	248,792	45,046	1,514,143
1985	1,884,069	281,557	45,336	1,557,176
1986	2,003,873	255,463	41,497	1,706,913
1987	2,052,005	247,064	45,968	1,758,973
1988	1,931,274	216,242	49,262	1,665,770
1989	2,012,760	222,974	44,867	1,744,919
1990	2,374,409	250,301	46,822	2,077,286

Year	Total	Theft from shops	Handling stolen goods	Other theft
1991	2,761,119	281,276	51,495	2,428,348
1992	2,851,638	288,672	49,836	2,513,130

Bail Statistics

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people *(a)* were released on bail in (i) 1990, (ii) 1991 and (iii) 1992, *(b)* reoffended on bail and *(c)* were bailed again by the courts.

Mr. Maclean: The estimated number of persons remanded on bail at magistrates courts in England and Wales is published annually in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales". Table 8.5 shows that 441,900 people were remanded in 1990: 452,500 in 1991 and 458,700 in 1992. Information on numbers offending while on bail and on those bailed again is not collected centrally.

A Home Office research report—RPU report 65 "Offending while on bail; a survey of recent studies"—gives some information about recent studies relating to offences while on bail. The survey concludes that, on average, between 10 and 12 per cent. of defendants on bail are subsequently convicted of an offence committed on bail and nowhere was the figure more than 17 per cent. A copy of this report is available in the Library of the House.

Offences Statistics

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many notifiable offences were recorded by the police in the year ended June 1993.

Mr. Maclean: The requested information is not yet available.

Asylum

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the current average waiting time for asylum applications, from receipt of application to determination.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The estimated average length of time between the receipt of an asylum application and the decision, for cases decided in the second quarter of 1993, was 18 months. This figure reflects work on the resolution of older and more complex cases, as a result of the increase in staffing in the asylum and special cases division. Following the implementation of the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act 1993 on 26 July, priority has been given to cases received after that date, with the aim of resolving the majority within three months. However, comprehensive information on the average decision times since implementation of the Act is not yet available.

Political Conferences

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give details of the total policing costs associated with the 1993 annual conferences of *(a)* the Liberal Democrats, *(b)* the Labour party and *(c)* the Conservative party.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I understand from the chief officers of the forces concerned that the estimated costs are:

	£
(a) Liberal Democrat (Devon and Cornwall)	14,500
(b) Labour (Sussex)	31,000
(c) Conservative (Lancashire)	1,500,000

Juvenile Offenders

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what work his Department has undertaken to establish the number of persistent juvenile offenders; and what is his estimate of the number of such offenders at the present time.

Mr. Maclean: A survey of police forces and local authority social services departments last year identified 106 juveniles who met the criteria for persistent offenders specified in that survey. It was immediately recognised that this figure was a significant underestimate: not all respondents—including two of the largest police forces—held their information in a way which allowed them to produce precise numerical data. Consequently, further research on persistent juvenile offending was commissioned by the Home Office. The report is expected to be available in the near future.

Official Hospitality

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much was spent on official hospitality in his Department in the financial year 1992-93.

Mr. Howard: My Department's expenditure on official hospitality in the financial year 1992-93 was £21,651.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Bosnia

Sir Russell Johnston: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Blackpool, North (Mr. Elletson) of 6 July, *Official Report*, column *85*, what steps Her Majesty's Government took, before co-sponsoring United Nations Security Council resolution 816, to verify allegations of a breach of the no-fly zone over Gladovici on 13 March other than consideration of the UNPROFOR press notice.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I refer the hon. Member to the answers which my right hon. Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office gave to his written question of 18 October, *Official Report*, columns *83-84*. We are satisfied with the standard of United Nations reporting on the observance of the no-fly zone over Bosnia-Herzogovina, including the information provided about the breach over Gladovici on 13 March.

Ivory

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give details of all countries for which ivory export permits have been

issued by the authorities in Hong Kong since the entering of the reservation in respect of the ivory trade; and if he will provide full details of the ivory exported.

Mr. Goodlad: Since the entering of the reservation and up to 14 October 1993, details of commercial ivory exported from Hong Kong are as follows:

Importing country	*Nature and quantity*
China	7946·70 kg raw ivory
Korea	273·60 kg worked ivory
Taiwan	24·20 kg worked ivory
Mexico	195·20 kg worked ivory
Saudia Arabia	8·80 kg worked ivory
Andorra	112·60 kg worked ivory
Australia	8·00 kg worked ivory
USA	0·73 kg worked ivory
United Kingdom	0·85 kg worked ivory

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much ivory has been confiscated by the Hong Kong authorities since 1 February 1991; and how many prosecutions for illegal export have been initiated since that date.

Mr. Goodlad: Between 1 February 1991 and 14 October 1993, the Hong Kong authorities confiscated 1,210·9 kg of ivory and initiated two prosecutions for illegal export.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many exports of ivory have been authorised from Hong Kong since midnight on 17 July 1990.

Mr. Goodlad: No commercial exports of ivory have been authorised from Hong Kong between midnight on 17 July 1990 and 14 October 1993 except for seven shipments of pre-convention specimens of worked ivory totalling 1·58 kg.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many spot checks have been made by the Hong Kong authorities of ivory holding premises since 1 February 1991; and if any irregularities were discovered.

Mr. Goodlad: The Hong Kong authorities have made 778 spot checks on ivory holding premises between 1 February 1991 and 14 October 1993. No irregularities were discovered.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the current stock of all ivory known to be held in Hong Kong; and on what date it was last assessed.

Mr. Goodlad: The total commercial ivory stock held in Hong Kong on 17 July 1990 was 463 tonnes, to the nearest tonne. No commercial exports of ivory, except pre-convention specimens of worked ivory, have been authorised since then.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the current number of possession licences issued to holders of ivory stocks in Hong Kong.

Mr. Goodlad: As at 14 October 1993, there were 899 possession licences held by commercial ivory stock holders in Hong Kong.

Official Hospitality

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much was spent on official hospitality in his Department, including the Overseas Development Administration, in the financial year 1992-93.

Mr. Goodlad: Expenditure on official hospitality by both wings of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in 1992-93 is estimated at £6,946,298.

In addition, the FCO availed itself of part of the £1,141,600 grant-in-aid to the Government hospitality fund, but the exact figure is not available.

Endangered Species

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give details of items from endangered species seized by the Hong Kong authorities in the years 1991, 1992 and the first half of 1993; and what prosecutions arose from the seizures.

Mr. Goodlad: The Hong Kong authorities made 276 seizures of items from endangered species in 1991, 256 seizures in 1992 and 120 seizures in the first half of 1993. A total of 341 prosecutions for the two and a half year period arose from these seizures.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will give details of the ivory exported from Hong Kong since 25 March 1991 in accordance with the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species requirements.

Mr. Goodlad: No commercial exports of ivory have been authorised by the Hong Kong authorities since 25 March 1991 except for six shipments of pre-convention specimens of worked ivory totalling 1·48 kg.

Special Operations Executive

Mr. Carrington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he plans to release the records of the wartime Special Operations Executive.

Mr. Hurd: I said in my answer on 26 November 1992, *Official Report,* column *766,* that work had started on reviewing the SOE archives. A first batch of files, covering SOE activities in the far east have been transferred to the Public Record Office and will be available to the public from 21 October. The next batches will cover Scandinavia and Africa and will be released as soon as possible after mid-1994.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Ethiopia

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on future British aid to Ethiopia.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have agreed to commit £10 million of bilateral development assistance to support projects in Ethiopia in the period 1993 to 1995. In addition, during her recent visit to Ethiopia, my right hon. Friend

Baroness Chalker of Wallasey agreed to provide £5 million balance of payments support during United Kingdom financial year 1993-94 to support Ethiopia's economic reform programme.

Natural Resources Institute

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about recent discussions between the Natural Resources Institute and the university of Greenwich.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Natural Resources Institute —NRI—has been reviewing the scope and orientation of its work in the light of a changing market for its services and of the White Paper on science and technology, Cm 2250. The institute has concluded that it has surplus accommodation on its Chatham maritime site. At the same time, it wishes to strengthen links with centres of higher education and research.

The NRI has, therefore, agreed with the university of Greenwich that its school of earth sciences will be based at Chatham from the autumn of 1994. The university is considering whether to relocate other operations—notably its school of engineering—to Chatham as part of a wider plan to rationalise its estate and to expand the provision it offers in Kent. The NRI and the university intend to develop substantive links in research, teaching and consultancy. This association between NRI and the university is a welcome and constructive initiative, which will also give added impetus to the development of the Chatham maritime site and the Medway towns and will make an important contribution to the regeneration of the east Thames corridor.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Value Added Tax

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of *(a)* the percentage fall in the volume of book purchases if VAT at 17·5 per cent. were imposed on books and *(b)* on the consequential loss in corporation tax, income tax and national insurance contributions.

Sir John Cope: Research carried out by the Institute for Fiscal Studies suggests that imposing the standard rate of VAT on books would reduce book sales by approximately 10½ per cent. The consequential loss in corporation tax, income tax and national insurance contributions would depend on the behaviour of individual companies.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the estimated effect on the retail prices index of the imposition of VAT at 17·5 per cent. on books.

Sir John Cope: Imposing VAT at the standard rate would increase the RPI by around 0·08 per cent., assuming the tax is fully passed on to consumers in the form of higher prices.

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much revenue he estimates would be raised if VAT at 17·5 per cent. were applied to books.

Sir John Cope: The Treasury publication "Tax Ready Reckoner and Tax Reliefs" shows the estimated cost of applying a zero rate of VAT to books, newspapers and magazines as being £1,100 million in 1993-94. Revenue from books alone would be around 30 per cent. of this figure. This estimate makes no allowance for the likely behavioural response to applying VAT at the standard rate.

Official Hospitality

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much was spent on official hospitality in his Department in the financial year 1992-93.

Mr. Nelson: Expenditure on official hospitality in 1992-93 was £287,195. This is significantly higher than expenditure in 1991-92 reflecting two large one-off events; the annual conference of the International Organisation of Securities Commissions for which the United Kingdom was host in July 1992; and the informal ECOFIN meeting in September 1992 which was held as part of the United Kingdom presidency. If these two items are excluded, expenditure was £84,904.

No. 11 Downing Street

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 27 July, *Official Report*, column *876*, in respect of No. 11 Downing street, on what floor and room the old carpet was relaid; where the carpet already in that room is now located; what adjustments had to be made to the old carpet before it was relaid; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Cope: The old carpet was relaid on the back staircase between the ground and second floors. The carpet had to be cut to fit this previously uncarpeted staircase.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Computer Exports

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when the co-ordinating committee on multilateral export control was notified of the United States decision announced on 26 August to lift existing restrictions on export of computer equipment to China and eastern European countries; and if he will make a statement on the implications of the decision on British export policy for computers to these countries.

Mr. Needham: My officials were present at the meeting of COCOM—the Co-ordinating Committee for Multilateral Strategic Export Controls—on 30 September 1993 when the US delegation presented its proposals for amending the agreed level of controls on computer equipment by all COCOM members including the US to proscribed destinations, including China and eastern Europe. Agreement to decontrol was reached at a further meeting held on 5 October.

Like our counterparts in the US and other COCOM member states, we are considering the practical issues of implementing in the United Kingdom this more relaxed export control policy. We expect to introduce new measures soon.

Official Hospitality

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how much was spent on official hospitality in his Department in the financial year 1992-93.

Mr. Eggar: My Department spent £526,447 on entertainment in the 1992-93 financial year.

British Aerospace

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what discussions he has had with British Aerospace concerning launch aid for the Jetstream plant at Prestwick; what action he has taken as a result; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: British Aerospace has had initial discussions with officials about launch aid for Jetstream. No application has yet been made.

Nuclear Industry

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations his Department has received from the nuclear installations inspectorate concerning the safety of computer software to be used in the Sizewell B power station.

Mr. Eggar: I have received no such representations. I understand that the Health and Safety Executive's nuclear installations inspectorate has not yet completed its assessment of Nuclear Electric's safety case for the computerised primary protection system proposed for Sizewell B.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he plans to announce the timetable and the terms of reference of the 1993 nuclear review.

Mr. Eggar: The terms of reference and the format of the forthcoming review of the future prospects for nuclear power in the United Kingdom are under consideration within Government. It remains the Government's intention, as set out in the White Paper "The Prospects for Coal", to make an announcement later this year.

Renewable Energy

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he plans to publish his Department's renewable energy strategy document.

Mr. Eggar: I expect to publish a new and renewables strategy document this year.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when potential bidders will be informed whether they have been successful in obtaining support under the third renewables order of the non-fossil fuel obligation.

Mr. Eggar: The Non-Fossil Purchasing Agency expects to be able to inform bidders whether they have been successful around October 1994.

Regional Development Funds, Merseyside

Mr. Wareing: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what progress is being made to enable funds to be allocated to Merseyside as a result of its designation within objective 1 status; what is the total amount to be allocated; what changes have taken place in the allocated amount; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 18 October 1993]:* The objective 1 funds to be allocated to Merseyside are 840 mecu at 1992 prices, as I announced in my written answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Exeter (Sir J. Hannam) on 27 July, *Official Report,* column *948.*

A regional development plan is currently being prepared by the Government in consultation with local interests as required by the regulations and will shortly be transmitted by the Government to the Commission.

Swan Hunter

Mr. Trotter: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps he has taken to obtain the approval of the European Commission to the making of intervention funding available for merchant shipbuilding at Swan Hunter.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 19 October 1993]:* Following my initial approach to Vice President van Miert in May, applying for the shipbuilding intervention fund for British warship yards, I have submitted to the Commission a detailed case in writing. Since then I have met with Mr. van Miert in Brussels to urge approval of our application and I have pursued this in correspondence and on the telephone, most recently today. Negotiations between officials continue to take place and a further official level meeting is scheduled for Monday 25 October. I will continue to maintain a close involvement in this issue.

DEFENCE

Official Hospitality

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much was spent on official hospitality in his Department in the financial year 1992-93.

Mr. Hanley: In the financial year 1992-93, my Department spent £4,950,000 on official entertainment and refreshments, and on protocol entertainment. This figure includes expenditure incurred by the Ministry of Defence itself, by formations and establishments of the armed forces at home and abroad, and by individual officers occupying command and international appointments for which entertainment allowances are payable.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Sick Notes

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what guidance is given to Benefit Agency officers regarding the period of notice given to claimants when the sick note reminder form BF60B is sent out.

Mr. Scott: The issue of form BF60B is a procedural matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. James Wallace, dated 27 July 1993:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking what guidance is given to Benefit Agency officers regarding the period of notice given to customers when sick note reminder form BF60B is sent out.

Guidance to Benefit Agency staff does not specify how much notice a customer should be given about the expiry of their medical statement. Normally form BF60B is issued whenever an order book is issued to a customer which runs on beyond the expiry date of the medical statement. Notice to customers of expiry of medical statements would normally be in the range of 1 to 20 weeks.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the Official Report and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Official Cars

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many official cars are currently at the disposal of his Department.

Mr. Hague: There are currently 2,188 official vehicles in use on the Department's business.

Official Travel

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much was spent by his Department on travelling abroad by *(a)* Ministers and *(b)* officials in each of the last three financial years; and which countries were visited.

Mr. Hague: Information for financial years prior to 1992-93 is not available in the form requested and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

The sum spent in the financial year 1992-93 on the cost of travelling abroad was £403,600. Countries visited in that period were:

Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bermuda, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Hong Kong, Hungary, Ireland, Luxembourg, Mexico, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Puerto Rico, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, USA and Zimbabwe.

Separate figures for Ministers and officials are not available.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much has been spent by his Department in each of the last three financial years on costs for officials travelling to France.

Mr. Hague: Information on costs for officials travelling to France in years prior to 1992-93 is not available in the form requested and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. The sum spent in the financial year 1992-93 on the cost of travel to France by officials was £26,735.

Official Hospitality

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how much was spent on official hospitality in his Department in the financial year 1992-93.

Mr. Hague: Departmental expenditure on official hospitality in the financial year 1992-93 was £175,901.

SCOTLAND

Sheep Annual Premium

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many application forms were received after the deadline for sheep annual premium; how many were accepted late; what were *(a)* the reasons for late applications and *(b)* the percentage of applications received by the deadline; what his Department regards as exceptional circumstances; how many applications were accepted because of exceptional circumstances; if he will give details of each case; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro: Thirty-eight applications were received after the closing date for applications for the 1993 sheep annual premium scheme. The EC regulations which govern the scheme provide that only those late applications which can be attributed to "force majeure" can be accepted. For this purpose, on the basis of guidance from the European Commission, "force majeure" means abnormal or unforeseeable circumstances beyond the control of the applicant. The 38 applications in question were late for a variety of reasons, but none of them fell in the "force majeure" category.

A total of 17,027 applications—99·8 per cent.—were received by the deadline.

Local Government Reorganisation

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what arrangements he proposes for the election, operation and financing of community councils in his plan for reorganisation of local government in Scotland.

Mr. Stewart: Our White Paper, published last July, "Shaping the Future—The New Councils" restated our commitment to community councils. We are currently examining responses and will announce our conclusions in due course.

EMPLOYMENT

Environmental Training

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representation his Department will have at the European Commission's Joint Research Centre meeting on training and education for business and the environment, to be held in Seville on 8 to 12 November.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Joint Research Centre's Eurocourse on business and the environment, originally planned for November in Seville, has been postponed until some time next year.

Restricted Reporting Orders

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment by what methods a journalist or newspaper editor may challenge or apply to vary a restricted reporting order made under the Trade Union Reform and Employment Rights Act 1993.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: None, unless they are a party to the case.

Official Hospitality

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how much was spent on official hospitality in his Department in the financial year 1992-93.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: In 1992-93, the amounts spent on official entertainment by the Employment Department, the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service, the

Health and Safety Executive/Commission, the Employment Service and the Office of Manpower Economics were £39,000, £8,000, £20,000, £21,000 and £10,000, respectively.

ENVIRONMENT

Raw Materials

16. **Mr. Bayley:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans Her Majesty's Government have to reduce United Kingdom consumption of non-renewable raw materials.

Mr. Yeo: The consumption of non-renewable raw materials will be one of the issues raised in the United Kingdom strategy for sustainable development, which the Government are currently preparing.

Sustainable Development

17. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are Her Majesty's Government's policies for sustainable development.

Mr. Gummer: The United Kingdom has taken a leading role in establishing the world strategy on sustainable development. We shall be publishing our strategy in the very near future, following the wide consultation which we have already undertaken.

Eco-labelling

18. **Mr. Bennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about eco-labelling.

Mr. Yeo: The eco-labelling scheme was formally launched by the European Commission at the end of June 1993. The Commission has also approved the first ecological criteria, those for washing machines and dishwashers which were developed by the United Kingdom Ecolabelling Board. Manufacturers of these products are now able to apply for an ecolabel for products which meet the published environmental criteria and we expect the first labels to be awarded at the turn of the year. We hope that agreement will soon be reached on a range of other criteria including those for light bulbs, hairsprays, tissue products and soil improvers.

Competitive Tendering

20. **Mr. Clifton-Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the services which councils may put out to tender.

Mr. Curry: Local authorities can voluntarily put out to tender any services they think it appropriate. An increasing number of councils recognise the benefits of competition and, in addition to the services already subject to compulsory competitive tendering, have their own voluntary tendering programmes.

37. **Mr. Congdon:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made in his plans to extend CCT to a council's professional services.

Mr. Curry: We are continuing to consult the local authority associations and professional institutions on all aspects of the Government's proposals for extending CCT to local authority professional services, and have made considerable progress. Secondary legislation for legal and construction-related services, the first services to be introduced in the phased programme, will be circulated in draft for consultation in December and laid before Parliament thereafter. Legislation for the other services will follow.

Local Government Finance

21. **Sir Thomas Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement about his review of the formulae for calculating grants to local authorities.

Mr. Gummer: Work on the review of standard spending assessments for 1994-95 is now complete. I discussed the findings of the review with the local authority associations at the Consultative Council on Local Government Finance last week. Proposals for 1994-95 will be announced later this year.

28. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress he has made to alter, amend and improve standard spending assessments.

Mr. Gummer: Work has now finished on the review of standard spending assessments for 1994-95. The primary aim of the review was to incorporate data from the 1991 census into the underlying standard spending assessment formulae. Proposals for 1994-95 will be announced later this year.

Energy Conservation

22. **Mr. Cox:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to develop energy conservation projects both in domestic and business buildings; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: To encourage energy efficiency at home so as to reduce the threat of global warming, my right hon. Friend will tomorrow launch the Helping the Earth week.

At the same event, the Energy Saving Trust will launch a pilot trial of local energy advice centres which is partly funded by the Government.

Council Property (Repairs)

23. **Mr. Stephen:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to ensure that councils repair properties promptly.

Sir George Young: We are introducing an improved right to repair scheme from 1 April 1994 which will ensure that council tenants have a simple and reliable way of getting urgent repairs carried out promptly and paid for by the council.

Council Rents

24. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what change has occurred in the current rent for council houses and flats in England between 1979 and the most recent date for which figures are available.

Sir George Young: The estimated average weekly unrebated rent for local housing authority dwellings in April 1979 was £6·41. In April 1993, it was £33·50.

Estate Action

25. **Mr. Luff:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what resources have been made available under the estate action scheme since its introduction.

Mr. Baldry: Provision for estate action, from the inception of the programme to 1993-94, amounts to over £1·5 billion.

Council House Sales (Receipts)

26. **Ms Lynne:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the implementation of his policies in relation to allowing local authorities to spend capital receipts from past sales of council houses.

Sir George Young: We have recently widened the scope for debt-free local authorities to spend their reserved capital receipts. Other authorities can spend their reserved receipts provided that they use a credit approval. We have no plans to alter these arrangements.

Empty Properties, Liverpool

27. **Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many public and private sector properties are currently standing vacant in Liverpool.

Mr. Baldry: Local authorities report the number of their own dwellings which were vacant and estimates of the numbers of vacant dwellings owned by housing associations, by other public sector landlords and in the private sector in their annual housing investment programme—HIP1—returns. "Other public sector" includes dwellings owned by another local authority.

The latest available figures, for 1 April 1993, are shown in columns A71, A72, A73 and A74 respectively of Liverpool city council's HIP1 return, a copy of which is in the Library.

Bathing Water

29. **Mr. Matthew Banks:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he next expects to meet representatives from North West Water plc to discuss bathing water cleanliness; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State visited North West Water earlier this month to learn of progress on their schemes to improve bathing water quality at Southport, Blackpool and elsewhere. He has no immediate plans for further discussions, but he will continue to take a close interest in the improvements now under way.

London Docklands

30. **Mr. Spearing:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has received or plans to make concerning de-designation of any area currently within the statutory curtilage of the London Docklands development corporation.

Mr. Baldry: Detailed discussions have been taking place between the London Docklands development corporation and the London boroughs of Newham, Tower Hamlets and Southwark about the progressive withdrawal of the LDDC from parts of the urban development area. The Department has been kept in touch with the progress of these discussions.

Council House Sales

31. **Sir David Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many council houses have been sold to sitting tenants in England since May 1979.

Sir George Young: Between April 1979 and June 1993, about 1·35 million tenants bought their homes from English local authorities and new towns.

32. **Mr. Nigel Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has for the improvement of home ownership opportunities for those living in council homes.

Sir George Young: The new rent-to-mortgage scheme came into operation on 11 October. It provides a new route into home ownership for council tenants who pay full rent and are financially secure, but who find the full right-to-buy purchase price is still beyond their reach.

Urban Policies

33. **Mr. Jim Cunningham:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on his current urban policies.

Mr. Baldry: The Government will continue to support the regeneration of urban areas through their main programmes and special measures. These measures include bringing together English Estates, derelict land grant and city grant into a single Urban Regeneration Agency which will be a major engine of renewal; supporting the urban development corporations which have already attracted some £12 billion in private investment; and encouraging local regeneration through city challenge.

Thermal Oxide Reprocessing Plant

34. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to come to a decision on the commissioning of THORP.

Mr. Yeo: Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food have granted British Nuclear Fuels plc's existing authorisations to discharge liquid and gaseous radioactive wastes from Sellafield, to permit the testing of the company's thermal oxide reprocessing plant with natural and depleted uranium. The variations came into effect on 2 September 1993.

The grant of the variations is without prejudice to consideration of the company's main applications for authorisation to operate THORP, currently being undertaken by the Secretary of State for the Environment and the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. If the decisions on the main applications do not permit THORP to operate, the variations would require the company to stop testing and decontaminate the plant.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 28 June, *Official Report*, column *388*, if he will set out the technical areas in which RWMAC has been asked to do further work and the timescale set for it to submit its report.

Mr. Yeo: Last year, the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee—RWMAC—produced a first report on the proposals by British Nuclear Fuels plc —BNFL—to offer waste substitution to those foreign customers with whom its contracts provide for the return of waste. Under its proposals, BNFL would return an equivalent amount of high-level radioactive waste in place of intermediate and low-level waste arising from the reprocessing of their spent fuel.

British Nuclear Fuels plc has proposed the integrated radiological toxic potential—ITP—system for comparing the radiological equivalence between different waste streams. I have written to the chairman of RWMAC requesting the advice of the committee on whether ITP is a suitable basis for determining radiological equivalence, whether there are any limitations to its application and whether, in the committee's opinion, BNFL's proposals are on this basis broadly neutral. The committee has also been asked to identify the environmental implications resulting from substitution and to advise in what circumstances these may be significant.

The committee's advice is expected early next year.

Homelessness

35. **Mr. Milligan:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many people were accepted as homeless in the most recent two quarters for which figures are available.

Sir George Young: The number of households accepted as homeless by local authorities in England in the quarter ending June 1993 is estimated at 34,410. This is some 1,700—5 per cent.—less than the 36,120 accepted in the previous quarter.

This is the fourth quarter in succession in which the number of homelessness acceptances has fallen.

Ozone Depletion

36. **Mrs. Lait:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action the United Kingdom is taking to phase out the production of substances damaging the ozone layer.

Mr. Yeo: Under the EC regulation that implements the Montreal protocol on substances that deplete the ozone layer, United Kingdom production of halons must cease at the end of this year, chlorofluorocarbons and carbon tetrachloride at the end of next year and 1,1,1 trichloroethane at the end of 1995. Controls on hydrochlorofluorocarbons—HCFCs—and methyl bromide were added to the protocol last year, and a new regulation which would apply them within the EC is currently under discussion. In those discussions, the United Kingdom is pressing for the Community to agree to tighter controls than the protocol contains on both HCFCs and methyl bromide.

Single Mothers

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has relating to provision of local authority accommodation for single mothers; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: In my answer today to the hon. Member for Greenwich (Mr. Raynsford), I have indicated that we will be consulting interested organisations in due course about our proposals to reform the homelessness legislation, with the aim of ensuring fairer access to permanent social housing for everyone who needs it. I will consider what further accommodation provision may be needed for single mothers in that context.

Multiple Occupation Houses

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage of multiple occupation houses are classed as *(a)* unfit for human habitation and *(b)* substandard.

Sir George Young: The 1991 English house condition survey found 28 per cent. of multiple occupation houses, defined as dwellings in which facilities are shared by more than one household, unfit under section 604 of the Housing Act 1985, as amended by schedule 9 to the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. Information on the percentage unfit under section 352 of this Act is not available.

Docklands Light Railway

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Bow and Poplar (Ms Gordon) of 26 July, *Official Report*, column *580*, when he intends to make an announcement on the construction of the docklands light railway extension to Greenwich and Lewisham.

Mr. Baldry: An announcement will be made soon, once the structure of the project has been fully assessed to take into account the interests of both the public and the private sectors. Studies are under way to scrutinise the capital costs of building the railway's extension to Lewisham and to assess the best means of providing for private financing of its construction.

Climate Change

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the implications for Her Majesty's Government's policy on global warming and climate change of the findings of the Natural Environment Research Council's terrestrial initiative in the global environmental research project released on 31 August; and what further funding will be made available to the project to follow up the research findings published to date.

Mr. Yeo: Work under the Natural Environment Research Council's terrestrial initiative in global environmental research—TIGER—will help to improve predictions of climate change and its impacts. The results will be part of the scientific evidence supporting the implementation of the framework convention on climate change under which the United Kingdom will be committed to take actions aimed at returning CO_2 and other greenhouse gas emissions to 1990 levels by 2000.

Funding of the programme is a matter for the Natural Environment Research Council. The Department will continue to support TIGER by facilitating joint work with the Hadley Centre climate prediction programme and through the climate impacts link project at the climatic research unit, university of East Anglia.

Housing

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has to issue further guidance, and to amend existing guidance, to relevant authorities under the powers contained in section 71 of the Housing Act 1985.

Sir George Young: The Government have consulted local housing authorities and other interested parties on proposals *(a)* to revise the third edition (1991) of the "Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities" in the light of the Court of Appeal's judgment in the case of R-*v*-Secretary of State for the Environment ex parte London borough of Tower Hamlets, and *(b)* to supplement the code by providing guidance on the housing provisions of the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act 1993. I intend to issue a revision of the code and a supplement to it in due course, taking account of the consultation responses.

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to use his powers under section 59(2) of the Housing Act 1985 to vary the categories of persons defined as having a priority need for accommodation.

Sir George Young: We have no plans to amend section 59(2) of the Housing Act 1985 by order.

First-time Home Buyers

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to introduce new measures that will help first-time home buyers; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young The most important way in which first-time buyers, and indeed all home buyers, will be helped is through continued improvement in the general economy. Measures that my Department is taking to encourage home ownership include the new rent-to-mortgage scheme, which will enable secure tenants of local authorities and certain other bodies to buy their homes on a mortgage that costs no more than their rent.

Environmental Programmes

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to meet representatives of *(a)* the Business Council for Sustainable Development and *(b)* the World Industry Council for the Environment to discuss their respective programmes in regard to United Kingdom environmental policy.

Mr. Yeo: None. Officials are, however, in touch with both organisations.

Capital Receipts

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his latest estimate of the total accumulated capital receipts held by local authorities which are not available for investment.

Mr. Baldry: Local authorities are not required to account for the reserved part of capital receipts separately from other amounts set aside as provision to meet credit liabilities—PCL.

At 31 March 1992, the total balance held by local authorities as PCL was around £6·5 billion. Amounts held as PCL may be used to repay debt, to meet liabilities in respect of credit arrangements, or, with the authority of a credit approval, to meet capital expenditure. In the interim, such amounts would generally be represented by financial investments.

Building and Construction

Sir Michael Neubert: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of activity in the building and construction industry since last year's autumn statement to date.

Sir George Young: Total output in the building and construction industry in Great Britain fell by 2·5 per cent. between the third quarter of 1992 and the second quarter of 1993. This change is at constant 1985 prices and adjusted to exclude normal seasonal variation.

Council Services

Mr. Legg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many councils have put services out to tender on a voluntary basis.

Mr. Baldry: This information is not held centrally.

Official Hospitality

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much was spent on official hospitality in his Department in the financial year 1992-93.

Mr. Gummer: Total expenditure by my Department, including the Building Research Establishment agency, the Planning Inspectorate agency, the Buying Agency and the Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre agency, was £138,000 in 1992-93.

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Clappison: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made by Government Departments towards their 15 per cent. energy efficiency target.

Mr. Yeo: Energy management in individual Government Departments is a matter for the Ministers responsible for those Departments. The Energy Efficiency Office of my Department provides information on good practice and monitors progress towards the target agreed in 1990 of a 15 per cent. improvement in energy efficiency over the five years ending 1995-96. The progress of Departments towards the target during 1992-93 is shown in the tables. Green Ministers reviewed the results at their meeting on 13 October; they noted an improvement in 1992-93 over 1991-92, but agreed that further improvement was required.

I am pleased to note that in the first two years of the campaign my Department has reduced weather-corrected energy expenditure per sq m by 5 per cent. Performance indicators expressing performance in terms of carbon dioxide per sq m and total carbon dioxide emissions indicate that my Department has reduced the former by 16 per cent. and the latter by 20 per cent. during the same period.

Table 1: Departmental expenditure, investment and percentage progress on the standard performance indicator (£ metre³) relative to 1990-91

Department	Energy expenditure 1992-93 (£ million)	Own investment in energy efficiency 1992-93 (£'000)	£ metre³ Percentage progress on £ metre³ relative to 1990-91 1991-92	1992-93
MAFF—Main Estate	3·9	417	(4)	(6)
—Buffer Depots	0·1	0	0	21
Cabinet Office	0·5	40	(18)	(4)
Customs	3·6	650	2	13
Defence—Civil	n/a	n/a	(10)	n/a
—Royal Navy	n/a	2,800	n/a	n/a
—Army	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
—RAF	n/a	2,300	n/a	n/a
—Procurement Executive	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
—Defence Research Agency	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
—Total	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Education	0·5	n/a	(21)	(83)
Employment	9·8	1,175	(7)	(1)
Environment	2·0	208	2	5
FCO	1·0	165	(3)	7
Health	0·8	421	(14)	(1)
Home Office—non-Prisons	2·6	0	(17)	(21)
—Prisons	24·4	1,500	(1)	(2)
Inland Revenue	12·7	1,631	1	1
Lord Chancellor's	6·4	650	1	3
ODA	0·7	n/a	—	(4)
National Heritage	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
National Savings	1·3	84	4	8
Northern Ireland Office	10·4	729	5	5
Scottish Office	1·0	416	3	(2)
Scottish Courts	1·0	20	—	4
Scottish Prisons	3·3	n/a	(2)	(5)
Social Security	15·6	843	(6)	0
Trade and Industry	5·5	n/a	1	1
Transport	4·3	368	7	7
Treasury	0·3	4	2	4
Welsh Office	0·6	121	0	2
Total (excl. MOD, ODA and Scots Courts)	112·3	9,442	(0·8)	0·2

For ODA and Scottish Courts 1991-92 is the base year. Therefore these departments' contributions have not been included in the 'Progress' totals.

Table 2: Departmental percentage progress on CO_2/metre³ relative to 1990-91

Department	Percentage progress on CO_2/metre³ relative to 1990-91 1991-92	1992-93
MAFF—Main Estate	(1)	(1)
—Buffer Depots	3	25
Cabinet Office	(8)	1
Customs	1	15
Defence—Civil	(7)	n/a
—Royal Navy	n/a	n/a
—Army	n/a	n/a
—RAF	n/a	n/a
—Procurement Executive	n/a	n/a
—Defence Research Agency	n/a	n/a
—Total	n/a	n/a
Education	(16)	(58)
Employment	(6)	3
Environment	7	16
FCO	0	13
Health	(11)	3
Home Office—non-Prisons	(15)	(17)
—Prisons	1	3
Inland Revenue	3	7
Lord Chancellor's	2	8
ODA	—	(2)
National Heritage	n/a	n/a
National Savings	6	13
Northern Ireland Office	6	6
Scottish Office	2	6
Scottish Courts	—	6
Scottish Prisons	1	(2)
Social Security	(3)	5
Trade and Industry	5	9
Transport	10	13
Treasury	23	19
Welsh Office	1	7
Total (excl. MOD, ODA and Scots Courts)	3	6

For ODA and Scottish Courts 1991-92 is the base year. Therefore these departments' contributions have not been included in the 'Progress' totals.

Table 3: Departmental percentage progress on total CO_2 emissions relative to 1990-91

Department	Percentage progress on CO_2 relative to 1990-91 1991-92	1992-93
MAFF—Main Estate	(1)	(6)
—Buffer Depots	3	24
Cabinet Office	(22)	(13)
Customs	(56)	(38)
Defence—Civil	(6)	n/a
—Royal Navy	2	(3)
—Army	(3)	1
—RAF	(2)	(2)
—Procurement Executive	n/a	n/a
—Defence Research Agency	n/a	n/a
—Total	n/a	n/a

Department	Percentage progress on CO_2 relative to 1990-91	
	1991-92	1992-93
Education	(34)	(7)
Employment	(8)	3
Environment	5	20
FCO	(2)	7
Health	(50)	0
Home Office—non-Prisons	(15)	(17)
—Prisons	(5)	(8)
Inland Revenue	0	4
Lord Chancellor's	(12)	(6)
ODA	—	(2)
National Heritage	n/a	n/a
National Savings	6	13
Northern Ireland Office	3	1
Scottish Office	(12)	(8)
Scottish Courts	—	(7)
Scottish Prisons	(1)	(2)
Social Security	(3)	(10)
Trade and Industry	7	17
Transport	10	12
Treasury	13	31
Welsh Office	2	17
Total (excl. MOD, ODA and Scots Courts)	(3)	(2)

For ODA and Scottish Courts 1991/92 is the base year. Therefore these departments' contributions have not been included in the 'Progress' totals.

Notes to Tables

1. Progress by departments under each of the Performance Indicators (PIs) is expressed as a percentage reduction relative to the base year value of the PI in question, with 15 per cent. improvement on £/metre² after five years as the campaign target. Numbers in parentheses denote regress rather than progress.
2. Some departments have revised earlier years' figures, which explains some differences from last year's published results. Equally, some of this year's figures may be subject to revision.
3. Base year figures for Customs and Excise on expenditure, consumption and floor area were all considerably understated, at least partly because the department is a minority tenant occupier in many buildings, with energy bills often paid as part of the service charge, and not separately identifiable. This situation was largely altered after the base year, hence the apparent increase in the figures. For this reason, improvement relative to 1991-92 is a more reliable indicator of progress.
4. Floor area figures are not available for most of the MOD estate. An alternative assessment method to £/metre² has been agreed whereby base year consumption figures will be adjusted up or down to allow for the addition or loss of buildings to MOD's estate during the campaign; this will also apply to CO_2/metre². For total CO_2, since no allowance is made for estate changes to any other department, unadjusted figures will be used for MOD. At the moment, adjustments have not yet been made to MOD's data, so equivalent £/metre² and CO_2/metre² are not yet available.
5. DFE's consumption is dominated by the HQ building, and this changed from a largely naturally ventilated building in the base year to a completely air-conditioned one, with a much smaller floor area, last year. This is the explanation for their large increase in £/metre².
6. Investment figures for departments do not include investment made by Property Holdings on their behalf.

Housing, London

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total number of housing starts in London for 1990-91, 1991-92, 1992-93 and expected for 1993-94 by *(a)* local authority, *(b)* housing associations and *(c)* private sectors.

Sir George Young *[holding answer 18 October 1993]:* Estimates are shown in the table of the total numbers of housebuilding starts by sector in Greater London for financial years 1990-91, 1991-92, 1992-93 and the first five months of 1993-94.

Financial Year	Private Enterprise	Housing Associations	Local Authorities	Total
1990-91	6,900	3,000	100	10,000
1991-92	7,800	3,500	100	11,400
1992-93	7,200	5,900	200	13,300
1993-94[2]	3,500	2,800	—[1]	6,400

[1] Less than 100.
[2] April to August.

The Department does not prepare forecasts of housebuilding activity.

Birds

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has had from the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds in relation to the Marismas de Santoña judgment—C355/90—in the European Court of Justice on 2 August; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo *[holding answer 18 October 1993]:* I have received a copy of the representations made by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales. A response to these representations was sent on 12 October.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

THORP

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps were taken to publicise the second consultation period on the thermal oxide reprocessing plant; how many sets of consultation documents were distributed and to whom; what criteria were adopted in deciding the scope of distribution of relevant documents; how many responses were received; and if she will give a breakdown of those *(a)* in favour of and *(b)* opposed to the opening of THORP, based on the responses.

Mr. Jack: The second consultation in connection with British Nuclear Fuels plc's application for authorisations for Sellafield, including THORP, was publicised by a public notice in the national press and in local newspapers within the Sellafield area. Some 250 sets of the consultation documents were issued to those local authorities, public bodies, environmental and other interest groups who were previously consulted by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food. In excess of 40,000 responses have been received and these are still being assessed. More detailed figures will be made available once all the responses have been considered.

Agriculture Council

Mr. David Martin: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the outcome of the Agriculture Council held in Luxembourg on 18 and 19 October; and if she will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: This Council, at which I represented the United Kingdom, considered a proposal from the Commission for changes in the agri-monetary system, made in response to pressure, mainly from Germany, at the previous meeting. Following the changes in the exchange rate mechanism in August, the appreciation of any Community currency beyond a defined limit results in an automatic revaluation of the green rate of the member state concerned and a consequent fall, in terms of that currency, in prices and amounts set under the common agricultural policy. The Commission's proposal would slightly widen the margin within which a currency can appreciate without triggering such a revaluation. I argued that there was no need to alter the existing rules. Germany continued to press for the extension of the "switchover" mechanism to floating currencies, whereby prices in all other member states would be increased in order to avoid a reduction in one.

The Council will return to this issue at its next meeting. Meanwhile, the Commission indicated that it would continue to freeze green rates at their current level. I objected to this, on legal grounds and because farmers and traders had a right to expect that existing rules would not be arbitrarily suspended.

The Council had an inconclusive discussion of the Commission's proposals for changes to the detailed arrangements for arable area payments, including set-aside, and for implementing the agreement on oilseeds reached between the Community and the United States. These proposals will similarly be considered again at the Council's next meeting.

The Agriculture Commissioner, Mr. Steichen, reported on his discussions with the United States trade representative, Mr. Kantor, on the agricultural aspects of the Uruguay round tariff negotiations.

The Council adopted two decisions by qualified majority vote, one establishing a draft supplementary and amending budget for the Community for 1993, and the other authorising the Commission to negotiate with certain banana exporting countries about their rights under the general agreement on tariffs and trade in relation to the changes in the Community's arrangements for bananas agreed last December.

Non-departmental Public Bodies

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, pursuant to her answer of 6 July, *Official Report*, columns *111-12*, whether the interests declared by chairpersons of members of the boards of executive NDPBs sponsored by her Department are maintained in a register of interests available for inspection.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 27 July 1993]:* There is no register of interests for members of NDPBs and none of the NDPBs for which my right hon. Friend is responsible maintains a register of interests available for inspection. Details of those filling many posts are published, or are available at the time of appointment.

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many animals confirmed as having BSE were born between *(a)* August 1988 and December 1988, *(b)* January 1989 and June 1989, *(c)* July 1989 and December 1989, *(d)* January 1990 and June 1990, *(e)* July 1990 and December 1990, *(f)* January 1991 and June 1991, *(g)* July 1991 and December 1991, *(h)* January 1992 and June 1992 and *(i)* July 1992 and December 1992.

Mr. Soames: The details of confirmed cases of bovine spongiform encephalopathy in cattle born in Great Britain relative to the periods referred to are as follows:

Period of birth	*Cases of BSE confirmed*
August to December 1988	3,499
January to June 1989	375
July to December 1989	397
January to June 1990	3
July to December 1990	3

Note: There have been no cases of BSE confirmed in cattle born after December 1990.

EDUCATION

Student Unions

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he has met leaders of the National Union of Students to discuss charitable status for student unions.

Mr. Boswell: My discussions with the president of the NUS have covered the position of student unions as charities, on which the Attorney-General, in his role as protector of charities, issued guidance in 1983.

Press and Public Relations

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list for each financial year since 1990-91 his Department's expenditure on press and public relations, together with the budget for those items for 1993-94 and 1994-95.

Mr. Boswell: The figures for Department of Education expenditure on press and publicity, including staff costs and relevant administrative expenditure, for the financial years 1990-91 to 1993-94 are given in the table. Figures for 1994-95 have not yet been agreed. The Department does not incur expenditure on public relations.

Year	*£000*
1990-91	5,275·6
1991-92	9,006·2
1992-93	8,036·9
1993-94	[1]10,122·6

[1] Estimated.

Official Hospitality

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how much was spent on official hospitality in his Department in the financial year 1992-93.

Mr. Boswell: In 1992-93, the Department spent £96,000 of its administration budget on providing official hospitality.

Student Lodgings

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if students lodging in private houses are protected by regulations governing homes in multiple occupation.

Mr. Boswell: The type of private rented accommodation in which most students are likely to live may be classified as a house in multiple occupation—HMO. An HMO is identified in the Housing Act 1985 as a house which is occupied by persons who do not form a single household and this may cover a range of shared accommodation, bedsits and hostels. Local authorities have wide ranging powers under the Housing Act 1985 to control the standards in HMOs.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will consult vice-chancellors on a code to protect students in lodgings from fire and from faulty gas appliances.

Mr. Boswell: Where students live in accommodation which can be classified as a house in multiple occupation, which is a house occupied by persons who do not form a single household, local authorities have wide-ranging powers to control standards under the Housing Act 1985.

In addition the Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1984 put a duty on those who install and service gas appliances. The Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act 1984 places a duty on a person who runs a business to ensure that any persons not in his employment are not exposed to risk to their health or safety.

Access Funds

Mr. Haselhurst: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will review the announced split between the postgraduate and undergraduate access funds allocated in England for 1993-94, and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Boswell: Further to my announcement on 14 June, *Official Report* column *421*, at the request of the Higher Education Funding Council for England, I have agreed a reapportionment of the £18·98 million available in access funds for distribution to institutions in England. The revised allocations, which take account of the relatively greater increase in undergraduate student numbers, are as follows:

	£million
Undergraduate	13·34
Postgraduate	5·30
Further education	0·34
Total	18·98

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 21 October 1993

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Legal Aid

Mrs. Angela Knight: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what effects the reduction in the number of cases coming before the criminal courts is likely to have on the level of legal aid expenditure contained in the Supply estimates.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The 1993-94 Supply estimate provision for legal aid is £1,284 million, net of receipts. Based on figures for expenditure to the end of August, we now forecast that net expenditure for legal aid in the current year is likely to be £1,254 million. At this stage in the year, however, there is inevitably still uncertainty about the eventual outturn. The reduction in the forecast is largely related to criminal legal aid. The changes in eligibility introduced in April, the effect of which was almost entirely in relation to civil legal aid and advice and assistance, appear to be having broadly the effect anticipated.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

Environment and Development Conference

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what contribution was made by the Overseas Development Administration to the Partnerships for Change conference on environment and development held by Her Majesty's Government in Manchester on 20 to 22 September; and if he will make a statement on the support given by his Department to the participating countries.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Overseas Development Administration was actively involved in preparations for the conference with the Department of Environment, which had responsibility for organising the event. The ODA was also represented at the conference.

Yugoslavia

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what investigations are currently being made by Her Majesty's Goverment or the EC into possible widespread incidence of epidemic disease and illness in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia as a result of the effects of implementation of economic and diplomatic sanctions; and if he will make a statement;

(2) when he received the report prepared for the European Community by the Belgian ambassador to Belgrade on 17 September regarding the effects on humanitarian and medical provisions in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia as a result of economic and diplomatic sanctions; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what reports he has received into the medical and humanitarian situation in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia as a result of the implementation of economic and diplomatic sanctions; what assessment he has made of the effect on medical and humanitarian services and facilities as a resuslt of such sanctions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The incidence of epidemic disease and illness throughout the former Yugoslavia, including Serbia and Montenegro, is the subject of frequent investigation by the World Health Organisation which is responsible for co-ordinating the international relief effort. We have made a substantial contribution including a further £10 million in medical assistance announced by my right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development on 26 August. Our total contributions, directly and through the European Community, is £141 million. Although we have not received a report prepared by the Belgian ambassador, we have received a great many reports from other sources, including that prepared by the all-party parliamentary group about humanitarian aid and UN sanctions.

Sanctions applied to Serbia and Montenegro under UN Security Council resolutions Nos. 757 and 820 specifically exclude foods and medicines, subject to notification procedures in the United Nations sanctions committee. We have worked hard in this committee to ensure that genuine humanitarian shipments are expedited.

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will support moves to allow the Federal Yugoslav authorities to fly humanitarian and medical support directly into Belgrade airport; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We recognise the importance of providing rapid humanitarian and medical support to those most in need, in the former Yugoslavia regardless of their origins.

The Belgrade authorities have made no applications to fly humanitarian supplies directly into Belgrade. The UN sanctions committee would need to decide whether this would be permitted under existing UN resolutions.

PRIME MINISTER

Community Care

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make it his policy to develop an overall assessment of community care housing needs for the United Kingdom.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

The assessment of housing needs associated with care in the community is for local housing authorities, in consultation with social services authorities, as they develop their housing strategy statements; these are intended to address all housing needs in their areas.

Office Running Costs

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Prime Minister what was the cost of running his Office during the last 12 months; and what was the cost at today's prices *(a)* five and *(b)* 10 years ago.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

Comparative information is available only for complete financial years. The costs, at 1993-94 prices, of running my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's Office in 1983-84 and 1988-89 and the budget for 1993-94 are as follows:

	£000
1983-84	5,114
1988-89	8,558
1993-94	[1]10,710

[1] Budget.

Notes:

1. The figures represent the cost of 10 Downing Street and Chequers borne on the Votes of the Cabinet Office (OPSS) and its predecessors. Over the period in question the following changes have occurred to the basis of the costs:
   in 1983-84 the then Property Services Agency introduced charges for buildings and services;
   in 1984-85 charges were introduced for the Government Car Service and the Service personnel at Chequers; and
   in 1986-87 the cost of office services was included for the first time.
2. Costs are shown in the year in which the expenditure was made. Because of billing delays this is not always in the financial year in which the goods or services were provided.

THORP

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer of 16 July, *Official Report*, column *687*, if he has yet had the opportunity to reply to the letter handed to him on 15 June by a Japanese group in respect of the thermal oxide reprocessing plant; if he will send a copy of his reply to the hon. Member for Don Valley; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

My hon. Friend the Minister for Energy replied on 22 September on behalf of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister.

Overseas Staff and Premises

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Prime Minister what is the cost for the current financial year of his Department having *(a)* premises and *(b)* personnel overseas; and what were the comparable figures for *(a)* 12, *(b)* 24, *(c)* 36 and *(d)* 48 months ago.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

The office of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister maintains neither premises nor staff overseas.

Engagements

Sir Peter Tapsell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 21 October.

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 21 October.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is attending the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in Cyprus.

United States-United Kingdom Relations

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement on present relations between the United States of America and the United Kingdom.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

The United Kingdom and the United States have a strong and fruitful relationship at all levels.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Mr. Patrick Doyle

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will publish a list of all meetings held and correspondence exchanged in the past year between his Department and Mr. Patrick Doyle, now of AST Training; what was the nature of such meetings or correspondence; what plans he has to meet Mr. Patrick Doyle; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: Since the Office of Public Service and Science was established in April 1992 I have not met Mr. Patrick Doyle and I have no plans to meet him. My Department has no record of any correspondence received from Mr. Doyle or of any meetings with him.

Technology Foresight Programme

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what recent contributions have been made by Her Majesty's Government to the OECD Committee for Scientific and Technological Policy's project on the responsiveness of scientific and technological institutions to environmental change.

Mr. Davis: The United Kingdom offered staffing support for this review which concluded with a report in 1991. The United Kingdom continues to support the work of the OECD Committee for Scientific and Technological Policy in its current programme of work.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

European Court (Phone Calls)

Dr. Godman: To ask the Chairman of the Administration Committee, pursuant to his answer of 17 February, *Official Report*, column *217*, what steps have been taken to ensure that hon. Members are not charged for telephone calls to the European Court of Justice; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: The European Court of Justice is now an authorised destination which hon. Members may dial direct at no cost to themselves. I have asked the Serjeant at Arms to ensure that an amended list of directly dialled numbers to European destinations is made available to Members.

NATIONAL FINANCE

VAT

Dr. Strang: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment his Department has made of the impact of the imposition of VAT on food upon the food consumption, nutritional intake and health of low-income families.

Sir John Cope: It would not be appropriate to comment before the Budget on 30 November.

Accountants

Mr. Darling: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will set out the criteria applied by the Government in considering whether Government Departments or public sector bodies should consider doing business with private sector accountants where there is a potential conflict of interest;

(2) on what grounds his Departments and public sector bodies decline to do business with certain partners of accountancy firms; what further plans he has to exclude particular accountancy firms from Government business; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Cope: The grounds on which Departments decide to do business with any accountancy firm will depend upon the individual circumstances of each appointment.

In general, Departments seek to ensure that there are no matters which could reduce a firm's effectiveness in performing the services for which it is to be appointed and that there are no matters which make it inappropriate for Government to have business dealings with the firm.

Mrs. Gillan: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what is the total number of audit appointments awarded by Government Departments to private accountancy firms; what is the total for the period of the last 12 months; what is the number in each Government Department; what proportion of these audit appointments were *(a)* held by the six largest accountancy firms, and *(b)* by other accountancy firms, again divided by Department; what proportion and total number of audit appointments carrying fees in excess of £25,000 is held by (i) the six largest accountancy firms and (ii) other accountancy firms; and if he will make a statement on his Department's policy on awarding audit appointments to firms other than the six largest accountancy firms;

(2) what is the total number of consultancy appointments awarded by Government Departments to private accountancy firms; what is the total for the period of the last 12 months to date; what is the number in each Government Department; what proportion of these consultancy appointments were *(a)* held by the six largest accountancy firms and *(b)* by other accountancy firms, again divided by Department; what proportion and total number of consultancy appointments carrying fees in excess of £25,000 is held by (i) the six largest accountancy firms and (ii) other accountancy firms; and if he will make a statement on his Department's policy on awarding consultancy appointments to firms other than the six largest accountancy firms.

Sir John Cope: The information sought on such appointments awarded by Government Departments to private sector accountancy firms is not held centrally, and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

The Government's policy on awarding these appointments is that firms are considered on their merits for the work involved in each appointment.

Touche Ross

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what assessment he has made of the quality of consultancy work done for Government Departments by Touche Ross; if he will list the major commissions currently being undertaken by that firm for the Government; and what plans he has to review advice purchased from Touche Ross in the past.

Sir John Cope: The information sought on consultancy work is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Prisoner Transfers

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many prisoners from England and Wales have applied for transfer to Northern Ireland prisons in the last 12 months;

(2) how many prisoners have been transferred permanently from prisons in England and Wales to prisons in Northern Ireland in the last 12 months;

(3) how many prisoners have been transferred temporarily from prisons in England and Wales to prisons in Northern Ireland in the last 12 months;

(4) how many prisoners transferred on a temporary basis to Northern Ireland from England and Wales in the last 12 months have since been made permanent transferees.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: In the 12 months to 30 September 1993, 50 prisoners applied for transfer to prisons in Northern Ireland. Of these, one prisoner was transferred on a permanent basis; four prisoners were temporarily transferred and four prisoners' requests were either refused or withdrawn. None of the prisoners temporarily transferred in this time subsequently had their transfers made permanent. However, four prisoners previously temporarily transferred were granted further temporary transfers and two prisoners previously transferred were granted permanent transfers.

Mr. A. C. S. Benton

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received in the last three years over the case of Mr. A. C. S. Benton, of Bloxwich, Walsall, when it is likely he will be able to decide on whether the conviction should be referred to the Appeal Court; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: Mr. Benton has made numerous representations over the past three years. The hon. Member was advised in June 1992 that no grounds could be found for referring Mr. Benton's conviction to the Court of Appeal. Since then further representations have been received. These are the subject of current police inquiries. When the police report is to hand, my right hon. and learned Friend will consider whether there are grounds on which it would be right for him to take any action in respect of Mr. Benton's conviction.

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to hear from the West Midlands police on the case of Mr. A. C. S. Benton of Bloxwich, Walsall.

Mr. Maclean: The inquiries which are being made by West Midlands police into Mr. Benton's case are taking longer than expected, but I understand from the chief constable that they will be completed shortly.

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he sent on Dr. Candy's report on the case of Mr. A. C. S. Benton of Bloxwich, Walsall to the West Midlands police; and when he expects to have a response to the report.

Mr. Maclean: Dr. Candy's report was received in the Home Office on 11 August and sent on to West Midlands police the following day. I expect to receive a response once the West Midlands police have considered Dr. Candy's report in the light of a further expert report which they are awaiting.

Electoral Registration

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what efforts his Department is making to encourage voters to enrol on the electoral register; what specific measures are planned to encourage more women to ensure they are on the register; and if there are any plans to target lone-parent mothers.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: We have undertaken a national television advertising campaign in support of electoral registration for the first time this year at a cost of £620,000. The advertising was targeted particularly at groups of the population, such as young people and ethnic minorities, shown by research to be less likely to register to vote. We have no evidence to suggest that women or single-parent families are among these groups and we have no plans to target them.

Sheehy Inquiry

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to announce his decision on the implementation of the Sheehy inquiry into police responsibilities and awards.

Mr. Charles Wardle: My right hon. and learned Friend hopes to make an announcement shortly.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish in full the terms of reference of the Sheehy inquiry.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The terms of reference of the inquiry into police responsibilities and rewards were announced by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Rushcliffe (Mr. Clarke) on 6 July 1992, cols. 43-44.

Animal Welfare

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what inspections are carried out by his Department on establishments using animals to test impact consequences on aero-engines.

Mr. Charles Wardle: None. I understand that the animals in question are humanely killed before the tests take place. Such work therefore falls outside the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986, which is concerned only with experiments using living animals.

Wymott Prison

Sir Ivan Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the report of the inquiry by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons into the recent disturbance of HM prison Wymott will be published.

Mr. Howard: The report by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons of his inquiry into the disturbance at Wymott prison is being published today. A copy of the report is being placed in the Library.

Victim Support

Mr. Batiste: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much the Government have committed to victim support in each of the last five years.

Mr. Maclean: Home Office funding of the national charity, Victim Support, in the last five years is set out in the table:

Financial year	*Home Office grant (£ million)*	*Percentage increase over previous year*
1989-90	3·910	43
1990-91	4·735	21
1991-92	5·670	20
1992-93	7·260	28
1993-94	8·375	15

Security Forces' Equipment

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what research has been carried out into the use and possible side-effects of electroshock equipment within the United Kingdom;

(2) what official guidelines or regulations are applicable for the use of *(a)* electroshock equipment by the police, prison and security forces, *(b)* the tear gas agent oleoresin capsicum, *(c)* Frag 12 exploding ammunition and *(d)* dum dum bullets in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Charles Wardle: In 1990 the Forensic Science Service published a theoretical assessment of the effects of electric shock weapons.

None of these devices or substances is used against the general public, suspects or offenders, by the police, prison services or the security forces in the United Kingdom.

Ministerial Broadcasts

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the occasions on which he has spoken on the BBC Radio 4 programme "Today", and the topics in each case.

Mr. Howard: I receive numerous requests for interviews from the media, covering the whole range of my Department's responsibilities. I accept many of them, including requests from "Today".

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Moated Sites

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what action his Department is currently taking to record and preserve moated sites of archaeological interest in England and Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: English Heritage's monuments protection programme is evaluating all known archaeological remains

in England, including moated sites, and identifying those which may be suitable for scheduling. This exercise is expected to result in a very significant increase in the number of scheduled monuments.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales is responsible for the scheduling of monuments in Wales.

Official Hospitality

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how much was spent on official hospitality in his Department in the financial year 1992-93.

Mr. Brooke *[holding answer 20 October 1993]:* My Department has incurred expenditure of £40,759 on official hospitality during the financial year 1992-93. This total includes official hospitality expenditure incurred by the royal parks and the Historic Royal Palaces Agency.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Gibraltar

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs to what extent Her Majesty's Government endorse the contents of the address given by the Chief Minister of Gibraltar to the United Nations Committee of 24 on 14 July.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: We shall continue to fulfill our obligations to non-self-governing territories under chapter XI of the United Nations charter. The situation in Gibraltar is, however, complicated by historical realities, particularly the treaty of Utrecht. We stand by our commitment to the people of Gibraltar enshrined in the constitution.

Saudi Arabia

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations Her Majesty's Government have made to the Saudi Government about the religious persecution of Florencio Madriaga and Roque Atilon.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We are aware of these cases but have no specific information about them. We and our EC partners seek opportunities to discuss human rights, including freedom of worship, with the Saudi authorities, who can be in no doubt of the strength of our views on this issue. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs last did so during his visit to Saudi Arabia last month.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Rabies

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will make a statement on current measures to prevent rabies from entering the United Kingdom; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Hague) by my right hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk Coastal (Mr. Gummer) on 16 June 1992, *Official Report*, column *455-56.*

Fish Farms

Mr. Hoon: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what discussions her Department has had on the implications of siting fish farm enterprises close to environmentally sensitive locations; and whether she will issue written guidance.

Mr. Jack: The siting of fish farms in inland waters is regulated by the town and country planning system, for which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment is responsible.

Mr. Hoon: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what business opportunities her Department's delegation that visited Turkey from 9 to 12 May identified in the fish farming sector.

Mr. Jack: During his visit to Turkey from 9 to 12 May this year my right hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, Coastal (Mr. Gummer) was accompanied by a team of businessmen including a representative from the fish farming industry. I understand that a number of potential opportunities were identified including in particular joint ventures for the development of fish farms. These have been notified to the industry. The fish farming sector in Turkey is at an early stage of development and the potential for business exists in the medium and long term.

Renewable Energy

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will meet the Countryside Commission to discuss its programme of assessing the impact of renewable energy technologies on farmland and agriculture.

Mr. Jack: While I am always willing to meet the Countryside Commission to discuss matters of mutual interest, I understand that its research into the broader implications of renewable energy for the countryside has only recently been commissioned. I shall be pleased to consider the Commission's advice when that research is complete.

School Milk

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations she has received regarding European Commission proposals to cut the subsidy on school milk; and what discussions have taken place on the matter in the EC Agriculture Council.

Mr. Jack: The Department received a number of representations from the dairy trade and local authorities opposing the Commission's proposal for a 50 per cent. cut in the rate of school milk subsidy. At the Agriculture Council on 20 to 21 September the United Kingdom, supported by several other member states, argued that the Commission's proposal was too drastic a measure for achieving budgetary savings and would threaten the viability of a popular scheme which had played an important role in encouraging consumption of milk and milk products. In the light of these arguments the Council agreed to limit the reduction in subsidy to 25 per cent. and to find the balance of the necessary savings by making technical adjustments aimed at improving the cost-effectiveness of the scheme. The Government are satisfied

that this represents a sensible compromise which safeguards the viability of the scheme while at the same time taking account of the severe pressure on the Community budget.

Environmental Statistics

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how her Department was represented at the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe meeting on methodological issues of environmental statistics, held in Geneva on 20 to 23 September.

Mr. Jack: My Department's interest was represented by a member of the Government Statistical Service at a meeting on 20 to 23 September 1993 for a joint UN/ECG and Eurostat work session on specific methodological problems in environmental statistics. The meeting was held in Bratislava.

Equine Viral Arteritis

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what measures her Department has taken to establish which countries would be willing to accept United Kingdom exports of equidae vaccinated for equine viral arteritis; and if she will list those countries which *(a)* will and *(b)* will not grant access.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The Ministry's Chief Veterinary Officer has written or is about to write to his counterparts in a number of third countries inquiring as to the animal health conditions which would have to be met to enable equidae vaccinated against equine viral arteritis to be eligible for import into those countries.

Current bilateral agreements with Australia and Barbados preclude the export to those countries of equidae vaccinated against EVA. The United States of America will accept vaccinated horses.

Cetaceans

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will give details of the survey on the abundance and distribution of small cetaceans in the North sea; and which other countries are involved.

Mr. Jack: In 1993-94 my Department will contribute some £167,000 towards five cetacean research projects. The projects are:

1. Population biology of cetaceans
2. The effects of environmental change on whale populations
3. Interaction between cetaceans and man
4. ASCOBANS survey of cetaceans in the North sea and Baltic
5. Enhancing the acoustic detectability of fishing nets.

Whales

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the purpose of the meeting held in London on or around 11 October between the British Commissioner to the International Whaling Commission and other commissioners; which countries were represented; and what was discussed.

Mr. Jack: The United Kingdom Commissioner to the International Whaling Commission held talks in London on 11 October with colleagues from Australia, Brazil, France, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands and the United States of America. These were informal, and concentrated on the forthcoming plans of the IWC to hold an intersessional meeting next February on the establishment of a southern ocean sanctuary, in preparation for decisions at the 46th annual meeting of the commission.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information the International Whaling Commission has regarding the export of whale meat from Norway to Japan; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: The International Whaling Commission has no information on the commercial export of whale meat from Norway to Japan. However, I understand there has been a recent attempt to smuggle whale meat out of Norway which was discovered by the Norwegian authorities. Our embassy in Oslo confirms that this matter is currently under police investigation and we await reports from the Norwegian Government. The Government have made their views crystal clear on Norway's decision to resume commercial whaling activity and to proceed with their lethal scientific programme. We have pressed the Norwegian Government at the highest levels to reconsider their position and will continue to do so. Nobody should doubt that this is a matter of considerable concern to the Government.

Arable Area Payments Scheme

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what are the area figures in hectares on a county basis for *(a)* applications under the main scheme of the arable area payments scheme in 1993 apportioned to (i) cereals, (ii) oilseeds, (iii) protein crops and (iv) set-aside and *(b)* applications under the simplified scheme of the arable area payments scheme in 1993 apportioned to *(x)* cereals, *(y)* oilseeds and *(z)* protein crops.

Mrs. Shephard: The following table gives provisional figures for the five separate yield regions. Because applicants had to submit a single area aid application in respect of all their land, it is not possible to provide accurate figures on a county basis. I will, however, let the hon. Member have area figures related to the county in which the applicant's main holding is based as soon as they are available.

	England	*Wales*	*Northern Ireland*	*Scotland non-LFA*	*Scotland LFA*	*United Kingdom*
Main scheme:						
Cereals	2,174,093	14,062	5,507	277,429	40,134	2,511,225
Oilseeds	307,340	1,353	498	56,731	4,945	370,867
Proteins	198,071	816	43	4,101	49	203,080
Vining peas[1]	20,302	—	—	2,795	198	23,295
Linseed	151,897	2,250	230	1,415	—	155,792
Set-aside of which:	481,069	3,028	1,193	61,617	8,725	555,632
Growing non-food crops	51,084	151	—	2,448	56	53,739

	England	Wales	Northern Ireland	Scotland non-LFA	Scotland LFA	United Kingdom
Simplified Scheme:						
Cereals	205,825	22,184	[2]25,587	21,213	35,229	310,038
Oilseeds	1,258	—	—	—	—	1,258
Proteins	2,323	—	—	—	—	2,323

[1] Not eligible in 1994.
[2] Includes a small area of oilseeds which cannot be identified separately for reasons of confidentiality.

Fisheries Council

Sir Patrick McNair-Wilson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the outcome of the Fisheries Council held in Luxembourg on 20 October; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: I represented the United Kingdom at the Council of EC Fisheries Ministers on 20 October, together with my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland.

Since accession, fishing by Spanish and Portuguese vessels in Community waters has been under arrangements which limit their numbers and the waters to which they have access. Under the Fisheries Section of the Act of Accession for Spain and Portugal, any decisions to change the arrangements for these countries would have to be made by the end of 1993.

At the Council, the Commission put forward a proposal for a Council regulation.

In substance, the proposal would give all EC member countries access to Community waters within the confines —endorsed at the June Council—of no change to the requirements of no increase in fishing effort and the preservation of relative stability. The document did not deal with the constraints which would be applied to Spain and Portugal under these proposals. Effectively, we were being asked to sign a blank cheque.

I said this was unacceptable and requested that Council should deal with all aspects of this matter together. I would need to be satisfied on the arrangements to apply in the Irish box and the North sea; on how fishing effort would be capped at the present level; and on how member states' shares of available quotas—"relative stability"—would be respected. Other member states made similar points.

The Commission presented a proposal which specifies the minimum information needed in fishing vessel licences throughout the Community. This should prove a useful tool in ensuring common standards of enforcement but it must not encroach on existing national licensing rules.

The Council discussed the market situation for fish and asked the Commission to review the existing minimum import price arrangements for each fish species and, as appropriate, to use its powers to continue these temporary measures until the end of the year or to adjust them. The Council will return to the question of the market situation at its December meeting.

I raised the question of industrial fishing. Currently there is considerable concern about its possibly harmful effects on the marine environment and the marine food chain and the consequences for fish stocks and sea birds. I am pleased to say that the Commissioner endorsed the importance of this issue and agreed that the Council should discuss it further.

No matter on the agenda was listed for a vote and no vote was taken.

LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

Russian Elections

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Lord President of the Council if arrangements are to be made for the Russian elections in December to be observed by hon. Members.

Mr. Newton: We shall be responding positively to the Russian Government's invitation to send observers to monitor the parliamentary elections in Russia in December. The arrangements are under discussion.

ENVIRONMENT

Contaminated Land

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent meetings his Department has had with the Institute of Waste Management on inherited liabilities and prospective restoration of contaminated land.

Mr. Yeo: The Department liaises regularly with the Institute of Waste Management to discuss a wide range of environmental and waste management issues. However, the subject of inherited liabilities and prospective restoration has not been discussed in recent meetings.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place in the Library the paper on civil liability and contaminated land by his Department's contaminated land and liabilities division, presented to the third environmental insurance conference held in London on 15 October.

Mr. Yeo: I have placed a copy in the Library along with a copy of a speech on the same subject which I delivered to the British Bankers Association on 13 October 1993.

Rural Development

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the review of the priority areas of the Rural Development Commission announced on 30 July.

Mr. Yeo: I look forward to receiving the Rural Development Commission's recommendations shortly and expect it to make an announcement of the new rural development areas thereafter.

Noise Abatement Zones

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what conclusions he has reached on consideration of the Building Research Establishment's report in relation to noise abatement zones; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: My Department is considering the effectiveness of noise abatement zones in the light of the findings of the Building Research Establishment's "Review of Noise Abatement Zones in England and Wales 1976-1992". The review showed that the procedure for establishing and monitoring NAZs was complex and resource intensive for all the parties involved. In reaching conclusions, we must balance the need to limit the regulatory burden on businesses with the continuing need to deal effectively with noise pollution.

Open University

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will meet educationists at the Open university to discuss the benefits to environmental communication of and future developments to the new Open university course on enterprise and the environment.

Mr. Yeo: My Department would be interested to see any assessment of the impact of the Open university's course on enterprise and the environment.

EC Law

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the European Commission's 10th annual report on the monitoring of the application of Community law, Com (93) 320 final, so far as it refers to matters for which his Department has responsibility.

Mr. Yeo: We welcome the environment section of the Commission's report and look forward to debating it in the Environment Council in due course, as agreed on a United Kingdom initiative during our presidency.

Mortgage Interest Relief

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has regarding the number of first-time buyers receiving tax relief on mortgage interest; what percentage of mortgage holders they represent; what percentage of mortgage advances in cash terms they represent; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: According to the 1991 Labour Force Survey, 3·5 million first-time buyer households in England were purchasing their property with a mortgage. They represent 42 per cent. of all mortgage holders.

The Labour Force Survey does not provide information on the amount of mortgage finance borrowed by first time buyers. However, using information collected by the Department from building societies and banks it is estimated that in 1992 first time buyers' mortgage advances accounted for 45 per cent. of all such advances.

EC Environment Institute

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what benefits accrue to the United Kingdom from resources committed to the European Commission's Environment Institute in Ispra.

Mr. Yeo: The nature of the work undertaken within the various component institutes of the Commission's joint research centre, including the Environment Institute, is such that the resultant benefits are designed to accrue broadly to the European Community as a whole. As a consequence, the benefits that flow from Community resources committed to these activities are shared by all 12 member states, including the United Kingdom. The specific benefits of the JRC institutes' activities accruing to any one member state are, however, not easy to isolate and are not routinely assessed.

Housing

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what proposals he has to make changes to *(a)* section 58, *(b)* section 59(1), *(c)* section 60, *(d)* section 62, *(e)* section 64 and *(f)* section 65 of the Housing Act 1985;

(2) what plans he has to introduce new legislation on amendments to existing legislation relating to the provisions of part III of the Housing Act 1985.

Sir George Young: In order to ensure fairer access to permanent social housing for those who need it, the Government propose to reform the homelessness provisions in the Housing Act 1985. We want to restore confidence in the housing waiting list, and to get away from the present position where, in some areas, the only route in to social housing may be to become statutorily homeless. We will be consulting on our proposals in due course, which will cover steps local authorities can take to prevent people from becoming homeless, and to increase the supply of rented housing in co-operation with private landlords.

Climate Change

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on progress made at the negotiations held in Geneva in September on *(a)* financing and *(b)* ratification of the United Nations convention on climate change.

Mr. Yeo: At the international negotiating committee meeting in August, good progress was made towards preparing for the first conference of parties to the convention, which is expected to take place in Berlin early in 1995. On financing, detailed preliminary discussions took place on support for developing countries through the global environment facility, the interim financial mechanism of the convention. Thirty-six countries have now ratified the convention. Fifty ratifications are needed to bring the convention into force. The United Kingdom has undertaken, along with our G7 and EC partners, to ratify by the end of 1993.

Annual Environmental Review

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for The Environment what was the original publication date of the annual environmental review; when he now expects the review report to be published; and what is the reason for the delay.

Mr. Yeo: We will publish the third year report in the series of White Papers on the Environment in the new year. This will allow us to take account both of the outcome of the annual public expenditure survey and production of the United Kingdom strategy for sustainable development. We had no other date in mind and there has been no delay.

Noise

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many complaints relating to noise have been *(a)* reported to local authorities and *(b)* investigated by local authorities under the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

Mr. Yeo: The Department of the Environment "Digest of Environmental Protection and Water Statistics" HMSO 1992 indicates that during 1990-91, 136,609 complaints about noise were received by local authorities, relating to the Control of Pollution Act 1974 and the Environmental Protection Act 1990. Of these, 31,721 were considered to be justified as statutory nuisances and in 6,113 cases abatement notices were served.

The 1990 Act came into operation on 1 January 1991 and separate figures for the number of complaints investigated under that Act in 1990-91 are not available.

Community Care Programme

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the number of dwelling units which need to be built or converted each year, for the next three years, in order to provide accommodation to meet the requirements of the community care programme; and what is his estimate of the cost of this provision.

Sir George Young: Community care policy came into full operation earlier this year; its impact on housing demand is expected to be gradual and progressive. Local authorities include information about community care in their housing strategy statements, which inform local decision-making about resource allocation.

Environmental Programmes

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to publish the third-year report on the Government's environmental strategy set out in the 1990 White Paper, "This Common Inheritance".

Mr. Yeo: The Government will publish the third year report on the White Paper, "This Common Inheritance" in the new year.

Valuation Offices

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the reasons why he has asked his Department's valuation offices to ask their tribunal members if they are currently parish or town councillors.

Mr. Baldry: From time to time, the Department seeks information about trends in the composition of the membership of the valuation tribunal service. In this case, the question related to membership of all local authorities, not just parish or town councils.

Kirkstall Valley, Leeds

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will immediately call in the proposals by Berkshire Properties to develop the Kirkstall valley in Leeds and order a public inquiry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: Should they be minded to grant planning consent for the proposed development in the Kirstall valley, the Leeds development corporation has assured my Department that the planning application will be referred to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State so that he can decide whether or not it should be called-in for public inquiry.

Thermal Oxide Reprocessing Plant

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many representations he had received in the consultation excercise on THORP before 4 October; how many of these were in favour of THORP going ahead; and how many against.

Mr. Yeo: Over 40,000 responses were received during the consultation exercise, of which more than half arrived in the last two days of the consultation. The responses are still being counted and assessed. More detailed figures will be made available once all the responses have been considered.

Council Tax

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what is his latest estimate of the total number in each council band in England of *(a)* dwellings, *(b)* exempt dwellings, *(c)* chargeable dwellings, *(e)* chargeable dwellings entitled to a single discount for the purposes of council tax, *(f)* chargeable dwellings that are entitled to two discounts for the purposes of council tax and *(g)* total equivalent number of dwellings after discounts, exemptions, and disabled relief;

(2) what is his latest estimate number of band D equivalents in each council tax band in England;

(3) what is his latest estimate of the number of dwellings on the valuation list in England that were exempt in each class A to Q.

Mr. Gummer *pursuant to the answer, 22 July 1993, Official Report,* column *346*: The information requested is as follows:

Dwellings on valuation lists held by English local authorities on 7 June 1993

Thousands

	A	*B*	*C*	*D*	*E*	*F*	*G*	*H*	*Total*
Dwellings on lists	5,258	3,842	4,388	2,923	1,819	986	751	121	20,089
Exempt dwellings	192	110	104	60	32	18	14	4	533
Dwellings subject to disabled reduction	—	19	23	17	12	7	7	2	87
Diplomats dwellings	0·1	0·3	0·2	0·3	0·3	0·3	0·8	0·6	2·4
Dwellings entitled to a single discount	2,155	1,261	1,223	695	366	168	114	18	6,000
Dwellings entitled to two discounts	150	90	97	64	44	29	32	13	519

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	Total
Equivalent number of dwellings after discounts, exemptions and disabled relief	4,472	3,376	3,924	2,652	1,668	911	687	104	17,794
Number of Band D equivalents[1]	2,981	2,626	3,488	2,652	2,039	1,316	1,145	207	16,454

[1] Excluding contributions in lieu in respect of Class O dwellings.

Exempt dwellings on valuation lists held by English local authorities on 7 June 1993, by class

(thousands)

Class and description		Number of exempt dwellings
A	Empty dwellings where works are required, under way or recently completed	73
B	Empty dwellings owned by charities	1
C	Dwellings left empty and unfurnished	183
D	Dwellings left empty by prisoners	1
E	Dwellings left empty by patients in hospital and care homes	30
F	Dwellings left empty by deceased persons	48
G	Dwellings which are unfit etc.	8
H	Empty clergy dwellings	1
I	Dwellings left empty by people receiving care	5
J	Dwellings left empty by people providing care	1
K	Dwellings left empty by students	2
L	Repossessed dwellings	36
M	Halls of residence	7
N	Dwellings occupied solely by students or school leavers	61
O	Armed forces' accommodation	60
P	Visiting forces' accommodation	15
Q	Dwellings left empty by bankrupts	—
	Total exempt dwellings	533

EDUCATION

Primary Schools

Mr. Paice: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will provide for all local education authorities the percentage of total schools expenditure allocated to primary schools for the latest year for which figures are available and list them in rank order.

Mr. Forth: The table sets out, for each local education authority, the percentage of the aggregated schools budget allocated to primary schools for the financial year 1993-94, and is derived from budget statements available to the Department as at 7 July.

1993-94 budgets:
Percentage of aggregated schools budget allocated to primary schools

Local education authority	Rank order	Percentage of ASB
City of London	1	100·00
Wandsworth	2	79·66
Hillingdon	3	74·04
Ealing	4	72·42
Bromley	5	69·19
Lambeth	6	67·28
Sutton	7	65·79
Southwark	8	63·62
Gloucestershire	9	63·47
Kensington/Chelsea	10	63·11
Islington	11	62·93
Harrow	12	62·87
Croydon	13	61·88
Surrey	14	61·85
Merton	15	60·49
Hackney	16	60·40
Warwickshire	17	60·01
Brent	18	59·78
Essex	19	59·73
Buckinghamshire	20	59·24
Haringey	21	59·02
Tower Hamlets	22	58·13
Hampshire	23	57·98
Manchester	24	57·88
Hammersmith/Fulham	25	57·69
Knowsley	26	57·50
Tameside	27	57·47
Salford	28	57·05
Lewisham	29	57·01
Birmingham	30	56·94
Waltham Forest	31	56·88
Cambridgeshire	32	56·77
Lincolnshire	33	55·73
Dudley	34	55·71
Sandwell	35	55·71
Kingston	36	55·43
Trafford	37	55·26
Kent	38	55·07
Humberside	39	55·04
Norfolk	40	54·85
Calderdale	41	54·82
Cumbria	42	54·49
Bury	43	53·91
Wolverhampton	44	53·89
Barnsley	45	53·80
South Tyneside	46	53·77
Newham	47	53·52
Hounslow	48	53·09
Sheffield	49	52·99
Derbyshire	50	52·86
Rochdale	51	52·60
Greenwich	52	52·58
Bolton	53	52·53
Cleveland	54	52·51
Lancashire	55	51·98
Sunderland	56	51·90
Liverpool	57	51·83
Barnet	58	51·81
Leeds	59	51·81
Gateshead	60	51·57
Richmond	61	51·51
Kirklees	62	50·69
Stockport	63	50·61
Coventry	64	50·34
Westminster	65	50·19
Durham	66	50·18
Solihull	67	50·17
Wirral	68	50·14
Avon	69	50·12
Leicestershire	70	49·94
Shropshire	71	49·81
Staffordshire	72	49·80
Wakefield	73	49·74
Devon	74	49·74
East Sussex	75	49·72
Hertfordshire	76	49·57
Walsall	77	49·45
Berkshire	78	49·41
St. Helens	79	49·27
Oldham	80	49·13
Wiltshire	81	49·12
Nottinghamshire	82	49·02

Local education authority	Rank order	Percentage of ASB
Rotherham	83	48·76
Dorset	84	48·73
West Sussex	85	48·70
Cheshire	86	48·55
Wigan	87	48·40
Cornwall	88	48·40
Northamptonshire	89	47·97
Bexley	90	47·91
Enfield	91	47·56
Sefton	92	47·20
Somerset	93	47·15
Newcastle	94	46·87
Doncaster	95	46·46
Havering	96	45·97
Oxfordshire	97	45·44
Bedfordshire	98	45·27
Hereford/Worcester	99	44·85
Redbridge	100	44·22
North Tyneside	101	44
Camden	102	42·45
Bradford	103	40·62
Suffolk	104	39·43
Northumberland	105	34·77
Isle of Wight	106	34·14
Barking	107	n/a
Isles of Scilly	108	n/a
North Yorkshire	109	n/a

Notes to Table

(1) "n/a" denotes either that no budget statement was available at 7 July, or that Part 1 of the authority's statement did not provide a primary/secondary breakdown of the Aggregated Schools Budget.

(2) The primary sector's percentage share of a local education authority's Aggregated Schools Budget will be heavily influenced by a variety of factors, including the respective numbers of primary and secondary grant maintained schools in the authority's area: the respective contributions made by schools and further education institutions to the totality of provision for the age-range 16-18: and (in the case of the authorities marked[1]) the inclusion of special schools' funding within the Aggregated Schools Budget.

EDUCATION

Hasmonean Preparatory School

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Education when he expects to make a decision on the application by Hasmonean preparatory school to become a voluntary-aided school.

Mr. Robin Squire: A decision will be made as soon as possible.

Technology Colleges

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is his Department's proposed budget for the technology college programme for 1994-95 and 1995-96; and how many schools it is proposed will become technology colleges in September 1994.

Mr. Robin Squire: We have not set any budget for the technology colleges programme in 1994-95 or 1995-96, nor have we set a target for the number of schools to begin operating as technology colleges from September 1994. The budget will depend on the number of schools that apply to become technology colleges and their individual needs, and on the outcome of the public expenditure survey.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list by local education authority those secondary schools which have received funds under the technology schools initiative, stating in each case, *(a)* the level of funding received and *(b)* whether the school is a county, voluntary-aided or grant-maintained school.

Mr. Robin Squire: The information requested is set out in the table. For schools which have been allocated support in the current financial year, 1993-94, expenditure may not yet have been incurred, and grant or supplementary credit approval may not yet have been claimed from the Department.

Local education authority and school	*TSI award £ thousands*	*Status*
Avon		
Chew Valley School	250	County
Culverhay Boys School	250	County
Barking and Dagenham		
Barking Abbey School	185	County
Barnet		
Mill Hill GM High School	130	Grant maintained
Ravenscroft School	163	County
Whitefield School	107	County
Barnsley		
St. Michael Secondary School	100	Voluntary assisted
The Dearne High School	250	County
Bedfordshire		
Manshead School	252	Grant maintained
Mark Rutherford Upper School	250	County
Stratton Upper School	190	County
Berkshire		
Bulmerse School	205	County
Denbigh High School	251	County
Desborough Comprehensive School	465	Grant maintained
Highdown School	190	County
Reading School	630	Grant maintained
Theale Green School	222	County
Bexley		
Bexleyheath School	149	County
Birmingham		
Arthur Terry School	200	County
Great Barr School	700	Grant maintained
Sheldon Heath School	207	County
Small Heath School	211	Grant maintained
St. John's Wall RC School	20	Voluntary assisted
Bradford		
Greenhead School	256	County
Queensbury School	190	County
Wyke Manor School	140	County
Brent		
Claremont High School	250	Grant maintained
John Kelly Schools	180	County
Preston Manor High School	250	County
Queens Park Community School	205	Grant maintained
St. Gregory's RC High School	30	Voluntary assisted
Bromley		
Bullerswood School for Girls	375	Grant maintained
Kemnal Manor School	250	County
Ravens Wood School for Boys	244	Grant maintained
Buckinghamshire		
Beaconsfield High School	750	Grant maintained
John Hampden Grammar School	193	County
Calderdale		
Brooksbank School	250	County
Calder High School	250	County
Ryburn Valley School	170	County
Cambridgeshire		
Deacons School	300	Grant maintained
The King's School	100	Grant maintained
Witchford College	166	County
St. Peter's School	274	Grant maintained
Camden		
Hampstead School	257	County
Cheshire		
Tarporley County High School	198	County
Cleveland		
Bassleton School	181	County
English Martyrs School	11	Voluntary assisted
Manor County Secondary School	190	County
Cleveland		
Northfield County School	217	County
Cornwall		
Falmouth Community School	210	County
Helston Community School	263	County
Saltash School	250	County
Coventry		
Coundon Court School	260	County
Woodway Park Secondary School	248	County
Croydon		
Archbishop Tennison's School	350	Voluntary aided
Lanfranc High School	265	County
Norbury Manor High School for Girls	250	County
Cumbria		
St. Benedict's RC School	175	Voluntary assisted
Victoria High School	185	County
Whitehaven School	250	County
Derbyshire		

Local education authority and school	TSI award £ thousands	Status
Wyndham School	250	County
Ecclesbourne School	780	Grant maintained
High View School	207	County
Nether[illegible]orpe School	300	Grant maintained
Devon		
Bideford College	220	County
Exmouth Community College	254	County
Plymstock School	250	County
Sidmouth College	230	County
St. Thomas High School	203	County
Doncaster		
Hayfield School	230	County
Dorset		
Bournemouth School	546	Grant maintained
Ridgewood School	208	County
Dudley		
The Pensnett School	250	County
Durham		
Tanfield School	221	County
Ealing		
Northolt High School	200	Grant maintained
East Sussex		
Tideway School	205	County
Essex		
Helena Romanes School	241	County
Mark Hall School	271	County
Sir Charles Lucas School	170	County
The Hylands School	250	County
Thomas Lord Audley School	250	County
Westcliffe High School for Boys	280	Grant maintained
Gloucestershire		
Beaufort School	185	County
Farmors School	250	County
Saintbridge Technology School	135	Grant maintained
The Crypt School	250	Grant maintained
Hackney		
Kingsland School	151	County
Skinners Company Upper Girls School	50	Voluntary assisted
Hampshire		
Applemore School	250	Grant maintained
Connaught School	141	County
Haringey		
SS David & Katherine's School	27	Voluntary assisted
White Hart Lane School	200	County
Harrow		
Canons High School	250	County
Park High School	210	County
Whitmore High School	250	County
Hereford & Worcester		
Minster High School	186	County
Hertfordshire		
Beaumont School	500	County
Bishops Stortford School	175	Grant maintained
Rickmansworth School	250	Grant maintained
Watford Grammar School for Boys	180	Grant maintained
Watford Grammar School for Girls	400	Grant maintained
Westfield School	200	County
Hillingdon		
Northwood School	400	Grant maintained
Swakeleys School	203	County
Hounslow		
Heston Community School	147	County
Humberside		
Headlands School	200	County
St. Bede's RC School	240	Voluntary assisted
The Immingham School	230	County
Whitgift School	195	County
Isle of Wight		
Cowes County High School	175	County
Islington		
Elizabeth G Anderson School	122	County
Kent		
Aylesford School	380	Grant maintained
Cranbrook School	438	Grant maintained
Dartford Grammar School	260	Grant maintained
Homewood School	176	Grant maintained
Northfleet School	170	County
Sir William Nottidge School	219	County
Southlands Comprehensive School	223	Grant maintained
The Cornwallis School	207	Grant maintained
Kingston on Thames		
Hollyfield School	200	County
Tolworth Girls School	200	County
Kirklees		
Almondbury High School	250	County
Batley Boy's High School	250	County
Howden Clough School	155	County
Knowsley		
Brookfield Community School	114	County
Lambeth		
La Retraite High School	750	Grant maintained
Lancashire		
Archbishop Temple School	251	Grant maintained
Baines School	205	Grant maintained
Billinge High School	235	County
Edge End High School	163	County
Lancaster Royal Grammar School	124	Grant maintained
Walton County High School	163	County
Leeds		
Bruntcliffe Manor School	205	County
Garaforth Community College	175	County
Horsforth School	200	County
Parklands High School	250	County
Roundhay High School	250	County
Liecestershire		
Burleigh College	201	County
Vale of Catmose College	230	County
Lewisham		
Sydenham School	180	County
Lincolnshire		
Caister School	287	Grant maintained
Lincoln School of Science and Technology	250	County
St Georges School	500	Grant maintained
Manchester		
South Manchester High School	200	County
Newham		
Sarah Bonnell School	273	County
Stratford School	300	Grant maintained
Newcastle		
Benefield Comprehensive School	225	County

Local education authority and school	TSI award £ thousands	Status
Norfolk		
Gosforth High School	240	County
Earlham High School	213	County
Oriel High School	206	County
North Tyneside		
Wymondham College	200	Grant maintained
Norham High School	250	County
Willington High School	170	County
North Yorkshire		
Huntingdon School	232	County
Lady Lumley's School	218	County
Rossett High School	152	County
Northamptonshire		
Campion School	224	County
Danetre School	180	County
Kingswood School	330	Grant maintained
Moulton School	210	County
Northampton School for Boys	250	Grant maintained
Rothwell Montsaye School	199	County
Northumberland		
Coquet High School	237	County
Cramlington Community School	274	County
King Edward VI School	200	County
Oldham		
Grange Secondary School	180	County
The Radclyffe School	250	County
Oxfordshire		
Peers School	145	County
Redbridge		
Loxford High School	193	County
Woodford High School	184	County
Rochdale		
Heywood Community School	200	County
Middleton High School	250	County
Rotherham		
Dinnington School	180	County
Salford		
Moorside High School	150	County
Sandwell		
Warley High School	210	County
Woodenborough High School	185	County
Sefton		
Chesterfield High School	200	County
Maghull High School	85	County
Sheffield		
Handsworth Grange School	200	County
High Storrs School	210	County
Shropshire		
Adam's Grammer School	470	Grant maintained
Lacon Childe School	250	County
Rhyne Park School	140	County
Somerset		
Sir John Talbots School	198	County
Court Fields Community School	250	County
The Wells Blue School	284	County
St. Helens		
Cheslyn Hay High School	150	County
Haydock High School	165	County
Penkford School and Special Needs Centre	171	County
Stockport		
Kingsway School	299	County
Reddish Vale School	235	County
Suffolk		
Great Cornard School	215	County
Samuel Ward County School	200	County
Thurleston High School	250	County
Thurston Upper School	250	County
Sunderland		
St. Robert of Newminster School	205	Voluntary assisted
Surrey		
Bishop Reindorp School	170	Voluntary assisted
Heath End School	160	County
The Beacon School	185	Grant maintained
The Glyn School	350	Grant maintained
Therfield School	238	County
Sutton		
Nonsuch High School for Girls	700	Grant maintained
Tameside		
Hyde Community High School	205	County
West Hill Boys School	250	County
Trafford		
Sale Moor High School	220	Grant maintained
Wakefield		
Outwood Grange High School	188	County
Walsall		
Brownhills School	250	County
Waltham Forest		
McEntee School	165	County
Walthamstow Girls School	210	County
Wandsworth		
Battersea Technology College	250	County
Burntwood School	553	Grant maintained
Graveney School	300	Grant maintained
Warwickshire		
Ashlawn School	200	County
Wigan		
Golbourne School	144	County
Shevington High School	170	County
Wiltshire		
The George Ward School	103	County
Wirral		
Meadowside School	160	County
Wolverhampton		
Mosley Park School	730	Grant maintained
Parkfield School	224	County
St. Peter's Collegiate School	188	Voluntary assisted
Wednesfield School	196	County
Wolverhampton Girls High School	450	Grant maintained

School Inspections

Ms Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) what criteria Her Majesty's inspectorate are using in its inspections of *(a)* individual primary schools and *(b)* individual secondary schools;

(2) what measures Her Majesty's inspectorate are taking to ensure that its criteria for inspecting schools are

available to *(a)* parents, *(b)* staff, *(c)* parents of potential pupils and other interested members of the local community and *(d)* governors;

(3) how the criteria for inspecting schools differ from those used by Her Majesty's inspectorate before the new arrangements were introduced following the Education (Schools) Act 1992.

Mr. Robin Squire: The arrangements for inspecting schools under the Education (Schools) Act 1992 are a matter for Ofsted—The Office of Standards in Education.

I have asked Professor Sutherland to write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Patrick Doyle

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will publish a list of all meetings held and correspondence exchanged in the past 10 years between his Department and Mr. Patrick Doyle, now of AST Training; what was the nature of such meetings or correspondence; what plans he has to meet Mr. Patrick Doyle; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Boswell: There have been no recent meetings or correspondence between Mr. Patrick Doyle and this Department.

Schools

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the number of *(a)* county, *(b)* voluntary-aided and *(c)* grant-maintained secondary schools for each local education authority; and, in each case, what is the total number of pupils in each category.

Mr. Robin Squire: Information on county, voluntary aided and self-governing secondary schools and pupils in January 1992, the latest date for which comparable information is available, is shown in the table. For completeness, the table also shows the number of schools currently operating as self-governing.

Maintained secondary schools in each Local Education Authority in England

LEA	1992[1]						1993[2]
	County[3]		Voluntary aided[4]		Self-Governing		Self-Governing
	Schools	Pupils	Schools	Pupils	Schools	Pupils	Schools only
Corporation of London	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Camden	5	4,860	6	5,381	0	0	2
Greenwich	10	10,363	4	2,555	0	0	0
Hackney	6	4,719	4	3,069	0	0	0
Hammersmith	4	2,341	4	2,463	1	1,197	1
Islington	6	5,468	3	2,264	0	0	0
Kensington and Chelsea	1	1,506	2	1,201	1	622	1
Lambeth	5	3,244	3	1,755	1	605	5
Lewisham	8	7,572	4	2,171	0	0	0
Southwark	8	5,017	6	3,659	1	389	4
Tower Hamlets	8	5,877	3	2,479	1	879	1
Wandsworth	6	5,042	3	1,837	2	2,709	6
Westminster	3	3,855	4	2,945	0	0	0
Barking	7	8,125	1	1,039	0	0	0
Barnet	11	9,724	8	6,774	2	1,954	7
Bexley	14	12,193	3	2,157	0	0	4
Brent	10	8,129	1	790	1	976	8
Bromley	9	8,471	2	1,511	6	6,039	11
Croydon	14	10,132	7	4,589	1	958	4
Ealing	11	8,874	2	2,228	0	0	5
Enfield	11	11,379	5	4,297	0	0	4
Haringey	7	6,787	2	1,992	0	0	0
Harrow	8	6,658	3	1,468	0	0	1
Havering	14	11,322	5	4,601	0	0	4
Hillingdon	8	4,896	2	2,100	7	6,398	11
Hounslow	9	8,709	3	2,824	0	0	2
Kingston upon Thames	7	5,209	1	597	0	0	4
Merton	7	3,777	3	2,116	0	0	0
Newham	11	11,169	2	1,878	1	574	1
Redbridge	12	11,903	1	1,309	0	0	1
Richmond upon Thames	7	6,538	1	633	0	0	0
Sutton	10	7,341	1	879	3	2,407	8
Waltham Forest	16	10,292	1	903	1	1,058	2
Birmingham	59	46,202	15	10,331	4	4,827	13
Coventry	15	14,282	3	2,962	0	0	0
Dudley	19	15,156	2	1,712	1	564	6
Sandwell	22	16,622	1	681	1	652	1
Solihull	13	12,108	2	2,098	0	0	0
Walsall	17	14,563	5	4,133	0	0	6
Wolverhampton	15	11,527	3	2,296	2	1,777	2
Knowsley	7	5,865	4	3,041	0	0	1
Liverpool	17	14,480	18	13,454	1	1,043	2
St. Helens	8	8,401	4	3,269	0	0	0
Sefton	16	12,465	5	4,365	0	0	0
Wirral	20	18,238	3	2,831	0	0	2
Bolton	12	10,823	4	4,219	1	717	3
Bury	11	7,283	4	3,076	0	0	0
Manchester	19	14,979	11	8,645	0	0	0
Oldham	11	11,908	4	3,926	0	0	0
Rochdale	11	9,768	3	2,771	0	0	1

LEA	1992[1]						1993[2]
	County[2]		Voluntary aided[2]		Self-Governing		Self-Governing
	Schools	Pupils	Schools	Pupils	Schools	Pupils	Schools only
Salford	14	9,883	6	2,595	0	0	0
Stockport	14	15,529	3	1,845	0	0	0
Tameside	16	11,561	3	1,748	1	794	3
Trafford	14	10,044	1	415	0	0	4
Wigan	14	11,335	6	6,268	0	0	0
Barnsley	13	10,742	0	0	0	0	0
Doncaster	32	19,080	2	1,590	0	0	0
Rotherham	15	16,144	1	545	0	0	0
Sheffield	30	22,069	2	1,802	0	0	2
Bradford	76	38,465	8	4,190	1	938	6
Calderdale	12	8,953	2	1,554	2	1,339	4
Kirklees	31	21,709	1	996	2	1,192	2
Leeds	79	41,715	16	7,585	0	0	1
Wakefield	32	16,939	3	1,758	0	0	0
Gateshead	11	9,731	2	1,827	0	0	0
Newcastle upon Tyne	19	13,569	3	2,929	0	0	0
North Tyneside	27	14,065	1	901	0	0	0
South Tyneside	9	7,383	2	1,669	0	0	0
Sunderland	14	15,159	3	3,409	0	0	0
Isles of Scilly	1	112	0	0	0	0	0
Avon	50	45,478	5	3,527	2	1,455	2
Bedfordshire	61	37,996	6	3,741	1	774	10
Berkshire	43	34,939	6	2,875	6	5,251	10
Buckinghamshire	35	25,963	2	1,123	3	3,069	8
Cambridgeshire	39	34,681	3	1,879	0	0	16
Cheshire	58	52,636	10	7,465	1	528	3
Cleveland	40	31,245	11	7,350	0	0	0
Cornwall	32	28,925	0	0	0	0	0
Cumbria	32	21,833	4	2,997	2	1,417	11
Derbyshire	49	44,717	5	3,589	2	1,921	13
Devon	61	51,913	5	3,273	1	499	5
Dorset	39	25,470	6	3,973	3	2,627	9
Durham	40	32,644	5	4,377	0	0	0
East Sussex	34	30,576	3	2,801	0	0	0
Essex	91	83,656	9	6,553	3	3,445	53
Gloucestershire	33	24,788	2	1,781	4	2,821	22
Hampshire	91	73,137	6	4,575	4	2,986	15
Hereford and Worcester	58	35,527	7	5,185	0	0	5
Hertfordshire	68	49,230	12	9,707	5	4,486	18
Humberside	55	51,368	5	2,892	0	0	0
Isle of Wight	17	8,769	2	752	0	0	0
Kent	97	67,676	13	10,162	16	12,877	54
Lancashire	69	52,632	22	16,508	4	3,183	7
Leicestershire	73	50,626	4	3,307	1	364	5
Lincolnshire	41	22,826	3	1,328	10	6,719	22
Norfolk	47	34,718	2	1,528	1	878	12
North Yorkshire	49	35,476	8	5,155	0	0	0
Northamptonshire	52	35,875	7	4,005	5	2,990	12
Northumberland	52	25,167	4	1,397	0	0	1
Nottinghamshire	73	53,513	10	7,302	0	0	3
Oxfordshire	37	28,274	3	1,661	0	0	0
Shropshire	32	21,364	2	1,200	1	481	5
Somerset	31	21,773	1	623	1	391	1
Staffordshire	71	58,730	9	6,264	0	0	5
Suffolk	68	42,833	4	1,763	0	0	0
Surrey	43	31,804	7	5,295	5	4,137	12
Warwickshire	27	18,799	6	3,357	3	1,303	8
West Sussex	31	31,192	9	5,530	0	0	0
Wiltshire	32	24,945	2	1,210	1	540	8
England	2,989	2,274,063	486	351,910	130	105,750	511

[1] Information collected in January 1992 Schools' Census
[2] Includes some secondary schools operating as self-governing in October 1993

Parental Ballots

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many parental ballots on grant-maintained status were held in *(a)* September 1992 and *(b)* September 1993; and, in each case, how many resulted in a majority of parents voting (i) yes and (ii) no.

Mr. Robin Squire: The information requested is given in the table:

	"Yes" votes	"No" votes	Total ballots
September 1992	15	1	16
September 1993	3	6	9

Note: Overall, of the 1,280 ballots so far held on grant-maintained status, 77 per cent. have resulted in a yes vote.

Overseas Staff and Premises

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the cost for the current financial year of his Department having *(a)* premises and *(b)* personnel overseas; and what were the comparable figures for *(a)* 12, *(b)* 24, *(c)* 36 and *(d)* 48 months ago.

Mr. Boswell: No cost accrues to this Department. It has no overseas premises and no staff working abroad.

TRANSPORT

Transport Council

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the result of the Transport Council held in Brussels on 28 September.

Mr. MacGregor: The Transport Council met in Brussels on 28 September. My noble Friend Lord Caithness and I represented the United Kingdom.

Political agreement was reached on the text of the directive on road haulage taxation and charging, and the regulation on road haulage cabotage to give effect to the conclusions reached at the Council in June.

The Council reached agreement on the regulation amending the regulation on a code of conduct for computer reservation systems; formal adoption will follow shortly. The regulation deals with a range of practical and competition issues which have become apparent since the original regulation was adopted. In particular it aims to remove the scope for anti-competitive behaviour which might result if an airline were allowed to run a commercially available CRS system in close conjunction with its own in-house computer.

The Council discussed the Commission's communication on road safety. We stressed the considerable success the United Kingdom had achieved by action at local and national level and argued that Community action should be directed at improving vehicle safety standards rather than at harmonisation of speed and blood alcohol limits which took no account of differing road conditions and national attitudes.

The Council agreed to a general discussion of relations with Switzerland at the October General Affairs Council prior to consideration of negotiating mandates on air and road transport at the Transport Council in November.

In view of the significant restructuring taking place in some member states the Council agreed that a debate on community rail policy should be held at the Transport Council in November. We explained that the reforms in the United Kingdom would separate rail infrastructure from services, and encourage the involvement of the private sector. We stressed the importance of implementation of the 1991 access directive by all member states, which the United Kingdom has implemented, and asked the Commission to examine the directive to consider how it would fit with the new industry structures.

The Council reached political agreement on slight modifications to the guidelines for Community trans-European networks for combined transport, roads and inland waterways agreed at the Council in June. Formal adoption awaits the opinion of the European Parliament.

There were no votes taken.

British Rail Telecommunications Ltd.

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has been made in privatising British Rail Telecommunications Ltd.

Mr. MacGregor: The Government and British Rail intend to privatise British Rail Telecommunications Ltd. by the end of 1994. They wish to involve the private sector to the maximum extent possible in the management, maintenance and exploitation of the British Rail telecommunications network. The network provides two types of service to BR at present: operational—especially communications relating to signalling—and business services. There is also some spare capacity on the network which could be exploited for external telecommunications customers.

BRT is to be restructured by April 1994 with new management. BR will be devising appropriate commercial arrangements to be put in place between BRT and the railway before these activities are privatised. These matters and others will be detailed in an information memorandum which is expected to be issued during the first half of next year. Railtrack will have a major role to play because of its responsibility for safety and as a customer.

The Government and BR believe that there are excellent opportunities for private sector involvement in rail telecommunications while safeguarding operational requirements. BR will consult the private sector about the details of the privatisation of BRT.

Transport Ministers' Meeting

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the outcome of the informal meeting of EC Transport Ministers on 27 September.

Mr. MacGregor: EC Transport Ministers met on the day before the September Transport Council at the request of the presidency to hear presentations from the European airline associations. In the ministerial discussion which followed, I stressed that the success of British airlines was founded on commercial, private sector management and emphasis on the customer. I emphasised that there should be no going back on the liberalising third aviation package and that Governments and the Community should limit themselves to areas where only they could take action, that the Community should tackle over-regulation and that urgent action should be taken on state aids and ground-handling monopolies. This was supported by much of the evidence given by the associations.

Given the informal nature of the meeting, no decisions were taken, but a useful discussion took place.

Biodiesel Trials

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what has been learnt from the emissions tests carried out on one of the buses used in the Reading Buses biodiesel fuel trial.

Mr. Freeman: The conclusions of tests carried out by the Transport Research Laboratory are that changes in most emission rates are small and not clearly attributable to the type of fuel. The exceptions are visible smoke which was significantly lower with biodiesel, and particulate which, contrary to the reported results of others, was substantially higher. A copy of the TRL report has been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Motorway Service Areas (Disabled Persons)

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what surveys his Department has conducted of the provision of *(a)* night-time services and *(b)* 24-hour facilities for the disabled at motorway service areas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: The Department requires the operators of all motorway service areas in England to provide a range of facilities, including free short-term parking, toilets, fuel and food and drink, 24 hours a day every day of the year. These facilities must be available to all motorway users including the disabled.

The Department does not use surveys to ensure compliance with its requirements, but pursues any complaints received with the operators concerned. If the hon. Member has a particular difficulty in mind, perhaps he would write to me.

European Regional Development Funds

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give details of European regional development funds which have been allocated for transport initiatives in the last 12 months and which are proposed for the next 12 months.

Mr. MacGregor: European regional development fund resources are allocated to multi-annual regional programmes, and are administered locally by regional committees which decide priorities and assess potential schemes. For 1993-94 my Department estimate that transport schemes will attract £33 million in support from the ERDF. Plans for 1994 to 1996 have not yet been finalised.

Hazardous Goods

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the new labelling system for hazardous goods in transit published by the Health and Safety Commission.

Mr. Key: The Health and Safety Commission published in June a consultative document, CD63, on proposals for new regulations on the classification, packaging and labelling of goods for carriage by road and rail in preparation for the opening up of rail freight services to private sector operators and in order to harmonise the rules for the carriage of dangerous goods by rail and road in line with the United Nations recommendations. A copy of the consultative document is in the Library. The Health and Safety Executive is now considering responses to it and I expect to receive the Commission's recommendations and draft regulations at the end of the year.

Bus Deregulation

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list all the local bus companies that operate services in south Yorkshire that replied to his consultation document in respect of how the 1985 deregulation of service arrangements are working; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: The only bus company based in South Yorkshire that responded was South Riding. In total some 160 replies were received. I am considering these and expect to announce the results shortly.

London Underground

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he hopes to make a statement in respect of his quasi-judicial role in London Underground Ltd.'s intention to seek closure of the Central line service between Epping and Ongar; and how far negotiations have proceeded to date.

Mr. Freeman: Following receipt of objections to London Underground Ltd.'s proposed closure of the Epping to Ongar service, the London Regional Passengers Committee is to hold a public hearing at Ongar on Monday 8 November, in accordance with the procedures laid down in the Transport Act 1962. The committee will then report to the Secretary of State. The Secretary of State will make his decision on the closure proposal once he has considered this report and any other material factors.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Health and Safety

Mr. Dobson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish dates of all meetings with outside persons or bodies and titles of all non-departmental briefing papers or any associated material concerning the possible amendment of sections 1(1), 1(2) or 15(1) of the Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act 1974; what plans he has to amend sections 1(1), 1(2) or 15(1) of the Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act 1974 in respect of matters relating to his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The seven deregulation task forces, established earlier this year by my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade, have all considered health and safety matters to varying degrees in sector specific or cross sectoral ways. Details of all task force meetings, consultations or papers could not be provided except at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish a table listing *(a)* all regulations suggested by his Department to the Health and Safety Commission or by the Health and Safety Commission to his Department as candidates for revocation as part of the deregulation initiative, *(b)* the purpose and function of each of these regulations, *(c)* whether it is suggested that the regulations be (i) amended, (ii) abolished, (iii) replaced with self-regulation or (iv) replaced with other regulation; whether, for each regulation, revocation without replacement or with self-regulation would require amendment of section 1(1), 1(2) or 15(1) of the Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act 1974; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Possible sector-specific and cross-sectoral candidates for administrative simplification and reform by the Health and Safety Commission are currently being considered by the seven deregulation task forces, established earlier this year by my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade. The task forces have not yet completed their work, but their proposals will be submitted to the Government in due course for consideration.

Further possible proposals for reform by the HSC may be identified by the HSC's own task groups which have been asked to complete their work by April next year.

Overseas Staff and Premises

Mr. Redmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the cost for the current financial year of his Department having *(a)* premises and *(b)* personnel overseas; and what were the comparable figures for *(a)* 12, *(b)* 24, *(c)* 36 and *(d)* 48 months ago.

Mr. Eggar: The costs to this Department of its personnel temporarily based overseas in 1993-94 are

estimated to be in the region of £1·3 million, on the basis of expenditure in the first half of the current financial year. This Department does not have to meet the costs of any overseas premises.

Precise figures for earlier years are not readily available, but are likely to have been broadly similar to the current year in real terms.

EC Public Utilities

Mr. Cash: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps are being taken to ensure that public utilities in other EC countries actively encourage suppliers from the United Kingdom to participate in their contracts.

Mr. Needham: Under the Utilities Directive 90/531/EEC contracting bodies are, in most cases, obliged to publish calls for competition in the *Official Journal of the European Communities*, through periodic notices of planned procurement, notices of qualification systems or specific contract notices. These notices can also be accessed on the tenders electronic daily database. Since 1 January 1993 contract notices have been published in the *Official Journal* by utilities in all the major member states and even some by utilities in Greece, Portugal and Spain who do not yet have to implement the directives.

My Department actively supports United Kingdom suppliers in EC markets and I have appointed an export promoter on loan from industry to focus specifically in this area. My Department is also mounting a campaign to bring public procurement opportunities in the Community to the attention of United Kingdom industry, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises.

Finally, I have just initiated a review to identify problems faced by United Kingdom businesses trying to sell to public purchasers in other EC member states, including those included within the scope of directive 90/531/EEC. My Department will ensure that everything possible is done to solve specific problems and will provide feedback to the EC Commission as necessary. This review is expected to be completed early next year and the results will be used in my Department's work supporting British exporters.

European Community Public Procurement Directive

Mr. Cash: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what action he is taking to encourage the EC to ensure that European Community public procurement directive (90/531/EEC) is equally implemented by all relevant member states; and with what results.

Mr. Needham: The European Commission continues to put pressure on all member states to eliminate any delays in implementing single market measures, including public procurement directive 90/531/EEC. It regularly produces a table showing the state of transposition of such measures by EC member states which it presents to ministers at meetings of the Internal Market Council. It also holds meetings as appropriate on a bilateral basis with the authorities of member states to discuss specific difficulties on transposition. In addition, the Commission has three advisory committees to discuss its proposals for monitoring the application and effectiveness of the public procurement directives.

Directive 90/531/EEC, which is designed to open up supplies and works contracts for utilities in the water, energy, transport, and telecommunications sectors to Community-wide competition, is required to have entered into force on 1 January 1993 with derogations for Spain —1 January 1996—and for Greece and Portugal—1 January 1998. The Commission's latest report indicates that six member states, including the United Kingdom, have so far implemented the directive, Belgium has drafted the necessary domestic legislation and Germany and Italy have yet to notify any implementation measures. The Government will continue to take a close interest in progress towards proper implementation by all member states.

Atomic Energy Authority

Mr. Milligan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what financial target and capital expenditure limit have been set for the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority for 1993-94.

Mr. Eggar: The United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority's financial target for 1993-94 has been set as a 12·1 per cent. return on average capital employed, calculated according to the current cost convention. The target is based on the profit earned on ordinary activities before long-term interest is payable. I have also approved the AEA's capital expenditure programme for the year at £18·9 million.

Reinsurance (Acts of Terrorism) Act 1993

Mr. Waterson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what agreements have been laid before Parliament under the Reinsurance (Acts of Terrorism) Act 1993; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The agreement with Pool Reinsurance Company Ltd. was concluded, with the consent of the Treasury, on 30 July and was laid before Parliament on 30 July. Updated versions of schedules 5, 6 and 7 to the agreement—the forms of the legal contracts between Pool Reinsurance Company and its members—were laid before Parliament today. The changes are not substantive but serve to simplify the administrative arrangements between Pool Reinsurance Company Ltd. and its members.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is also undertaking, with the consent of the Treasury, to guarantee a credit facility which has been obtained by Pool Reinsurance Company Ltd. from a group of banks to ensure the financing of the arrangements. The guarantee together with a copy of the credit facility was also laid before Parliament on 30 July.

Following the conclusion of the agreement, Pool Reinsurance Company Ltd. was authorised on 30 July to carry on reinsurance business in accordance with the Insurance Companies Act 1982.

The authorisation of the company, the conclusion of the agreement and the granting of the guarantee, together with the credit facility, mark the completion of the establishment of the arrangements announced by my right hon. Friend on 21 December. The arrangements established enable the Secretary of State to act as reinsurer of last resort are effective from 1 January 1993. Industry and commerce in Great Britain can now be confident that firm arrangements exist to provide for insurance against terrorist damage, provided they take out such insurance.

Nuclear Exports

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps he has taken to support the export activities of the United Kingdom nuclear industry since 1979.

Mr. Eggar: In association with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Embassies overseas, my Department provides general support for the export activities of the nuclear industry, subject to necessary regulation in the areas of non-proliferation, safety and environmental protection. Where specifically requested, umbrella co-operation agreements have been negotiated between Governments. In addition, the industry can make use of the comprehensive package of assistance offered to all exporters by my Department.

EC Law

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many responses he received to his consultation document reviewing the implementation and enforcement of EC law in the United Kingdom; how many copies of the document were printed; how many were *(a)* sold and *(b)* otherwise distributed; and if he will place in the Library copies of the responses.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: To date, over 70 submissions have been received in response to the call for comments on the review of the implementation and enforcement of EC law in the United Kingdom. A total of 1,500 copies of the review were printed. Approximately 500 copies have been sold to date. A further 440 complimentary copies were distributed to those individuals, businesses, trade associations and representative organisations which assisted in the review and to the press, parliamentarians and others.

I am not at liberty to place copies of the responses in the Library of the House. Publications of respondents' comments is a matter for them. However, in line with recommendation 9 of the review and subject to the confidentiality which respondents have a right to expect, a summary of responses is being prepared for distribution to all those who contributed to the consultation exercise. I will place a copy of this, together with a list of respondents, in the Library of the House as soon as all the responses have been analysed.

Defence Industry Diversification

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will set out the criteria used by Her Majesty's Government in compiling the United Kingdom bid to the EC KONVER fund on defence industry diversification; which regional organisations were consulted in preparation of the KONVER bid; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: The United Kingdom's proposal for a KONVER programme is based on the European Commission's letter of 28 May to the permanent representative of the United Kingdom to the European Communities which is available in the House of Commons Library. The United Kingdom programme proposes eight selection criteria to be used to select projects for grant assistance. Projects to be given priority are those which:

(i) accelerate diversification, where possible, so as to render such areas less dependent on this sector;
(ii) encourage the development of commercially viable businesses in any sector;
(iii) demonstrate good value for money and include quantifiable and measureable targets to be monitored;
(iv) involve an integrated approach to regeneration which will benefit the whole of the area which is the subject uof the application;
(v) involve a high degree of leverage, of finance from other public and private sector sources;
(vi) are innovatory;
(vii) complement existing schemes and services provided under relevant CSFs, Community initiatives and national measures.

In compiling the programme the following bodies were consulted:

Training and Enterprise Councils
Local Enterprise Companies
Association of Metropolitan Authorities
Association of County Councils
Association of District Councils
Association of Local Authorities of Northern Ireland
Convention of Scottish Local Authorities
Council of Welsh Districts
Assembly of Welsh Counties
Scottish Enterprise
Highlands and Islands Enterprise
Northern Ireland Industrial Development Board
Local Government International Bureau
National Council for Voluntary Organisation (England and Wales)
Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action
Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations
National Council for Industry Training Organisations
London Boroughs Association
Association of London Authorities
Rural Development Commission
Industrial Common Ownership Movement.

Mining Industry

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list for the past five years in both British Coal and United Kingdom private licensed mines *(a)* the fatality rate per 100,000 manshifts and *(b)* the total number of fatalities.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 20 October 1993]:* The information requested, which has been provided by the Health and Safety Executive, is as follows:

Year	British coal mines[1]		Private licensed mines	
	Fatality per 100,000 manshifts	Total fatalities	Fatality per 100,000 manshifts	Total fatalities
[2]1992-93	0·03	3	n/a	3
1991-92	[3]0·07	10	n/a	2
1990-91	0·07	11	n/a	1
1989-90	0·10	18	n/a	1
1988-89	0·08	18	n/a	2

[1] Covers injuries to British Coal Corporation employees and contractors.
[2] Provisional figures.
[3] Revised August 1993 to take account of contractors shifts worked.
n/a=Not available.

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what comparison his Department has made of the safety record of British Coal's deep mine operations with those in the United States of America and elsewhere.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 20 October 1993]:* Meaningful comparisons are generally not possible because of the different mining conditions and the different bases on which such information is recorded in each country.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish a table showing the amount of deep-mined coal produced in the United Kingdom, from 1982 to 1992, distinguishing between categories used for household, coking, industrial boilers, and electricity power generation, which were produced, using domestically exported and imported coal, respectively, together with the comparable production and use of opencast-produced coal; and what was the cost of imported coal at 1993 prices for each year shown in the table.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 18 October 1993]:* The information readily available is as follows:

Thousand tonnes

	1982	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*
Deep-mined	106,161	101,742	35,243	75,289	90,366	85,957	83,762	79,628	72,899	73,357	65,800
Opencast	15,266	14,706	14,306	15,569	14,275	15,786	17,899	19,442	18,880	19,356	18,435
Other[1]	3,284	2,806	1,633	3,253	3,458	2,790	2,405	1,535	1,729	2,208	639
Total production	124,711	119,254	51,182	94,111	108,099	104,533	104,066	100,605	93,508	94,921	84,874
Exports	7,447	6,561	2,293	2,432	2,677	2,353	1,822	2,049	2,533	1,672	668
Stock changes[2]	+10,124	+5,583	−21,412	−1,569	+3,502	−5,235	+2,920	+3,078	−1,484	+5,561	+3,886
Statistical difference[3]	+205	+91	+1,886	+594	−1,760	+1,302	−489	+34	−1,014	−214	+50
Consumption of UK coal	106,935	107,019	68,415	92,654	103,680	106,113	99,813	95,444	93,473	87,902	80,270
Of which:											
Domestic	7,860	7,199	3,742	6,299	6,257	5,679	4,561	3,504	3,869	3,323	2,187
Coke ovens	7,827	8,092	2,774	4,069	4,865	4,967	4,612	3,594	2,238	871	646
Industry	7,152	7,227	6,944	8,244	7,575	5,414	5,184	5,091	4,983	4,344	3,356
Electricity generators	79,422	80,225	53,359	71,284	81,465	86,602	82,285	80,623	80,059	77,090	72,422
Other	4,674	4,275	1,596	2,758	3,518	3,451	3,171	2,632	2,324	2,274	1,659
Imports[4]	4,063	4,456	8,894	12,732	10,554	9,781	11,685	12,137	14,783	19,611	20,373
Of which:											
Domestic	553	605	1,667	1,516	1,164	855	1,180	1,544	370	1,455	1,991
Coke ovens	2,579	2,356	5,472	7,053	6,257	5,892	6,290	7,198	8,614	9,140	8,385
Industry	32	33	62	67	1,703	1,410	1,945	1,139	767	1,607	2,727
Electricity generators	806	1,340	52	2,656	1,187	1,358	1,973	1,963	4,488	6,927	6,586
Other	93	122	1,641	1,440	243	266	297	293	544	482	684
											£ per tonne
Average cost of imported coal[5]	78·61	80·26	85·42	80·47	61·01	52·20	46·47	46·96	46·77	38·43	35·57

[1] Estimates of slurry etc. recovered and disposed of other than by British Coal from dumps, ponds, rivers, etc.
[2] Stock fall (−), stock rise(+).
[3] Supply greater than (+) or less than (−) recorded demand.
[4] Though data is available on total imports and on consumption by fuel producers, there is only very limited direct information on consumption of imported coal by final users. The allocation of imports to individual sectors has therefore been estimated.
[5] Cash figures adjusted to 1993 price levels by excluding the effect of general inflation as measured by the GDP deflator.
Source: Digest of United Kingdom Energy Statistics 1993.

My officials are seeing whether further information, which separately identifies the use of deep-mined coal and opencast coal, is available. If it is, I will write to the hon. Member when the details have been extracted.

HEALTH

Unemployment

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people aged *(a)* 16 or 17 years and *(b)* 18 to 24 years living in (i) York parliamentary constituency, (ii) North Yorkshire, (iii) Yorkshire and Humberside and (iv) Great Britain were unemployed according to the 1991 census.

Mr. Sackville: The information is shown in the table.

Number of residents recorded in 1991 Census as unemployed

Area	*Age*		
	16	*17*	*18-24*
York Parliamentary Constituency	83	87	1,082
North Yorkshire	343	471	4,904
Yorkshire and Humberside	4,234	5,413	62,424
Great Britain	43,255	61,494	657,848

Source: 1991 Census for Great Britain (part 1), Table 8; and County Report for North Yorkshire (Part 1), Table 8.

Ambulance Service

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of ambulances in each service in England responded within *(a)* eight minutes and *(b)* 14 to 20 minutes to emergency calls in (i) 1992-93 and (ii) the first half of 1993-94.

Mr. Sackville: Information for 1992-93 is shown in the table. This information is collected annually and, therefore, no figures are available for the first half of 1993-94.

Patient transport services
Emergency calls: Response times
1992-93
England

Ambulance authority	*Total number of emergency calls resulting in ambulance arriving at scene of incidents (thousands)*	*Response within 8 minutes (per cent.)*	*Response within 19 minutes (rural) 14 minutes (urban) (per cent.)*
Rural authorities			
Cumbria	15·3	55·6	91·2
Durham	30·3	51·6	97·1
Humberside	43·0	72·8	99·2
Northumbria (NHS Trust)	77·6	67·8	99·0
North Yorkshire	23·1	58·8	95·4
Derbyshire	35·2	46·6	95·7
Leicestershire	32·6	54·4	97·0
Lincolnshire (NHS Trust)	17·8	62·2	95·3
Nottinghamshire	54·7	57·9	97·7
Cambridgeshire	19·1	40·9	94·2
Norfolk (NHS Trust)	27·5	57·5	96·7
Suffolk	11·9	53·2	92·1
Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire	59·6	54·3	96·9
Essex (NHS Trust)	66·1	57·8	98·6
East Sussex	36·9	67·7	97·7
Kent	57·8	55·2	96·4
West Sussex	26·8	65·6	97·3
Dorset	27·8	54·6	96·1
Hampshire	46·7	55·9	97·4
Wiltshire	15·1	60·7	95·9
Isle of Wight	4·3	59·5	97·9
Berkshire	28·4	58·9	99·0
Buckinghamshire	22·1	62·0	97·0
Northamptonshire	17·8	68·0	98·2
Oxfordshire	16·1	51·8	94·2
Cornwall (NHS Trust)	16·5	41·2	90·0
Devon (NHS Trust)	38·4	60·2	98·5
Gloucestershire (NHS Trust)	13·5	57·8	96·8
Somerset	11·8	58·9	94·7
Hereford and Worcester	21·3	61·9	97·1
Shropshire	12·7	51·1	96·0
Staffordshire (NHS Trust)	39·6	53·4	95·3
Warwickshire	14·4	49·4	95·3
Lancashire	69·8	65·9	98·7
Urban authorities			
Cleveland (NHS Trust)	24·2	73·0	97·0
West Yorkshire	108·2	55·0	94·0
South Yorkshire (NHS Trust)	56·4	46·6	89·9
Surrey	44·0	55·1	94·8
London Ambulance Service	474·5	11·3	58·5
Avon (NHS Trust)	37·0	55·5	90·0
West Midlands	140·7	45·2	91·1
Mersey (NHS Trust)	147·7	68·1	95·4
Greater Manchester	165·4	60·5	97·4

Clothier Inquiry

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she plans to publish the findings of the Clothier inquiry.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: The independent inquiry into incidents at Grantham and Kesteven general hospital by Sir Cecil Clothier and his team is likely to report its findings in January 1994. The report will be published in full.

Operations

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the latest estimate available to her of the annual number of operations in *(a)* NHS hospitals and *(b)* private hospitals in England for (i) hip replacement, (ii) cataract and (iii) varicose veins.

Mr. Sackville: We do not collect information on activity in private hospitals. For national health service hospitals the latest available information through the hospital episode statistics is shown in the table.

Estimated number of finished consultant episodes in national health service hospitals, England, 1989-90

Operation	*Number of completed episodes*
Operations for removal of cataract	92,184
Operation on varicose vein of leg	63,320
Hip operations	50,790

National Health Service Chief Executive

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she expects to appoint a successor to Sir Duncan Nichol as NHS chief executive.

Dr. Mawhinney: Early in 1994.

Deregulation

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will withdraw the letter on deregulation, residential care homes, private nursing homes and hospitals issued by her Department on 3 August; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: No. While I have no intention of withdrawing or weakening any regulation which protects people in residential and nursing homes, it is entirely proper to consult home owners and managers as to the appropriateness and complexity of regulations affecting such homes.

Ministerial Visit

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many civil servants were engaged in her visit to Thailand, Malaysia, Australia and Hong Kong from 7 to 17 September; and what was the cost of the visit.

Dr. Mawhinney: Four. The trade mission was not supported financially by any Government Department. The cost to the Department of Health was £31,000, comprising travelling and subsistence expenses for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and accompanying officials. The companies involved paid their own expenses and also met the cost of local transport, receptions and seminars for the whole party.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the benefits accrued to the NHS, and the value of them, during her visit to Thailand, Malaysia, Australia and Hong Kong; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: My right hon. Friend's trade mission to Australia and the far east was organised by the Association of British Healthcare Industries in order to develop existing trade relationships and seek out new opportunities for partnerships, exports and local investment.

The visit did much to expand the export drive of the British health care industry, which, like that of our other industries, is vital to sustain the economic foundations on which our health and social care system is based.

The United Kingdom national health service is a much-admired model of health care and an international benchmark for comparison. Through National Health Service Overseas Enterprises, the official marketing arm of the NHS in England, many of the skills and services which are available in the United Kingdom health service can be marketed overseas. Profits from these activities come back to the NHS.

As a result of the mission both the NHSOE and the representatives of the British health care industry were able to strengthen their position in each of the countries visited through new and important trade and manufacturing links, including some specific business opportunities.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what advice has been issued by her Department to NHS trusts regarding the need for those appointed as chief executive to have experience of working in the national health service.

Dr. Mawhinney: None.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list, by wave, the end of year financial position of each self-governing trust for 1992-93.

Mr. Sackville: This information is contained in the 1992-93 annual accounts of national health service trusts. We are assembling and summarising these accounts in accordance with statutory deadlines. Comprehensive information will be available at the end of November 1993.

NHS Review

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she plans to publish her review of the structure and management of the NHS.

Dr. Mawhinney: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will be making a statement to the House today. Copies of "Managing the new NHS", a background document which provides further information in support of the decisions she will be announcing, are available in the Library.

Nursing Homes

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will list, by local authority, the average time it takes to find nursing home places for elderly people transferring from hospitals;

(2) if she will list for each London borough the number of specialist nursing home places for each year from 1990; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not available centrally.

Health Services, Ealing

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what recent discussions she has had with the London borough of Ealing and Ealing NHS hospital trust.

Dr. Mawhinney: We have had no direct discussions but a number have taken place locally with officials from the North West Thames regional health authority.

Jarman Index

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to update the Jarman index.

Dr. Mawhinney: This is not a matter for which Ministers have responsibility.

Northumbria Ambulance Service Trust

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what discussions she has had with officials of the Northumbria Ambulance Service NHS trust on the subject of accounting procedures.

Mr. Sackville: Officials have reminded the Northumbria Ambulance Service NHS trust of the statutory accounting procedures for NHS trusts. These procedures are contained in the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990 and in the NHS "Trusts Manual For Accounts", copies of which will be placed in the Library.

Nurses (Clothing and Equipment)

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what items of work clothing and equipment are issued as standard to every NHS hospital nurse; and what is the cost to the NHS of one of each item.

Mr. Sackville: There is no standard clothing issued by all hospitals. It is a local purchasing decision for the hospital concerned and the price is dependent on size, quality and colour of uniform.

London Ambulance Service

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps she has taken to ensure the stability of the London ambulance service.

Mr. Sackville: South West Thames regional health authority is responsible for the effective functioning of the London ambulance service. We understand that it is making progress in implementing the recommendations of the inquiry into the LAS, introducing new accountability arrangements and improving the authority's oversight of the LAS. We further understand that the LAS has developed a financial plan for discussion with purchasing authorities and has received transitional funding to assist in handling the loss of some of its patient transport service contracts. Ministers remain committed to the LAS as a Londonwide service, matching where possible health authority, police and fire service boundaries.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what qualitative guidance her Department has given South West Thames regional health authority on the procurement of information technology for the London ambulance service.

Mr. Sackville: The National Health Service Supplies Authority issued new guidance on information technology procurement in July this year. A copy of this guidance, "Procurement of Information Systems Effectively", is available in the Library.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what discussions she has had with South West Thames regional health authority concerning proposals for computer systems for the London ambulance service.

Mr. Sackville: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State receives regular reports from South West Thames regional health authority on the progress of the London ambulance service on the implementation of the recommendations of the inquiry report, which includes directions on the implementation of any future computer-aided dispatch system.

Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what consideration she has given to compensating those patients and their families who had treatment that could have infected them with Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease.

Mr. Bowis: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo) to my hon. Friend the Member for Faversham (Sir R. Moate) on 27 May at column *671*.

NHS Management Executive

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many pamphlets the national health service management executive published from January 1992 to January 1993 and from January 1993 to October 1993; if she will list the title, the recipients and the cost; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: During the period January 1992 to October 1993, the national health service management executive issued 61 pamphlets, leaflets and brochures. The table gives the description, cost and to whom they were sent. Copies of the documents will be placed in the Library.

January 1992 to October 1993

Title	*Cost £*	*Distribution*
Patient's Charter News Issue 3	1,679	National Health Service Managers
Patient's Charter News Issue 4	2,923	National Health Service Managers
Patient's Charter News Issue 5	3,185	National Health Service Managers
Patient's Charter News Issue 6	3,345	National Health Service Managers
Patient's Charter News Issue 7	4,830	National Health Service Managers
Patient's Charter News Issue 8	5,161	National Health Service Managers
Patient's Charter News Issue 9	4,356	National Health Service Managers
Patient's Charter News Issue 10 (including Regional Round Up)	9,296	National Health Service Managers
IMG News Issue No. 14 (Information Management Group)	2,184	National Health Service Managers
IMG News Issue No. 15	2,633	National Health Service Managers
IMG News Issue No. 16	2,890	National Health Service Managers
IMG News Issue No. 17	3,134	National Health Service Managers
This is the IMG[1]	2,350	National Health Service Managers

Title	Cost £	Distribution
Data Quality Review No. 4	1,308	National Health Service Managers
Good Practice and Innovation in Contracting	5,288	National Health Service Managers
Assessing Effects of Health Technologies	17,201	National Health Service Managers
Nursing Research Taskforce Report	10,520	National Health Service Managers
Specification of National Indicators Booklet	23,021	National Health Service Managers
London Health No. 1	12,706	National Health Service Staff (London)
London Health No. 2	12,658	National Health Service Staff (London)
London Health No. 3	19,347	National Health Service Staff (London)
London Health No. 4	18,419	National Health Service Staff (London)
Community Care Booklet for Nurses	53,961	RCN Members, Directors of Social Services, National Health Service Managers
ME News January 1993	8,196	National Health Service Managers
ME News February 1993	13,398	National Health Service Managers
ME News March 1993	9,510	National Health Service Managers
ME News April 1993	18,666	National Health Service Managers
ME News May 1993	19,466	National Health Service Managers
ME News June 1993	9,110	National Health Service Managers
ME News July 1993[1]	13	National Health Service Managers
ME News August 1993[1]	2,058	National Health Service Managers
ME News September 1993[1]	2,153	National Health Service Managers
Quality Compendium[1]	368,000	National Health Service Staff
Fundholding News[1]	4,010	GP Fundholders
Childcare Initiative Booklet	13,280	National Health Service Staff
A Study of Midwife GP-led Maternity Units	5,290	National Health Service Managers
Health Service Indicators Handbook 1993	28,731	National Health Service Managers
Primary Care Opportunity 2000[1]	35,500	National Health Service Staff
Patient's Charter Distance Learning Pack	68,009	National Health Service Managers
Purchasing for Health No. 2[1]	4,000	National Health Service Managers
VFM Update (Value for Money)	2,764	National Health Service Managers
Named Nurse, Midwife and Health Visitor[1]	30,000	National Health Service Staff
Patient's Charter Monitoring Practice Guide[1]	35,000	National Health Service Managers
Purchasing for Health No. 3[1]	7,687	National Health Service Managers
Ethnic Minority Health	45,015	National Health Service Staff
HOTN—Local Target Setting[1] (Health of the Nation)	25,000	National Health Service Managers
Research for Health Vol. 2	63,499	National Health Service Managers
HSI Publicity—Prices Leaflet	987	National Health Service Managers
Nursing Research Report	4,030	National Health Service Managers
Patient's Charter[1]	10,000	GP Staff
NHSME Chief Executive Award[1]	10,000	National Health Service Staff
Day Surgery Task Force "Tool Kit"	28,996	Royal Colleges, National Health Service Managers, GPs, Nurse Trainers
HOTN Local Target Setting Paper	8,005	National Health Service Managers
Study of Midwifery and GP-led Maternity Units	5,290	National Health Service Managers
Schools Out—Childcare booklet	13,280	National Health Service Managers
New World New Opportunities	3,450	National Health Service Managers
Research for Health	49,016	National Health Service Managers
Value for Money	2,764	National Health Service Managers

[1] Estimated.

Traffic Casualties

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list for each year since 1979 the amount of money collected by the national health service in respect of payment for ambulance services to traffic casualties.

Mr. Sackville: No charge is made for the national health service emergency ambulance service.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list for each year since 1979 the amount of money collected by the national health service in respect of payment for hospital treatment of traffic casualties.

Mr. Sackville: Income received from Road Traffic Act charges for each year from 1979-80 to 1990-91 in cash terms for England, is set out in the table.

	£000
1979-80	1,438
1980-81	2,722
1981-82	4,198
1982-83	5,894
1983-84	6,950
1984-85	7,324
1985-86	7,916
1986-87	7,871
1987-88	8,687
1988-89	8,748
1989-90	9,256
1990-91	9,080

Note: The information for subsequent years is not collected centrally.

Clinical Grading Appeals

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list, by region of origin, the number of outstanding clinical grading appeals at *(a)* district, *(b)* regional and *(c)* national level.

Mr. Sackville: Of the 20,000 appeals outstanding in March 1993 there are now just over 6,000 outstanding. The details requested are shown in the table.

Outstanding clinical grading appeals[1]: situation as at 30 September 1993

Region	*Employing authority level*	*Regional level*	*National level*	*Total*
North Western	n/a	n/a	n/a	956
Mersey	n/a	n/a	n/a	890
West Midlands	n/a	n/a	n/a	711
Trent	n/a	n/a	n/a	691
South Western	0	525	102	627
North West Thames	46	464	27	537
Yorkshire	31	272	79	382
North East Thames	20	280	22	322
Wessex	0	197	70	267
South West Thames	0	0	210	210
South East Thames	0	161	40	201
Oxford	0	10	158	168
East Anglian	0	82	80	162
Northern	2	121	34	157
Total				6,281

[1] The table has been put together based on information supplied by Regional Health Authorities.

Smokers (Health Care)

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to introduce guidelines to ensure equality of access to health care for smokers and non-smokers.

Mr. Sackville: A fundamental principle of the national health service, which is enshrined in the patients charter, is that clinical need continues to be the basis on which the NHS provides care to all. Decisions on the treatment of individual patients are properly a matter for clinical judgment by the clinicians responsible for their care, taking account of factors such as the likely success of that treatment. We have no plans to introduce further guidance in this area.

NHS Supplies Authority

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to privatise any of the services provided by the NHS Supplies Authority; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: Some services provided by the National Health Service Supplies Authority are already contracted out and the authority plans to expand the use of private sector partners where there is added value to services in doing so. Further development of these plans will be kept under review and discussed between the NHS Management Executive and the NHS Supplies Authority as part of the normal management review process.

Depo-medrone

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) whether she will establish an immediate investigation into the level of the use of the drug Depo-medrone in epidural therapy within the NHS;

(2) what advice has been issued by her Department to NHS doctors regarding possible side effects of using the drug Depo-medrone in epidural therapy;

(3) what representations have been received by her Department regarding the possible side-effects of the use of the drug Depo-medrone in epidural therapy.

Mr. Sackville: The Department has received a small number of inquiries from doctors on the side-effects of Depo-medrone when used by the epidural route and from patients who have received Depo-medrone epidurally.

Depo-medrone is not licensed for epidural administration. The Department has issued no specific advice to doctors on this issue. The data sheet produced by the manufacturer and authorised by the Licensing Authority carries a clear warning that Depo-medrone should not be used for epidural administration. In addition, the data sheet contains warnings of the side-effects associated with the use of Depo-medrone when administered via non-licensed routes.

Departmental officials are in discussion with relevant medical professional bodies about current clinical practice.

Adoption

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she plans to publish a White Paper on adoption.

Mr. Bowis: Shortly.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list those self-governing trusts that have filed their current accounts, indicating what percentage of the total this represents.

Mr. Sackville: All national health service trusts have produced annual accounts for 1992-93. A small number are still subject to audit.

Health Services, London

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of the effects of the Tomlinson proposals to close accident and emergency departments in central London on *(a)* the London ambulance service and *(b)* other central London casualty units; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: Proposals for changes in the pattern of accident and emergency provision in inner London are being considered in the context of the overall changes to London's health services. As part of this process account is being taken of studies carried out by the London ambulance service. Additionally, the London implimentation group is taking other expert advice to ensure the implications of specific proposals are assessed fully.

Camden and Islington Health Authority

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what discussions she has had with Camden and Islington health authority concerning its contracting decisions.

Dr. Mawhinney: None. Camden and Islington health authority is responsible for commissioning health care for its residents. We understand the authority has issued for public consultation its proposals for contracting from next year.

Pensioners (NHS Services)

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the latest available estimate of the full cost to the Exchequer of introducing *(a)* free national health service sight tests and *(b)* free national health service dental examinations for all people over the state retirement age.

Dr. Mawhinney: The estimated costs of extending free national health service sight tests and free national health service dental examinations to all people above the state retirement age who are not currently eligible on other grounds are about £30 million and £10 million, respectively, in 1993-94.

NHS Staff (Attacks)

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what figures have been collected by her Department in relation to physical attacks on staff in national health service hospitals for each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Sackville: None. These figures are not available centrally.

Bloomfield Report

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she intends to respond to the Bloomfield report.

Dr. Mawhinney: We will announce proposals for the future system of remuneration in the general dental services in due course.

NHS Sight Tests

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the number of national health service sight tests paid for by the general ophthalmic services for each six-monthly period since October 1990.

Dr. Mawhinney: The numbers of national health service sight tests paid for in each six-monthly period since October 1990 in England are shown in the table.

Numbers of national health service sight tests by financial year
England

Six monthly period	*Millions*
October 1990 to March 1991	2·129
April 1991 to September 1991	2·411
October 1991 to March 1992	2·569
April 1992 to September 1992	2·695
October 1992 to March 1993	2·832

Dentistry

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the latest figures for estimated annual income from NHS dental examination charges.

Dr. Mawhinney: The estimated income from dental examination charges is £63 million in 1993-94.

Hospital Doctors (Clothing and Equipment)

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what items of work clothing and equipment are issued as standard to every NHS hospital doctor; and what is the cost to the NHS of one of each item.

Dr. Mawhinney: No standard clothing is issued to doctors by all hospitals, and no items of equipment are issued as standard: these are matters for local determination.

Drugs

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether NHS patients who are to be treated using a drug in a manner which runs contrary to the advice of the manufacturer of that drug have a formal right to be informed of this fact.

Mr. Sackville: Under the terms of the Medicines Act, if a doctor believes that an unlicensed drug, or the use of a licensed drug for an unlicensed indication or unlicensed route of administration, is the only one suitable for a patient, he or she may supply or administer the drug. It is for doctors to use their training, knowledge and experience to weigh carefully the likely benefits of a drug against the anticipated risks before choosing the most appropriate treatment for a particular patient. If a doctor wishes to use an unlicensed drug, or a licensed drug for an unlicensed route of administration or unlicensed indication, it is entirely his or her own responsibility and he or she will be answerable to the consequences. The patients charter emphasises the right of national health service patients to be given a clear explanation of any treatment proposed, including any risks and alternatives, before deciding whether to agree to the treatment. It remains for the doctor concerned, in the exercise of clinical judgment, to decide the precise information a patient should receive and the terms in which the warning of risks should be given.

National Health Service Buildings, Leeds

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list *(a)* those buildings in Leeds currently used by NHS management executive staff and *(b)* the date at which the office space was bought or leased.

Mr. Sackville: National Health Service Management Executive staff in Leeds are all housed in Quarry house. Quarry house was built as a crown building. It first came into use on 6 July 1992.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Hospital Closures

8. **Mr. Ingram:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations he has received from medical practitioners in Northern Ireland on the closure of hospitals in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Ancram: Several GPs have written to the Department of Health and Social Services about particular hospitals—for example, the Royal Victoria hospital, Belfast, the Moyle hospital, Larne and the maternity unit at Tyrone county hospital, Omagh. The views of 43 GPs in the Downpatrick area about hospital services there were included in a report which was sent to the Department by the Downpatrick Community Health Committee.

Inter-party Talks

13. **Mr. O'Hara:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he next hopes to meet together the leaders of the Northern Ireland political parties.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I have frequent contact with each of the leaders on a range of issues but have no immediate plans to meet them together.

Belfast Airport

14. **Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations he has received from Northern Ireland Airport employees at Belfast international airport regarding privatisation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: I have received representations from the airport constabulary which I have discussed with them.

Voluntary Organisations

15. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he last met representatives of the Northern Ireland Council of Voluntary Organisations to discuss the role of voluntary organisations in the determination of the distribution of European Community structural funds; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Wheeler: On 1 February my right hon. and learned Friend discussed with representatives of the council a range of issues, including the next round of EC structural funds, and on 16 June gave the opening address at a conference organised by NICVA on "The Voluntary Sector and Europe". My own discussions with the Council on 30 September also covered structural funds issues.

Surface Links with Scotland

16. **Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representations he has received from bodies and individuals in Northern Ireland concerning the surface links with Scotland.

Mr. Atkins: During consultations for the preparation of the transportation programme Northern Ireland 1994-1999 21 bodies made representations on surface links with Scotland.

IRA Funding

17. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what measures he is taking to limit the funding of the IRA.

Sir John Wheeler: The RUC has primacy in investigating, arresting and securing the prosecution of terrorist racketeers and financiers and the Government are giving them every assistance in their efforts. A terrorist finance unit has been set up within the Northern Ireland Office and works closely with the RUC in investigations and in designing effective countermeasures against terrorist fundraising activities. The Government have introduced special investigative powers for terrorist finances, backed up by criminal penalties and increased sentences for terrorist offences.

Anglo-Irish Talks

18. **Mr. Alton:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what progress he is making in facilitating an agreement between the interested parties involved in the Northern Ireland peace process.

21. **Mr. John D. Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what proposals he has for the future government of Northern Ireland.

29. **Mr. Winnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the latest position on talks over constitutional issues in Northern Ireland.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes).

Health Care, Down

19. **Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what representatives he has received from Down community health committee on matters relating to health care in Down district.

Mr. Ancram: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Nuneaton (Mr. Olner) earlier today.

Housing Site Applications

20. **Mr. Clifford Forsythe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what co-ordination takes place between the planning and environmental interests when new housing site applications are being considered.

Mr. Atkins: Every planning application is subject to a range of consultations, which include environmental interests in appropriate cases.

Anglo-Irish Agreement

22. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what recent discussions he has held with political parties regarding the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: My colleagues and I have been maintaining contacts with the main constitutional political parties in Northern Ireland and the Irish Government over the past weeks to establish how best we can make political progress. A new and more broadly based agreement or structure could be one of the outcomes of the talks process, arrived at through direct discussions between those concerned.

Dublin Bombings

23. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what discussions he has had with *(a)* the RUC and *(b)* Ministers or officials of the Irish Republic regarding the 1973 Dublin bombings.

Sir John Wheeler: Any such discussions would be confidential.

Higher Education

24. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about the number of students entering higher education in 1993-94.

Mr. Ancram: An estimated 8,070 students will enter full-time higher education in Northern Ireland institutions in 1993-94. This represents an estimated increase of 2 per cent. on 1992-93 and a 41 per cent. increase since 1988-89. Information is not yet available on the numbers of part-time students, postgraduate students, or those commencing higher education courses outside Northern Ireland.

Hospital Closures

25. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he last discussed with members of the Eastern health and social services board the question of the closure of hospitals in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Ancram: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hillsborough (Mrs. Jackson) earlier today.

Cross-border Talks

26. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he next hopes to meet the Irish Foreign Minister to discuss cross-border issues.

Sir John Wheeler: I look forward to meeting the Irish Foreign Minister, Mr. Dick Spring, within the next few weeks at the next meeting of the Anglo-Irish intergovernmental conference.

Security

27. **Mr. Molyneaux:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the security situation in Northern Ireland.

Sir John Wheeler: I refer the right hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Bexleyheath (Mr. Townsend).

Electricity Charges

28. **Mr. Beggs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will further consider the need to protect Northern Ireland industrial, commercial and domestic electricity consumers against increased charges beyond the period of the present transitional relief period; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: I have no plans to extend the existing substantial transitional relief arrangements further.

Ambulance Service

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the number of ambulance staff in Northern Ireland employed by the NHS in 1990, 1991 and 1992, using whole time equivalents.

Mr. Ancram: The information is as follows:

	Number
30 September 1990	584·50
30 September 1991	587·50
30 September 1992	585·51

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the percentage of ambulances in each service in Northern Ireland which responded within *(a)* eight minutes and *(b)* 14 to 20 minutes to emergency calls in (i) 1992-93 and (ii) the first half of 1993-94.

Mr. Ancram: The information is as follows:

	1992-93 per cent.	*[1]1993-94 per cent.*
Per cent. responded to within 8 minutes		
Northern Health and Social Services Board	55	56
Southern Health and Social Services Board	60	60
Western Health and Social Services Board	62	58
Eastern Health and Social Services Board	60	[2]53
Per cent. responded to in 18 to 21 minutes[3]		
Northern Health and Social Services Board	95	97
Southern Health and Social Services Board	96	96
Western Health and Social Services Board	96	93
Eastern Health and Social Services Board	95	[2]91

Notes:
[1]First quarter only—second quarter figures are not available.
[2]Eastern Ambulance Service Health and Social Services Trust.
[3]Figures on the percentage of calls responded to between 14 and 20 minutes are not available as the Charter standards in Northern Ireland are set at 18 to 21 minutes.

Mr. Patrick Doyle

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a list of all meetings held and correspondence exchanged in the past 10 years between his Department and Mr. Patrick Doyle, now of AST Training; what was the nature of such meetings or correspondence; what plans he has to meet Mr. Patrick Doyle; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: There are no records of any meetings held or correspondence exchanged in the last 10 years between the Northern Ireland Office or the Northern Ireland Departments and Mr. Patrick Doyle. There are no plans to meet Mr. Patrick Doyle.

WALES

Ambulance Service

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the percentage of ambulances in each service in Wales that responded within *(a)* eight minutes and *(b)* 14 to 20 minutes to emergency calls in (i) 1992-93 and (ii) the first half of 1993-94.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The ambulance service classifications in Wales and their standards for emergency call response times are:

	Minutes	
	50 Per cent. within	*95 Per cent. within*
Urban areas (Population density: more than 3 persons per acre)	7	14
Rural areas (Population density: between 3 and 0·5 persons per acre)	8	18

	Minutes	
	50 Per cent. within	95 Per cent. within
Sparsely populated areas (Population density: less than 0·5 persons per acre)	8	21

Information is not yet available for the quarter ended 30 September 1993. Figures for 1992-93 and the first quarter of 1993-94 are shown in the following table:

Population density more than 3 persons per acre

	1992-93		April to June 1993	
	Percentage arriving within 7 minutes	14 minutes	Percentage arriving within 7 minutes	14 minutes
South Glamorgan	54	91	59	93

Population density between 3 and 0·5 persons per acre

	1992-93		April to June 1993	
	Percentage arriving within 8 minutes	18 minutes	Percentage arriving within 8 minutes	18 minutes
Clwyd	61	97	62	97
Gwent	54	96	53	97
Mid Glamorgan	61	98	51	93
West Glamorgan	61	95	56	90

Population density less than 0·5 persons per acre

	1992-93		April to June 1993	
	Percentage arriving within 8 minutes	21 minutes	Percentage arriving within 8 minutes	21 minutes
East Dyfed	59	94	59	93
Gwynedd	57	96	58	96
Pembrokeshire	42	88	46	90
Powys	47	89	44	88

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the number of ambulance staff in Wales employed by the NHS in each year since 1990.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The whole-time equivalent number of ambulance staff in post at 30 September each year was as follows:

	Number
1990	1,548
1991	1,565
1992	1,547
1993	1,538

The figures include ambulancemen and women, ambulance officers and control assistants.

Medicines Evaluation Agency

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had in relation to the case for designating Cardiff as the location for the proposed European medicines evaluation agency and the benefits that would be created by the presence of the staff of the agency being employed in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: After extensive consideration the Government decided that the United Kingdom's bid for the European medicines evaluation agency would best be led by the pharmaceutical industry. A strong bid is being mounted by the industry, based on a site in the London area. The Government fully support the industry's bid.

Mr. Patrick Doyle

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a list of all meetings held and correspondence exchanged in the past 10 years between his Department and Mr. Patrick Doyle, now of AST Training; what was the nature of such meetings or correspondence; what plans he has to meet Mr. Patrick Doyle; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I have no plans to meet Mr. Doyle. Following a check on centrally held records of correspondence to Welsh Office Ministers, which would include requests for meetings, no correspondence from Mr. Doyle has been found.

Caerphilly Town Centre

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he proposes to announce his response to the current application for urban investment grant in respect of the Caerphilly town centre redevelopment proposal.

Mr. Redwood: I am currently considering the recommendations of my independent panel of assessors and hope to make an announcement shortly.

DEFENCE

Depleted Uranium

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what studies have been undertaken by his Department into the nephrotoxicity of soluble depleted uranium used in armour piercing shells by the Army.

Mr. Hanley: The testing and use of armour-piercing shells by the Army does not produce soluble depleted uranium and therefore my Department has not conducted studies in this area.

Yugoslavia

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will detail the total number of casualties amongst British Forces serving in Bosnia-Herzegovina since deployment.

Mr. Hanley: There has been one death, that of Lance Corporal Edwards on 13 January this year, and 17 injuries sustained by British soldiers in the course of their duties with UNPROFOR in Bosnia-Herzegovina, from causes which include gunshot wounds, mine blast injuries and shrapnel wounds.

D-Notices

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the operation of the new D-notice arrangements since the establishment of the defence advisory notice system on 1 August.

Mr. Hanley: Copies of the six defence advisory notices which replace the former eight D-notices have been widely distributed within the media and to those members of the public who have asked for them. Altogether some 800 copies have been issued. I understand that, since they came into effect on 1 August, the defence advisory notices have been used on a number of occasions to help editors, producers and publishers on issues of national security when they are considering what to publish.

Air Force Targets

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if simulated attacks on civil airfields are included in the training syllabus for Royal Air Force Tornado F3 operational squadrons.

Mr. Hanley: No.

Maralinga Test Site

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to exchange notes with representatives of the Federal Government of Australia about an agreement over the ex-gratia payment to be made by Her Majesty's Government in respect of the clearing of the former United Kingdom atomic bomb test site at Maralinga, South Australia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: On 14 July 1993 the United Kingdom Government agreed in principle to make an ex-gratia payment to the Federal Government of Australia as a contribution to the cost of the further clean-up of the Maralinga site. Preparation of the legal documents giving effect to this agreement is at an advanced stage.

Ministry Police

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the names and titles of the Ministry of Defence Police Committee.

Mr. Hanley: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to him on 18 October, *Official Report*, columns *64-65*.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the reasons for and extent of the changes he is proposing for the Ministry of Defence Police Committee; and when he intends to table the statutory instrument giving effect to those changes.

Mr. Hanley: From time to time the composition of the Ministry of Defence Police Committee needs to change to reflect departmental reorganisations. Two such changes are set out in the answer I gave the hon. Member on 18 October, *Official Report*, columns *64-65*. In addition, to reflect the strategic management board arrangements for the Ministry of Defence Police when it becomes a Defence Agency and to avoid having two committees, we are proposing to augment the police committee by conferring full member status on the chief constable, the deputy chief constable and head of the secretariat, subject to satisfactory legal opinion. The statutory instrument will be tabled shortly after legal advice has been given.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will make it his policy to permit the Ministry of Defence Police Federation to send observers to those parts of the meetings of the Ministry of Defence Police Committee which do not relate to individual cases, or pay negotiations, and whose business is comparable to those agenda items of county police committees that would normally be considered in public under part I of the agenda;

(2) when the Ministry of Defence Police Federation were last invited to attend a meeting of the Ministry of Defence Police Committee.

Mr. Hanley: The Ministry of Defence Police Committee is different from a county police committee. While it is not considered appropriate that observers from the Ministry of Defence Police Federation should attend on a regular basis it has been acknowledged that there many be occasions when, at the discretion of the chairman and committee members, the Defence Police Federation could be invited to attend should it be considered appropriate.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects Sir John Blelloch's committee of inquiry into the Ministry of Defence police to commence its work; and when he expects it will make its report.

Mr. Hanley: I expect the committee to begin its work as soon as terms of reference and membership have been finalised and after my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary has announced the Government's response to Sir Patrick Sheehy's committee's report on police responsibilities and rewards. The committee is expected to report as soon as it has completed its work.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if the report of the committee of inquiry into the Ministry of Defence police will be published.

Mr. Hanley: Yes, although it is too soon to speculate on the form this will take.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will name and give the background of members of the Blelloch committee of inquiry into the Ministry of Defence police together with the name and address of the committee's secretary.

Mr. Hanley: No. The committee secretary has yet to be appointed, but meanwhile any submissions to the review team may be addressed through the chief constable, Ministry of Defence police.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he proposes to set up the Ministry of Defence police agency.

Mr. Hanley: As I announced to the House on 19 October, *Official Report*, column *171*, our plans envisage the Ministry of Defence police being the next support organisation to become a defence agency.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consultation there has been with the Ministry of Defence Police Federation about *(a)* the contents of the draft statutory instrument relating to the proposed amendments to the police committee's constitution and *(b)* the membership and terms of reference of the Blellock committee of inquiry into the Ministry of Defence police.

Mr. Hanley: No consultation with the Ministry of Defence Police Federation has taken place on the contents of the draft statutory instrument relating to the proposed amendments to the police committee's membership; nor is it appropriate. My Department wrote to the Ministry of Defence Police Federation last month about the committee of inquiry and the draft terms of reference will be discussed with it before finalisation.

Animal Testing

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what animal species *(a)* have been used and *(b)* are currently used by his Department and defence contractors to test impact consequences on aero-engines.

Mr. Aitken: Animal impact tests on aero-engines are usually carried out by the engine manufacturer. Commonly, dead chickens or ducks are used for these tests. No work of this type is currently undertaken within my Department.

Cetaceans

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence to what extent Royal Navy vessels are currently involved in projects to ascertain the abundance and distribution of cetaceans.

Mr. Hanley: Royal Navy vessels keep a record of sightings of marine natural phenomena of special scientific interest. This includes all sightings of cetaceans. These records are then made available to interested scientific bodies.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what research projects are currently under way in his Department on echo location used by cetaceans.

Mr. Aitken: There are no research projects currently under way in, or sponsored by, my Department on echo location used by cetaceans.

Surface Ship Command System

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when it was decided not to fit the surface ship command system in RFA Fort Victoria and RFA Fort George; why the decision was taken; what are the financial consequences; what adaptations are required as a result and at what cost; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: The decision not to fit the previously intended surface ship command system to the AORs was taken during financial year 1992-93 following the decision not to fit the ships with the vertical launch Seawolf defence system. The latter decision means that a less sophisticated command system is now appropriate with a consequent saving to the defence budget. We do not expect any adaptations as a result of this decision.

5 Airborne Brigade

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many light strike vehicles it was originally proposed to purchase for 5 Airborne Brigade; of what type and at what cost; what vehicles were to be replaced as a result; when and why this order was postponed; what are the operational implications for the brigade's tactical mobility; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: We have never had any plans to place an order for a light strike vehicle for 5 Airborne Brigade.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Retirement Pensions (Women)

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many married women reached pensionable age in each of the years 1979 to 1992 and made full class one contributions which were one, two or three years, respectively, short of the requisite number of qualifying years for a 25 per cent. pension.

Mr. Hague: The information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many married women qualified for a category B retirement pension in each year since 1979; and what information he has as to age at the time they first qualified.

Mr. Hague: Not all the information in the form requested is available. Such information as is available is in the tables.

Awards of category B retirement pension to married women

	6 months ending 6 April 1979	8 months ending 30 November 1979	6 months ending 31 May 1980	13 months ending 30 June 1981	5 months ending 30 November 1981	6 months ending 31 May 1982	4 months ending 30 September 1982
All ages	51,660	104,910	90,000	164,510	56,380	71,044	44,360
Age 60	14,730	30,170	33,190	52,270	20,690	24,630	16,600
Age 61	3,910	7,990	6,420	18,270	4,920	5,420	3,180
Age 62	5,430	9,220	6,770	12,490	4,310	6,360	4,440
Age 63	5,620	11,560	8,660	13,730	5,120	6,280	3,530
Age 64	6,190	11,570	8,580	15,240	4,850	6,160	3,950
Age 65	5,400	10,840	8,670	15,800	5,290	6,820	3,700
Age 66	3,040	6,820	5,140	11,220	3,050	4,630	2,190
Age 67	2,280	4,780	3,530	7,220	2,210	2,830	1,190
Age 68	1,300	3,620	2,440	5,540	1,690	2,410	1,340
Age 69	1,220	2,530	1,870	3,750	1,170	1,670	1,050
Age 70 to 74	2,280	5,180	4,090	7,570	2,710	3,445	2,170
Age 75 to 79	260	530	520	1,280	310	238	250
Age 80 and over	—	100	120	130	60	147	50

	6 months ending 31 March 1982	6 months ending 30 September 1983	6 months ending 31 March 1984	12 months ending 31 March 1985	6 months ending 30 September 1985	6 months ending 31 March 1986	12 months ending 30 September 1986
All ages	50,710	54,430	53,220	103,630	59,380	60,340	113,540
Age 60	21,180	22,230	20,150	39,640	21,830	23,600	45,250
Age 61	3,570	3,090	3,350	5,760	4,150	4,570	9,470
Age 62	4,270	4,230	4,360	7,480	4,510	4,250	7,600
Age 63	4,140	5,420	4,930	8,960	5,350	4,860	8,280
Age 64	4,090	4,250	4,480	10,070	5,700	5,250	9,050
Age 65	3,760	4,260	4,930	10,030	6,020	6,050	10,220
Age 66	2,420	2,730	2,480	5,560	2,750	3,230	7,450
Age 67	1,880	2,160	2,180	4,050	2,110	2,210	3,960
Age 68	1,530	1,510	1,790	3,280	1,840	1,480	3,170
Age 69	1,160	1,430	1,460	2,680	1,360	1,370	2,470
Age 70 to 74	2,230	2,650	2,620	5,170	3,210	2,820	5,370
Age 75 to 79	410	390	430	790	480	600	1,080
Age 80 and over	70	80	60	160	70	50	170

	12 months ending 30 September 1987	6 months ending 31 March 1988	6 months ending 30 September 1988	6 months ending 31 March 1989
All ages	94,110	45,860	43,380	42,440
Age 60	41,980	21,870	20,960	20,320
61	7,020	3,200	2,960	3,080
62	7,150	3,570	3,540	3,240
63	7,220	3,560	3,590	3,420
64	6,860	2,830	3,120	3,260
65	7,580	3,550	2,950	3,150
66	4,540	1,800	1,570	1,330
67	3,470	1,470	1,220	1,120
68	2,090	1,170	1,140	1,030
69	1,450	780	500	680
70 to 74	3,870	1,650	1,410	1,430
75 to 79	730	400	360	350
80 and over	150	10	60	30

Occupational Pensions Review

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make it his policy to extend the review of occupational pensions undertaken by the Pension Law Review Committee to consider problems and issues concerning private pensions.

Mr. Hague: The Pension Law Review Committee was set up in June last year to review the whole framework of law and regulation of occupational pension schemes. This wide-ranging review covered both the private and public provision of occupational pensions. The committee reported its findings to the Secretary of State for Social Security who published the report on 30 September (CM 2432). Having fulfilled its terms of reference, the committee has now been disbanded and the Government are making a start on the detailed consideration of the committee's recommendations.

Late Appeals

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what guidance has been issued to chairpersons of social security appeals tribunals on the issue of late appeals addressing CSIS 4/90;

(2) what guidance has been issued to the chairpersons of social security appeal tribunals on *(a)* admission of late appeals following favourable commissioners' decisions and *(b)* an interpretation of special reasons in regulation 3(3) of the Social Security (Adjudications) Regulations; and whether such guidance is publicly available.

Mr. Burt: The guidance of chairmen of social security appeals tribunals is a matter for the President of the independent tribunal service, his honour Judge Thorpe, and he will be writing to the hon. Member direct on this matter.

Single Parents (Benefits)

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many single parents are *(a)* claiming unemployment benefit, *(b)* receiving income support and

(c) living in rented accommodation and receiving housing benefit; and what percentage of the recipients in each category they represent.

Mr. Burt: Figures for the number of single parents receiving only unemployment benefit are not available. The latest available information on single parents receiving income support with and without unemployment benefit, and receiving housing benefit with and without income support is for 1992 and is in the tables.

Number of single parents in receipt of income support

	Number of cases	*Percentage of all income support cases*
With unemployment benefit	3,000	0·1
Without unemployment benefit	1,023,000	18·6
All cases	1,026,000	18·7

Number of single parents in receipt of housing benefit

	Number of cases	*Percentage of all housing benefit cases*
With income support	730,000	28·0
Without indomce support	87,000	5·0
All cases	817,000	19·0

Note: Figures are rounded to the nearest thousand. Figures may overlap as people can receive more than one of these benefits.

Child Support Agency

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many representations his Department has received regarding the implementation of the Child Support Agency since its inception.

Mr. Burt: Between 5 April 1993 and 30 September 1993 the Department of Social Security headquarters and the Child Support Agency headquarters received in the region of 1,200 written representations covering a range of views about child support issues.

State Pensions

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security by what amount the state pension will be increased next year for *(a)* single and *(b)* married pensioners.

Mr. Hague: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will make a statement about next year's uprating of benefits as usual in due course.

Benefits Agency

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list *(a)* those firms who were asked to bid for the management contract for Quarry house, Leeds and *(b)* the value of the contract awarded to the successful contractor.

Mr. Burt: The firms invited to bid were:

P and O Total Facilities Management;
Matthew Hall;
Ferguson Bucknall Austin;
Property and Facilities Management.

It would be a breach of commercial confidentiality to disclose the value of the contract.

SCOTLAND

Local Government Reorganisation

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he proposes to set up a committee to make recommendations for the organisation and management of the new local authorities along the lines of the Paterson committee in the previous reorganisation.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 20 October 1993]:* Much of the advice contained in the Paterson report continues to serve local government well today. The Government have already made it clear in their White Paper, "Shaping the Future—The New Councils" that it is not proposed to make provision in legislation for alternative forms of local government organisation and management to replace the existing committee-based system which was endorsed by the Paterson committee. It was agreed, however, in discussions of the joint Scottish Office/Convention of Scottish Local Authorities steering group and working group, which was established last year to consider internal management issues, that there was scope for guidance on possible developments in management structures within this basic statutory framework, and that this might best be taken forward from within local government itself.

EMPLOYMENT

European Social Fund

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will press in the Social Affairs Council for a rollover facility in the current year for grants from the European social fund into 1994.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: In July, the Foreign Affairs Council reached agreement on new regulations which will govern procedures for making grants under the structural funds, including the European social fund, from 1 January 1994. The Government argued strongly for a rollover year or similar transitional arrangements during the negotiations on the new regulations, but in the absence of support from other member states was unsuccessful in securing them.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish tables showing the percentage of those people who are registered as unemployed who are aged 24 years or under, according to the latest available figures, in each parliamentary constituency in *(a)* Great Britain and *(b)* England, and if he will publish the tables in rank order.

Miss Widdecombe: Official unemployment rates are not available for areas smaller than the self-contained labour markets known as travel-to-work areas. Unadjusted data on claimant unemployment levels, by age, in each parliamentary constituency are available quarterly for the months of January, April, July and October from the NOMIS database in the Library.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people aged *(a)* 16 or 17 years and *(b)* 18 to 24 years living in (i) York parliamentary

constituency, (ii) North Yorkshire, (iii) Yorkshire and Humberside and (iv) Great Britain were registered as unemployed at April 1991.

Miss Widdecombe: The information requested is given in the following table:

Unadjusted claimant Unemployment by Age (April 1991)

	Under 18	*18-24*
York Parliamentary Constituency	1	1,127
North Yorkshire	15	4,712
Yorkshire and Humberside	285	64,296
Great Britain	3,027	632,710

Note: Since September 1988 and coinciding with the extension of a guaranteed Youth Training Scheme now Youth Training (YT) place to all those aged under 18 not in full time education or employment, those who decline an offer of a YT place are no longer entitled to unemployment-related benefits except in cases of severe hardship.

THORP

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what requests he has received from BNFL trade unions since 28 June for a meeting on the employment implications of the thermal oxide reprocessing plant and associated nuclear facilities upon the Cumbrian economy.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Since 28 June, we have received one request from trade unions at BNFL for a meeting on the employment and local economic implications of the thermal oxide reprocessing plant (THORP).

Environmental Technology

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what initiatives have been taken in 1993 by training and enterprise councils, in conjunction with private industry, to promote job creation in environmental projects and manufacture of environmental technology.

Miss Widdecombe: This information is not generally available centrally, but I am aware of several good examples. For instance, West London training and enterprise council has a series of initiatives to help businesses to become more environmentally conscious; Northumberland TEC is involved in a project developing business and management training with a key objective to improve the understanding of environmental issues; and Dudley TEC has piloted a project which links schools and employers in projects on environmental and amenity improvements to industrial premises using computer technology.

Noel Employment Ltd.

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his answer of 29 June, *Official Report*, column *474*, for what reasons his Department judged that the temporary employees of Noel Employment Ltd. were to be refused redundancy payments.

Miss Widdecombe: Claims from the majority of temporary workers were rejected because they were not considered to be "employees" as defined in section 153 of the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978. The Department examined all the relevant contract documentation which indicated that in the majority of cases there was no obligation on the company to provide work, or for the temporary workers to accept it and that the temporary workers were free to work for other agencies between engagements. Nor were there any contractual arrangements for holiday, sick pay or pay for bank holidays which would normally be associated with a contract of service.

Two separate industrial tribunals have since upheld the Department's view that these factors were inconsistent with employee status for the purposes of the 1978 Act.

Health and Safety

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish dates of all meetings with outside persons or bodies and titles of all non-departmental briefing papers or any associated material concerning the possible amendment of sections 1(1), 1(2) or 15(1) of the Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act 1974; what plans he has to amend sections 1(1), 1(2) or 15(1) of the Health and Safety at Work Act, etc. 1974 in respect of matters relating to his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: There have been many discussions of a wide range of issues arising from the Health and Safety Commission's review of regulation, including those within the seven sectoral task groups. Any question of amendment of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 would take into consideration the findings of the Health and Safety Commission's review.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish a table showing for each of the past five years, the total number of each of forms OSR1, OSR7, F9, F10, F1229, F2252, F2522, F2404 and ASB5 received by the Health and Safety Executive and the total number estimated to be outstanding for each year; and what action the Health and Safety Executive took in each year to chase up outstanding forms.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information about the number of forms OSR1, F9, F10, F1229, F2252, F2522 and ASB5 received by the Health and Safety Executive is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. Forms OSR7 and F2404 are not required to be sent to HSE. As part of its inspection strategy, HSE seeks out premises that are not registered. Additionally and where relevant, during the course of inspection visits HSE inspectors remind occupiers of the requirement to provide formal notification to HSE as appropriate.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish a table showing for each of the past five years, the total number of inspections made by health and safety inspectors in relation to completion by employers of each of forms F31, F32, F34, F35, F36, F44A, F47, F55, F55A, F57, F59, F60, F339, F658, F750, F751, F1327, F1952, F2032, F2067, F2197, F2198, F2346, F2351, F2362, F2525, F2526, F2527, F2530 and F2531 and the total number of inspectors available to make such inspections; what was the total number of establishments found not to have completed such forms; and what action the Health and Safety Executive took in each year to chase up outstanding forms.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information is not available in the form requested.

The forms listed should be completed in various circumstances under the Factories Act 1961. Forms F658, F1327 and F2362 are no longer used.

The following table shows the total number of planned inspection visits made by FI in the last five years and the number of factory inspectors in post in the field at 1 April in each year.

Year (1 April to 31 March)	*Number of planned inspections*	*Number of inspectors*
1988-89	118,903	514·5
1989-90	126,495	527·0
1990-91	130,016	558·5
1991-92	130,275	577·0
1992-93	121,486	608·0

The primary purpose of planned inspection visits is to consider compliance with health and safety legislation and where necessary to give advice and guidance to employers and others. During visits inspectors consider the use of statutory forms and impress on occupiers, where appropriate, the importance of them.

Unemployment Benefit

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish a table showing for each of the past 10 years the total number of forms *(a)* UB77 and UB77A and *(b)* UB78A and UB78B issued by the employment service, and the total numbers of cases in each case where entitlement to unemployment benefit was subsequently withdrawn or not allowed.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. Frank Dobson, dated 21 October 1993:

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, the Secretary of State has asked me to write direct to respond to your Parliamentary Question to him about the total number of forms UB77, UB77A, UB78A and UB78B issued by the Employment Service in each of the last ten years, and the total number of cases where entitlement to unemployment benefit was subsequently withdrawn or not allowed. This is something which falls within the responsibilities delegated to me as Chief Executive of the Agency.

UB77 and UB78 forms are sent to employers to establish an individual's entitlement to unemployment benefit. Unfortunately, I am unable to provide the numbers we issue each year because this information is not collated or published.

I am sorry I cannot be of help on this occasion.

As decided by the Administration Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to written Parliamentary Questions will now be published in the Official Report. I will also place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

Deregulation

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish a list of all correspondence sent by his Department to the Health and Safety Commission or from the Health and Safety Commission to his Department containing suggested regulations to be considered for revocation as part of the deregulation initiative, the dates on which correspondence was sent and the dates on which each of the seven Health and Safety Commission's sectoral task groups for deregulation were established, have met and plan to complete their consideration.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: There has been no correspondence between the Department and the Health and Safety Commission on this issue.

The Health and Safety Commission established seven sectoral task groups to help it to undertake its review of health and safety regulation. The appointment of the chairmen and members of each of the seven groups runs from 1 July 1993 to 30 April 1994.

The following table gives the dates on which each of the seven sector task groups have met:

	July	*August*	*September*	*October*
Chemicals and pharmaceuticals	30	14	23	11
Communications and transport	29	1	22	28
Construction	15, 27	19, 25	16	15
Engineering industries	21	10, 24	—	4, 8
Food, drink and agriculture	19	16	24	11
Financial services	22	26	9	19
Other services	7	11	8	6

The Groups have been asked to complete their work by March 1994.

All health and safety regulations are being considered in the review. The findings of the seven sectoral task groups will be considered by the Health and Safety Commission and reported to me. Any regulations considered suitable for reform will be subject to the usual consultation procedures established by the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. The work of the sectoral groups is continuing.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish a table listing *(a)* all regulations suggested by his Department to the Health and Safety Commission or by the Health and Safety Commission to his Department as candidates for revocation as part of the deregulation initiative, *(b)* the purpose and function of each of these regulations, *(c)* whether it is suggested that the regulations be (i) amended, (ii) abolished, (iii) replaced with self-regulation or (iv) replaced with other regulation; whether, for each regulation, revocation without replacement or with self-regulation would require amendment of section 1(1), 1(2) and 15(1) of the Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act 1974; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: All health and safety legislation for which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment is responsible is being reviewed as part of the Health and Safety Commission's review of regulation. If, during the course of that review or at its conclusion, the Health and Safety Commission takes the view that reform of parts of the legislation would be desirable, the Health and Safety Commission will publish a consultative document containing its proposals. At the end of the

consultation period the Health and Safety Commission will put forward its proposals to us in accordance with section 11 of the Health and Safety at Work etc, Act 1974.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish a list of all regulations submitted by his Department for inclusion in the deregulation unit's list of regulations affecting business together with the estimated enforcement costs and compliance costs for each separate regulation and, for those regulations for which such costs are not yet available, the target date by which he intends to submit such costs to the deregulation unit.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Details of all regulations for which the Department, including the Health and Safety Executive, is responsible, were forwarded to the deregulation unit and incorporated in the baseline-document placed in the Library on 20 April. As part of the Government's deregulation initiative, the Department is currently undertaking reviews of all its regulations. As part of these reviews we aim to assess compliance costs. The reviews will be completed by April 1994.

Mr. Patrick Doyle

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish a list of all meetings held and correspondence exchanged in the past 10 years between his Department and Mr. Patrick Doyle, now of AST Training; what was the nature of such meetings or correspondence; what plans he has to meet Mr. Patrick Doyle; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: The Department has found no record of any meetings or correspondence with Mr. Patrick Doyle, now of AST Training. Neither I nor any other Ministers in the Department have any plans to meet Mr. Doyle.

Injured Trainees

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish a table showing for each of the past 10 years the total number of accident report forms CHS 76 completed by training providers and the total number of cases in which the injured trainee was deemed to be entitled to injury benefit.

Miss Widdecombe: The total number of accident report forms CHS 76 completed by training providers and submitted to the Department for each of the last 10 years is as follows:

	Number
1983	2,802
1984	2,278
1985	2,529
1986	2,771
1987	3,616
1988	4,039
1989	4,746
1990	3,811
1991	2,691
[1]1992	973

[1] From April 1992 forms CHS 76 were forwarded to the Department only for those injured trainees who had been terminated from their training schemes, or who suffered a major injury as defined in the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulation 1985 (RIDDOR).

The total number of cases in which the injured trainee was deemed to be entitled to injury benefit for the years 1990 to 1992 are as follows:

	Number of forms received	*Number entitled to benefit*
1990	3,811	1,067
1991	2,691	877
1992	973	592

Figures for previous years can be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Disabled Employees

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish a table showing for each of the past 10 years the total number of forms DP39 received and DP40 issued by his Department.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. Frank Dobson, dated 21 October 1993:

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, the Secretary of State has asked me to write to you direct to respond to your Parliamentary Question to him about the publication of a table showing the total number of forms DP39 received and DP40s issued by his Department for each of the past 10 years. This is something which falls within the responsibilities delegated to me as Chief Executive of the Agency.

I regret that I am unable to provide the precise information you asked for. We do not collect statistics centrally on applications for permits under the provisions of the Quota Scheme (form DP39), or the Designated Employment Scheme (DP40).

We do, however, collect data on the numbers of employers issued with permits (DP42) under the Quota Scheme each year. This is taken from annual returns from our Local Offices on the extent to which employers in their areas are complying with the requirements of the Scheme as at 1 June. I attach a table showing, for each of the last 10 years, the number of employers within scope of the Scheme, ie those with 20 or more employees who were not employing their full 3 per cent. quota of registered disabled people on 1 June, but who had been issued with permits during the previous 12 months.

I hope this is helpful.

As decided by the Administrative Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive Replies to written Parliamentary Questions will be published in the Official Report. I will also place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

Table

Numbers of below-quota employers issued with permits (DP42) 12 months to 1 June

	Number
1983	18,536
1984	18,770
1985	18,681
1986	18,840
1987	18,577
1988	18,594
1989	18,530
1990	18,038
1991	17,649
1992	15,871

Technical and Vocational Initiative

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the level of funding for the technical and vocational education initiative provided by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* local education authorities for each financial year since its introduction.

Miss Widdecombe: The following table shows the Department's expenditure on the technical and vocational education initiative since its introduction in September 1983 to March 1993.

The Department does not collate data on expenditure by local education authorities in relation to TVEI, though authorities and grant maintained schools do contribute to TVEI aims.

Employment Department expenditure on TVEI

	£ million
1983-84	[1]—
1984-85	26
1985-86	39
1986-87	70
1987-88	58
1988-89	88
1989-90	129
1990-91	135
1991-92	154
1992-93	[2]143

[1] Not separately identified.
[2] Forecast Out-turn.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 22 October 1993

TRANSPORT

Jubilee Line Extension

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the expected start and completion of the Jubilee line extension.

Mr. Norris: Good progress is being made in dealing with the legal and financial issues which must be satisfactorily resolved before the Secretary of State can authorise the start of construction. The extension is expected to enter passenger service 53 months after the start of construction.

European Night Services Ltd.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consultations he has had with the transport and competition directorate of the European Commission in relation to *(a)* the article 85 exemption procedure and *(b)* funding for British Rail investment in European Night Services Ltd. with respect to its south Wales-Paris-Brussels service proposal.

Mr. Freeman: The Department itself has not formally discussed these matters with the European Commission. European Night Services Ltd. is a joint enterprise by British Rail with French, German and Dutch railways. It is for them to arrange any exemptions and funding that may be required. The company and the railways concerned have applied to the Commission for formal confirmation that their operating agreements do not constitute restrictive practices prohibited by article 2 of Council regulation (EEC) No. 1017/68. I hope that the application will be viewed in a positive way.

M11 Link Road

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will set out in full the cost-benefit analysis economic justification for the M11 link road.

Mr. Norris: The last full assessment using an adaptation of the Department's COBA method was prepared for the 1987 public inquiry into the link road scheme. The supporting evidence presented to the inquiry is voluminous and so I will send a copy of it direct to the hon. Member.

Following this and other public inquiries and consultation, and in consideration of all the relevant factors, including but not solely the economics of the scheme, the Secretaries of State decided to proceed with the link road. The first of the four main contracts began on 13 September last and it is our intention to let further contracts to complete the link road by the end of 1997.

Water Transport

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consideration his Department is currently giving to the use of the *(a)* coastal traffic, *(b)* navigable rivers and canals and *(c)* ports for moving freight from the motorways to waterways; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: The Department has commissioned two studies examining the scope for shifting freight from roads to water: inland waterways, coastal and short sea shipping.

We expect to publish a summary of the results of both studies shortly.

Additionally, the River Thames working group, which I chair, is looking at both freight and passenger traffic on the Thames, the constraints that limit that traffic, the potential for its development, and the means to realise that potential. The group hopes to report its findings during the late spring of 1994.

London Transport Finance

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what changes there were to London Transport's core business external financing limit for the financial year 1992-93.

Mr. Norris: The original 1992-93 EFL for LT's core business was £852 million. This was reduced by £84 million following the transfer of the docklands light railway to the London Docklands development corporation in April 1992, but then increased by £65 million in July 1992 due to additional funding to implement measures in London Underground Ltd.'s company plan. The final EFL was therefore £833 million.

From this total, LT was allowed to carry forward £33 million to the current financial year. This was in respect of core business items related to the Jubilee line extension.

Mr. Patrick Doyle

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish a list of all meetings held and correspondence exchanged in the past 10 years between his Department and Mr. Patrick Doyle, now of AST Training; what was the nature of such meetings or correspondence; what plans he has to meet Mr. Patrick Doyle; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norris: The Department has no record of any meeting or correspondence with Mr. Doyle and has no plans to meet him.

M1/M62 Link

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the full cost to public funds of work undertaken on the proposal to build an M1/M62 motorway link in west Yorkshire; and if he will break down the costings into their various elements.

Mr. MacGregor: The total cost to date of preparation work on the M1/M62 link road is £1,682,391. This is made up of:

	£
Design Consultants Fees	1,516,346
Ordnance Survey	36,233
Blighted Property	82,626

	£
Publicity	4,704
Miscellaneous	42,482

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 19 October 1993 (Mrs. Peacock), *Official Report*, column *200*, to the hon. Member for Batley and Spen, if he will give the full results of the public consultation exercise into his proposal for an M1/M62 motorway link in west Yorkshire, indicating the number of representations in favour and against the various options proposed.

Mr. MacGregor: A leaflet is in preparation which will include the information requested. This will be circulated in the next few days. I will ensure the hon. Member receives a copy.

HEALTH

Prescription List

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the items that will not be available on a national health service prescription from November.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer the hon. Member to statutory instrument No. 2421, laid before Parliament on 11 October which lists the drugs and other substances to be added to the list of items which may not be prescribed at national health service expense from 1 November 1993.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many prescriptions in England were removed from the NHS provision by introducing limited lists in each year since 1988-89.

Dr. Mawhinney: The numbers of products removed from national health service prescription each year since 1988-89 are shown in the table:

Year	*Number*
1988-89	174
1989-90	27
1990-91	87
1991-92	100
1992-93	121
1993-94	653

Fund Holding

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will give for 1993-94 *(a)* the amount of money budgeted by each district health authority for purchasing services of the types covered by the fund-holding regulations on behalf of patients of non-fund-holding practices, *(b)* the number of patients registered with non-fund-holding practices in each district health authority and *(c)* the amount of funding per capita budgeted by each district health authority for purchasing services of the type covered by the fund-holding regulations on behalf of patients registered with non-fund-holding practices.

Mr. Sackville: The information requested in *(a)* is collected by the Department of Health for regional health authorities only, not for individual authorities. That requested in *(b)* and *(c)* is not collected centrally. The hon. Member may wish to contact the chairmen of regional health authorities for this information.

Health Authority Chairmen

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she advertises *(a)* internally and *(b)* externally for chairmen of regional health authorities whenever a post becomes vacant; and if she will make a statement;

(2) whether the recent vacant post of chairman of the West Midlands regional health authority was advertised before the post was filled; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: We do not consider it appropriate or necessary to advertise for candidates for appointment as chairman of a regional health authority, as there are many suitable ones already known to us both in other national health service bodies and from outside the NHS.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what qualifications Sir Michael Carlisle had for being made chairman of the community health Sheffield NHS trust; and if she will make a statement;

(2) if she will state the age and qualifications of the chairman of the community health Sheffield NHS trust.

Dr. Mawhinney: Chairmen of national health service trusts are appointed for their personal qualities and skills. Sir Michael Carlisle has been involved with the NHS for more than 20 years and he has been chairman of Trent regional health authority since 1982. He is therefore eminently suitable for appointment as chairman of an NHS trust. As stated in the Department's press notice dated 23 August (HN893/925), Sir Michael is 63 years of age.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list by health authorities and by date, for the last 48 months, the amount of compensation that has been paid to chairmen of health authorities who have left before their term of office had expired; and if she will make a statement as to what the special circumstances were for each payment made.

Dr. Mawhinney: With the agreement of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State decided to make a payment of £10,000 to Sir James Ackers, the former chairman of West Midlands regional health authority, under the provisions of paragraph 9(3) of schedule 5 to the National Health Service Act 1977; there have been no other such payments in the last 48 months.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if the post of chairman of the community health Sheffield national health service trust was advertised *(a)* privately or *(b)* publicly; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: The position of the non-executive part-time chairman of this trust was not advertised. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has indicated that she would be willing to appoint the retiring chairman of Trent regional health authority, Sir Michael Carlisle, to this position on the basis of his record over many years as a chairman in the national health service and his willingness to undertake the important responsibilities that fall upon national health service trust chairmen.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she advertises *(a)* internally or *(b)* externally for chairmen of national health service trusts whenever a post becomes vacant; and if she will make a statement;

(2) if she advertises *(a)* internally or *(b)* externally for chairmen of district health authorities whenever a post becomes vacant; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: We ask regional health authority chairmen to assist in the initial selection of candidates for chairmen's appointments to national health service authorities and trusts in their area. It is for them to decide how to obtain a good range of suitable and able people, with close links with the community served by the national health service body in question, and who would be willing to undertake the exacting responsibilities involved in purchasing or providing good patient care for the local community.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what are the maximum ages for the appointment of national health service trust and authority *(a)* chairmen and *(b)* non-executive directors;

(2) what are the limits on the number of times national health service trust and health authority chairmen and non-executive directors can be reappointed.

Dr. Mawhinney: There are no limits on the number of times chairmen and non-executives can be reappointed, and no age limit for these appointments.

Community Care

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the progress of the development of a housing input in the second round of community care plans.

Mr. Bowis: Social services departments, housing authorities and other housing providers should work closely together in planning and providing services to meet local need. The social services inspectorate is currently undertaking a study of housing and community care issues.

Computers

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will order a public inquiry into the purchase of computers by the NHS.

Mr. Sackville: No.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of the implications of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 for the future competitive ability of any contracting undertakings accepting responsibilities currently those of directly managed units or trusts within the health service, compared to competing organisations tendering in the future which are not subject to the same obligations.

Mr. Sackville: None. It is a matter for contractors through normal commercial practices and judgments to maintain their competitive ability throughout the market-testing process.

Breast Cancer

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what funding is available for breast cancer research; if she will give details of funding for each year since 1979; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The Government are committed to encouraging research into breast cancer. Within the Department's centrally commissioned research programme, £700,000 is expected to be spent on research specifically into breast cancer in 1993-94. Figures for cancer research funded by the Department broken down specifically for breast cancer are only available from the financial year 1990-91 onwards. These are:

	£000s
1990-91	417
1991-92	477
1992-93	5311

The main agency through which the Government support biomedical and clinical research is the Medical Research Council (MRC), which receives its grant-in-aid from the office of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. We understand that MRC expenditure into breast cancer research was £2·7 million in 1990-91 and £1·6 million in 1991-92, the latest years for which figures are available.

Mr. Patrick Doyle

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish a list of all meetings held and correspondence exchanged in the past 10 years between her Department and Mr. Patrick Doyle, now of AST Training; what was the nature of such meetings or correspondence; what plans she has to meet Mr. Patrick Doyle: and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has not met Mr. Patrick Doyle and has no current plans to do so.

If the right hon. Member has any previous meetings or correspondence with officials of the Department in mind, perhaps he will give me further details.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Child Care Facilities

Mr. Allen: To ask the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, representing the House of Commons Commission, what plans he has to introduce on-site child care facilities for the children of hon. Members and staff of the House.

Mr. Beith: At the request of the House of Commons Commission and the Administration Committee, consultants have been commissioned to prepare a comprehensive questionnaire on child care facilities, which will include the option of on-site provision. It will be circulated before Christmas to hon. Members, to staff and to other appropriate groups of personnel working in the House. The information gathered from the responses to the questionnaire will be considered by the Committee and the Commission before any final decision on the provision of child care facilities is taken.

Late Sittings (Cost)

Mr. Allen: To ask the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, representing the House of Commons Commission, what is his latest estimate of the costs of keeping the House open for sittings beyond 10 pm.

Mr. Beith: Additional costs are incurred when the House sits after 10.30 pm, but vary according to when the House rises. The House sat after 10.30 pm on some 37 occasions in May, June and July of this year, and the additional costs incurred in respect of House staff for this period are estimated to be £319,464.

Pre-1834 Furniture

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Chairman of the Accommodation and Works Committee (1) where is the pre-1834 table of the House of Commons which used to be on display in the Upper Waiting Hall;

(2) if a new location can be found for the pre-1834 table of the House of Commons in one of the public areas of the House.

Mr. Ray Powell: The table which used to be on display in the Upper Waiting Hall and which dates from the 1740s is now situated in the Speaker's House. It was moved to the Speaker's State Rooms after having suffered damage as a result of frequent moves made necessary by the staging of exhibitions in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Chairman of the Accommodation and Works Committee if he will publish a list of furnishings and fittings and other artefacts that are still located in the Palace of Westminster that were salvaged from the fire of 1834.

Mr. Ray Powell: I shall ask the Director of Parliamentary Works to write to the hon. Member.

Chamber Seating

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chairman of the Accommodation and Works Committee if he will instigate a feasibility study into moving the walls of the Commons Chamber so as to enable the amount of seating to be expanded.

Mr. Ray Powell: It would be inappropriate for the Accommodation and Works Committee to initiate any study of the kind referred to in the question.

Catering Facilities

Mr. Illsley: To ask the Chairman of the Catering Committee what rules apply to the booking by hon. Members of catering facilities in the House on behalf of outside organisations; what checks are made on the bona fides of the organisations concerned; what recent changes have been made in the rules; and what recent decisions have been allowing exemption from the rules.

Mr. Colin Shepherd: The regulations governing the booking by hon. Members of catering facilities in the House on behalf of outside organisations are set out in a brochure available from the Refreshment Department Banqueting Office or from the Director of Catering Services.

Rooms and facilities may be booked only by Members, Officers of the House and Lords who were formerly Members of the House of Commons, who may act as sponsor of a function on behalf of an outside organisation. In such a case, all responsibility for the function, including the checking of the bona fides, rests with the sponsor. There have been no recent changes in the banqueting rules, and no exception from the rules has been knowingly allowed.

The Catering Committee is to undertake a review of the operation of the Private Dining Facilities early in 1994 and has invited written evidence.

ENVIRONMENT

Single-parent Families

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage of *(a)* council house accommodation and *(b)* housing association accommodation is rented by single-parent families.

Sir George Young: The most recent information is from the housing trailer to the 1991 "Labour Force Survey". It shows that in England lone parents with dependent children formed 12 per cent. of all households renting from a local authority and 10 per cent. of all households renting from a housing association.

This and other results of the survey are published in "Housing in England: Housing Trailers to the 1988 and 1991 Labour Force Surveys" (table 2.3), available from the House of Commons Library.

Information available from the National Federation of Housing Association's CORE system shows that single parents accounted for 21 per cent. of new lettings by housing associations in 1992-93.

Housing, Lancashire

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what percentage of council properties in Lancashire are unfit to rent;

(2) what percentage of the total dwelling stock in Lancashire is *(a)* unfit for habitation and *(b)* in need of major renovation.

Sir George Young: Data on unfit dwellings, whether occupied or not, and on dwellings which are not unfit but in need of renovation are reported by local authorities in their annual housing investment programme—HIP1—returns.

On the basis of the data from these returns it is estimated that at 1 April 1993 some 12 per cent. of dwellings in Lancashire were unfit and a further 30 per cent. were in need of renovation. Within local authorities dwellings 0·7 per cent. were reported as unfit.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the value of the capital receipts accumulated by each Lancashire local authority for the last three years.

Mr. Baldry: The latest available information is as follows:

Accumulated usable capital receipts

Figures in £000s

	As at 31 March 1991	*As at 31 March 1992*	*As at 31 March 1993*
Blackburn	510	0	0
Blackpool	2,730	1,798	6,561
Burnley	1,915	1,044	389

	As at 31 March 1991	As at 31 March 1992	As at 31 March 1993
Chorley	930	600	982
Fylde	885	282	458
Hyndburn	2	180	0
Lancaster	801	385	488
Pendle	924	675	450
Preston	209	138	1,960
Ribble Valley	942	1,024	1,291
Rossendale	555	0	0
South Ribble	914	177	217
West Lancashire	2,038	1,237	1,433
Wyre	1,271	878	399

Source: Capital Outturn, Capital Receipts and Capital Estimates returns

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many new dwellings have been *(a)* built and *(b)* bought by each local authority in Lancashire over the past five years.

Sir George Young: Estimates of the total numbers of local authority house-building completions within each local authority area in Lancashire are published in "Local Housing Statistics", table 1. Figures for 1988 are in issue No. 93, for 1989 in issue No. 97, for 1990 in issue No. 101 and for 1991 and 1992 in issue No. 105.

The number of new dwellings bought by local authorities are not separately identified on returns made to the Department by local authorities.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received in the last three years in relation to housing problems in Lancashire.

Sir George Young: Ministers and regional officials of the Department of the Environment maintain a regular dialogue with all local housing authorities in Lancashire through the housing investment programme process. In addition, I have personally visited a number of Lancashire authorities to discuss housing issues over the last three years. On 19 October 1992 I met a group of authorities —the North West regional renewal lobby—to discuss problems relating to the operation of the renovation grant system and private sector housing renewal in Lancashire and Greater Manchester.

On Monday 25 October 1993 I look forward to meeting a delegation for Lancashire led by the Bishop of Burnley, to discuss the Lancashire housing inquiry panel's wide ranging report "Putting our House in Order".

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information his Department has on *(a)* the homeless figures, *(b)* the general waiting list figures and *(c)* the sheltered housing waiting list figures for each local authority in Lancashire over the last three years.

Sir George Young: Local authorities report information on their own dwellings in their annual housing investment programme—HIP1—returns.

The latest available reported figures for each authority in Lancashire, which are at 1 April 1993, appear in section C, homeless; column B5, households on waiting list; and column B6B, households on waiting list requiring specialised dwellings of the "1993 HIP1 All Items Print", a copy of which is in the Library.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimate his Department had made of *(a)* the time needed or *(b)* the financial resources needed to resolve the housing problems in Lancashire.

Sir George Young: None. It is for local housing authorities to prepare comprehensive housing investment programme strategies for their areas, to identify housing problems and, in partnership with other housing providers and players in the housing field, to draw up programme to meet the needs identified.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many clearance projects in Lancashire have been delayed due to problems rehousing those that will be displaced in the process.

Sir George Young: The Department of the Environment does not collect statistics on delayed clearance projects.

Correspondence

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the hon. Member for Walsall, North will receive a reply to his letter of 31 August to the President of the Board of Trade regarding Tarmac Brick and Tiles Ltd. and which was transferred under reference G/ST/P50/2343/93.

Mr. Yeo: I have written to the hon. Member today.

Standard Spending Assessments

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to include *(a)* standard morbidity rate or *(b)* other health indicators in the standard spending assessments for local authorities.

Mr. Curry *[holding answer 21 October 1993]:* We have considered the use of a range of health factors as part of the review of standard spending assessments for 1994-95. We shall consult in the usual way on our proposals for the revenue support grant settlement for 1994-95, including standard spending assessments, in the late autumn.

Sea Mammals

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give details of the survey on the abundance and distribution of small cetaceans in the North sea; and which other countries are involved.

Mr. Yeo: *[holding answer 21 October 1993]:* The "Small Cetacean Abundance in the North Sea" survey (SCANS) is a major international research project, which aims to record the abundance and distribution of dolphins, porpoises and other small cetaceans in the North sea and adjacent areas. It will provide baseline data for considering whether further conservation measures are necessary. The work will be carried out under the provisions of the agreement on the conservation of small cetaceans of the Baltic and North seas (ASCOBANS), which the United Kingdom ratified on 13 July 1993. The project is being co-ordinated by the sea mammal research unit in Cambridge. The European Commission, Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom are all contributing towards the costs of the

project, estimated to be 1,408,800 ecu, of which the United Kingdom is contributing 160,000 ecu. The main survey work is to be undertaken in summer 1994.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what level of funding is being provided for the interim secretariat of ASCOBANS at the sea mammal research unit in Cambridge.

Mr. Yeo: *[holding answer 21 October 1993]:* The Department of the Environment has provided funding of £43,754 for the interim secretariat of ASCOBANS at the sea mammal research unit in Cambridge, since it was established in June 1992.

Property Services Agency

Mr. David Martin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will now give final details of the PSA Building Management sales.

Mr. Curry: The sale of Building Management Scotland was completed on 1 September, and the sales of the other businesses on 1 October. The Government will receive considerations of £3·5 million for Building Management Scotland, a net £10·4 million phased over four years for Building Management South East and South and West combined, and £8 million phased over three years for Noreast Building Management. Government have made a payment of £11·46 million to the purchasers of Building Management Manchester but the final amount may be up to about £12·1 million depending on the number of staff who transfer their entitlements to the new pension scheme. This will not be known until six months or more after completion.

In addition, the Government injected cash into each business at the point of sale to meet the estimated net liabilities transferred to the purchasers under the sale agreements. The amounts of cash injected were £1·9 million to Building Management Scotland; £1·0 million to Building Management South East; £1·4 million to Building Management South and West; £2·2 million to Noreast Building Management and £2·0 million to Building Management Manchester. In all cases these amounts will be adjusted pound for pound after preparation of completion statements to compare actual net liabilities at the point of sale with the estimates made. The assets transferred exclude the amounts owed by customers to the five building management businesses for work done up to the sale. These debts will be collected by PSAS and retained in Government.

Staff in all five businesses were asked to choose between transfer to the private sector or a possible period of secondment to the new business. Not all staff who were available for secondment were selected. The results are summarised below:

Business	*Transferred*	*Selected for secondment*	*Not selected for secondment*
Building Management South East	439	618	98
Building Management South and West	616	668	52
Noreast Building Management	494	405	110
Building Management Manchester	699	397	126
Building Management Scotland	484	273	106

The Government have entered into a severence sharing arrangement with each purchaser, under which it will fund redundancies including those of secondees and non-elected staff that may arise up to an agreed maximum figure. These are: Building Management South East £30 million, Building Management South and West £25 million, Noreast £29·5 million, Building Management Manchester about £28 million and Building Management Scotland £15 million. In aggregate these amount to about £127·5 million.

The Government have also guaranteed the redundancy entitlements of transferring staff against the purchasers' bankruptcy for up to five years post sale. The maximum aggregate value of this contingent liability is estimated at around £65 million.

The departmental minute laid on 14 June 1993 indicated that the maximum contingent liability to be undertaken in the sale negotiations was estimated not to exceed £200 million. Final details of the sums paid in respect of the sale of the building management businesses will not be available for some time as this will depend on the number of transferred staff remaining with the businesses for more than five years from the date of sale.

EMPLOYMENT

Bank Holidays

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proposals he has to add to or transfer existing bank holidays.

Mr. David Hunt: An announcement will be made in due course.

Books (VAT)

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment he has made regarding the impact on employment in the publishing and bookselling sector of imposition of VAT at 17·5 per cent. on books.

Miss Widdecombe: I am not willing to speculate on the possible effect of measures that may or may not be in the forthcoming Budget.

Noel Employment Ltd.

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what account his Department took in its decision to grant an employment agency licence to Solo Employment Agency, of that agency's relationship to the former Noel Employment Ltd. in respect of *(a)* the address of the premises of the agency and *(b)* the identity of the directors of the agency.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Department has granted a licence under the Employment Agencies Act 1973 to Solo Appointments (Hammersmith) Ltd. The premises of the agency were formerly those of a branch of Noel Employment Ltd. One of the directors of the agency was formerly a director of Noel Employment Ltd. The Department took account of all relevant information and found no grounds for refusing to grant the licence.

Disabled Employees

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) if he will list for each of the last 10 years, the number of public sector employers who have been prosecuted for not employing the required percentage of disabled employees; what was the fine imposed; and what is the current percentage of disabled employees employed in the public sector;

(2) if he will list for each of the last 10 years, the number of private sector employers who have been prosecuted for not employing the required percentage of disabled employees; what was the fine imposed; and what is the current percentage of disabled employees employed in the private sector.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for the subject of the questions has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter to Mr. Martin Redmond from M. E. G. Fogden, dated 22 October 1993:

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, the Secretary of State has asked me to write to you direct to respond to your Parliamentary Questions to him about the number of public and private sector employers prosecuted for not employing the required percentage of disabled employees; the fines imposed and the current percentage of disabled employees employed in public and private sectors. This is something which falls within the responsibilities delegated to me as Chief Executive of the Agency.

It may be helpful if I briefly explain employers' duties and obligations under the provisions of the Disabled Persons (Employment) Act 1944.

The Act placed a duty on employers who have twenty or more workers to employ a Quota of registered disabled people. The standard Quota is currently set at three per cent. of the employer's total workforce. It is not an offence to be below Quota. However, when in this situation, an employer has a further duty under the Act to engage suitable registered disabled people if any are available when vacancies arise. A below Quota employer must not engage anyone other than a registered disabled person without first obtaining a permit to do so, and must not discharge a registered disabled person without reasonable cause. Failure to comply with either of these latter two obligations is a criminal offence. Employers in scope of the provisions of the Quota Scheme must keep records to show that they are complying with the requirements.

No employer has been prosecuted for infringing the provisions of the Quota Scheme in the last ten years.

You also asked about the percentages of disabled employees employed in the public and private sectors. I regret that information is not collected in this precise form. However, I can provide approximate figures related to registered disabled employees. Each year tables showing the number and percentage of registered disabled people employed by a wide range of public sector employers are published, with their agreement, in the Employment Gazette. The latest figures, relating to 1 June 1992, were in the April 1993 issue of the Gazette. The average percentage of registered disabled people employed by the public sector employers whose individual figures were published in the Gazette was 0·8 per cent.

Deduction of the data for this range of public sector employers from national data in respect of all employers who are in scope of the Quota provisions produces an approximate figure of 0·7 per cent. for employers in the private sector.

I hope this is helpful.

As decided by the Administrative Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to written Parliamentary Questions will now be published in the Official Report. I will also place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

Wages Statistics

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) how many establishments were found to be underpaying wages in each year since 1979;

(2) what information he has as to how many establishments *(a)* failed to post wages council notices, *(b)* failed to keep adequate records of hours worked and *(c)* failed to keep adequate records of wages paid in 1992;

(3) how many establishments were found to be making underpayments in wages council trades in 1992;

(4) how many *(a)* checks were carried out and *(b)* underpayments discovered for each wages inspectorate division in 1992;

(5) how many workers' pay levels were checked by wages councils in 1992 for each wages council inspectorate;

(6) how many establishments were covered by wages councils on the register at December 1992.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested is provided in the following tables:

Table 1
Establishments covered by wages councils on register at December 1992

Wages councils	*Divisions*									
	London	*South East*	*East*	*South West*	*Midlands*	*North West*	*Yorkshire and Humberside*	*North*	*Scotland*	*Great Britain*
Aerated waters	14	12	70	17	34	48	15	19	50	279
Clothing manufacturers	2,000	136	226	316	1,042	1,006	448	148	179	5,501
Boot and shoe repairing	370	215	249	272	382	449	620	83	138	2,778
Button manufacturing	16	3	1	4	11	4	2	3	0	44
Coffin furniture and cerement making	0	0	0	2	6	5	4	0	1	18
Cotton waste reclamation	1	0	0	1	6	20	0	0	0	28
Flax and hemp	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	6	7
Fur	61	2	2	6	4	15	4	0	6	100
General waste materials reclamation	99	74	92	157	212	286	222	89	105	1,336
Hairdressing	3,828	3,027	3,140	4,237	5,072	5,262	3,389	2,000	2,504	32,459
Hat, cap and millinery	14	3	38	1	3	17	10	9	1	96
Lace finishing	0	0	0	0	56	1	0	0	1	58

Wages councils	Divisions									
	London	South East	East	South West	Midlands	North West	Yorkshire and Humberside	North	Scotland	Great Britain
Laundry	142	121	63	137	224	89	53	43	148	1,020
Linen and cotton handkerchief and household goods and linen piece goods	3	1	3	4	13	116	9	2	2	153
Made-up textiles	23	14	42	31	37	45	46	18	27	283
Ostrich and fancy feather and artificial flower	11	2	7	4	0	3	1	4	3	35
Perambulator and invalid carriage	2	2	3	1	9	4	5	1	0	27
Retail bespoke tailoring	166	36	43	39	27	53	31	12	32	439
Rope, twine and net	1	1	5	26	4	24	16	3	22	102
Sack and bag	5	0	5	5	10	15	11	1	3	55
Toy manufacturing	9	12	27	27	21	59	30	11	7	203
Retail trades (non-food)	16,499	11,641	11,430	14,265	21,543	16,566	10,913	5,138	8,457	116,452
Retail food and allied trades	10,866	12,588	10,283	14,180	15,793	19,049	11,149	7,694	9,861	111,463
Licensed non-residential establishments	5,978	5,962	8,194	10,064	13,875	11,053	6,920	4,229	5,484	71,759
Licensed residential establishments and licensed restaurants	4,853	4,278	3,730	7,460	3,683	4,157	2,366	1,580	3,827	35,934
Unlicensed place of refreshment	3,559	2,720	1,506	3,551	1,885	2,474	1,523	877	1,733	19,828
TOTAL	48,520	40,850	39,159	54,808	63,952	60,820	37,787	21,964	32,597	400,457

Table 2

Establishments checked and underpayments found in wages council trades—1992

Wages councils	Establishments checked by all methods	Percentage of register checked	Establishments checked by visit	Percentage of register checked by visit	Establishments found underpaying	Percentage of all establishments checked underpaying	Percentage of establishments visited underpaying
Aerated waters	11	3·9	11	3·9	1	9·1	9·1
Clothing manufactury	316	5·7	284	5·2	89	28·2	31·3
Boot and shoe repairing	240	8·6	103	3·7	11	4·6	10·7
Button manufacturing	4	9·1	4	9·1	0	·0	·0
Coffin furniture and cerement making	5	27·8	4	22·2	0	·0	0
Cotton waste reclamation	1	3·6	1	3·6	0	·0	0
Flax and hemp	0	·0	0	·0	0	·0	·0
Fur	4	4·0	4	4·0	0	·0	·0
General waste materials reclamation	51	3·8	40	3·0	5	9·8	12·5
Hairdressing	2,625	8·1	1,830	5·6	505	19·2	27·6
Hat, cap and millinery	1	1·0	1	1·0	0	·0	·0
Lace finishing	0	·0	0	·0	0	·0	·0
Laundry	69	6·8	65	6·4	30	43·5	46·2
Linen and cotton handkerchief and household goods and linen piece goods	2	1·3	2	1·3	0	·0	·0
Made-up textiles	32	11·3	31	11·0	9	28·1	29·0
Ostrich and fancy feather and artificial flower	5	14·3	5	14·3	0	·0	·0
Perambulator and invalid carriage	3	11·1	3	11·1	0	·0	·0
Retail bespoke tailoring	20	4·6	15	3·4	2	10·0	13·3
Rope, twine and net	8	7·8	8	7·8	1	12·5	12·5
Sack and bag	5	9·1	4	7·3	1	20·0	25·0
Toy manufacturing	13	6·4	12	5·9	2	15·4	16·7
Retail trades (non-food)	9,864	8·5	4,206	3·6	1,449	14·7	34·5
Retail food and allied trades	9,278	8·3	5,968	5·4	2,631	28·4	44·1
Licensed non-residential establishments	5,762	8·0	3,166	4·4	1,050	18·2	33·2
Licensed residential establishments and licensed restaurants	2,272	6·3	1,824	5·1	672	29·6	36·8
Unlicensed place of refreshment	1,793	9·0	1,338	6·7	560	31·2	41·9
TOTAL	32,384	8·1	18,929	4·7	7,018	21·7	37·1

Table 3

Workers covered by wages councils and results of checks—1992

Wages Councils	*No. of Workers (Est. 1992)*	*Total workers checked*	*Workers checked by visit*	*Workers found unpaid*	*Per cent. unpaid of all workers checked*	*Arrears paid (£)*	*Arrears not pursued at workers request (£)*	*Arrears not pursued—other reasons (£)*	*Total arrears assessed as due (£)*
Aerated waters	4,400	337	337	1	·3	84	0	0	84
Clothing manufacturing	118,500	7,732	7,074	346	4·5	35,365	4,812	7,536	47,713
Boot and shoe repairing	5,000	445	244	19	4·3	5,601	2,475	0	8,076
Button manufacturing	1,000	345	345	0	·0	0	0	0	0
Coffin furniture and cerement making	200	77	73	0	·0	0	0	0	0
Cotton waste reclamation	300	34	34	0	·0	0	0	0	0
Flax and hemp	400	0	0	0	·0	0	0	0	0
Fur	800	9	9	0	·0	0	0	0	0
General waste materials reclamation	13,000	441	330	10	2·3	2,099	0	0	2,099
Hairdressing	69,000	7,653	5,389	627	8·2	112,073	24,742	7,455	144,270
Hat, cap and millinery	4,500	50	50	0	·0	0	0	0	0
Lace finishing	900	0	0	0	·0	0	0	0	0
Laundry	24,500	1,055	1,034	108	10·2	12,264	1,741	543	14,548
Linen and cotton handkerchief and household goods and linen piece goods	2,800	92	92	0	·0	0	0	0	0
Made-up textiles	3,500	760	751	45	5·9	1,184	0	3,254	4,438
Ostrich and fancy feather and artificial flower	500	324	324	0	·0	0	0	0	0
Perambulator and invalid carriage	2,000	18	18	0	·0	0	0	0	0
Retail bespoke tailoring	4,000	42	35	2	4·8	357	0	0	357
Rope, twine and net	2,200	187	187	2	1·1	84	0	0	84
Sack and bag	1,000	43	39	3	7·0	187	0	0	187
Toy manufacturing	11,500	140	135	11	7·9	398	0	0	398
Retail trades (non-food)	736,000	133,399	14,223	2,537	1·9	249,820	61,908	38,276	350,004
Retail food and allied trades	490,000	142,110	22,077	5,130	3·6	649,286	158,651	32,375	840,312
Licensed non-residential establishments	538,000	57,760	25,259	2,882	5·0	266,818	17,583	16,353	300,754
Licensed residential establishments and licensed restaurants	417,000	30,522	23,991	1,889	6·2	129,174	13,027	17,968	160,169
Unlicensed place of refreshment	110,000	19,813	7,336	1,167	5·9	96,537	14,609	15,276	126,422
TOTAL	2,561,000	403,388	109,386	14,779	3·7	1,561,331	299,548	139,036	1,999,915

Table 4

Checks carried out and underpayments found in wages inspectorate divisions—1992

Divisions	*Establishments checked by all methods*	*Percentage of register checked*	*Establishments checked by visit*	*Percentage of register checked by visit*	*Establishments found underpaying*	*Percentage of all establishments checked underpaying*	*Percentage of establishments visited underpaying*
London	3,472	7·2	1,461	3·0	425	12·2	29·1
South East	1,323	3·2	1,172	2·9	385	29·1	32·8
Eastern	2,235	5·7	1,012	2·6	283	12·7	28·0
South West	4,631	8·4	2,710	4·9	1,076	23·2	39·7
Midlands	8,519	13·3	2,767	4·3	979	11·5	35·4
North West	2,956	4·9	2,854	4·7	1,256	42·5	44·0
Yorkshire and Humberside	3,173	8·4	2,176	5·8	875	27·6	40·2
Northern	3,073	14·0	2,482	11·3	892	29·0	35·9
Scotland	3,002	9·2	2,295	7·0	847	28·2	36·9
Great Britain	32,384	8·1	18,929	4·7	7,018	21·7	37·1

Note:

From November 1991 the London, South East and Eastern Divisions have been merged to form the new Southern Division.

Table 5
Workers whose pay was checked in wages inspectorate divisions—1992

Divisions	Total workers checked	Workers whose pay was checked by visit	Workers found underpaid	Percentage underpaid of all workers checked	Percentage underpaid of workers checked by visit	Arrears paid (£)	Arrears not pursued at workers request (£)	Arrears not pursued for other reasons (£)	Total arrears assessed as due (£)
London	85,791	6,145	731	0·9	11·9	72,522	15,737	13,093	101,352
South East	6,968	5,752	726	10·4	12·6	50,233	21,458	9,565	81,256
Eastern	103,142	4,662	502	0·5	10·8	40,714	24,527	336	65,577
South West	41,054	14,670	2,112	5·1	14·4	186,140	22,268	37,389	245,797
Midlands	65,373	20,246	2,286	3·5	11·3	210,612	64,008	24,645	299,265
North West	14,888	14,090	2,298	15·4	16·3	459,058	57,278	12,082	528,418
Yorkshire and Humberside	44,319	12,085	2,006	4·5	16·6	195,908	50,721	15,166	261,795
Northern	19,461	16,189	2,049	10·5	12·7	144,130	15,392	7,220	166,742
Scotland	22,392	15,547	2,069	9·2	13·3	202,014	28,159	19,540	249,713
Great Britain	403,388	109,386	14,779	3·7	13·5	1,561,331	299,548	139,036	1,999,915

Table 6
Prosecutions for underpayment

Divisions	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992
London	3	—	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—
South East	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	2	1	4	3	—	—
Eastern	—	1	1	2	1	1	—	1	—	2	—	—	—	—
South West	4	2	3	—	1	1	—	—	—	2	2	1	2	1
Midlands	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	1	1	1	—	—	1
North West	—	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	1	2	—	—	1	—
Yorkshire and Humberside	1	1	1	—	—	—	1	—	—	2	1	2	7	5
Northern	1	3	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	2	2
Scotland	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	3
Great Britain	9	8	8	4	2	2	2	2	4	10	9	7	15	12

Note: From November 1991 the London, South East and Eastern Divisions have been merged to form the new Southern Division.

Table 7
Establishments found underpaying 1979 to 1985

Divisions	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
London (East)	431	495	440	391	441	324	298
London (West)	249	259	270	294	339	354	357
South East	521	769	749	764	871	703	670
Southern	585	576	450	441	494	475	556
Eastern	685	941	848	726	727	914	688
South West	1,010	1,201	1,070	954	1,078	1,033	929
Midlands (East)	634	771	623	532	573	534	430
Midlands (West)	605	674	598	666	543	552	712
North West (East)	946	879	613	648	704	560	529
North West (West)	1,115	1,060	688	652	865	886	804
Yorkshire and Humberside	1,156	1,119	871	964	941	1,026	818
Northern	893	902	736	552	630	721	815
Scotland (East)	710	687	529	515	525	480	488
Scotland (West)	59[illegible]	750	556	349	389	365	361
Wales	8[illegible]	1,071	1,033	821	722	534	609
Totals	10,969	12,154	10,074	9,269	9,842	9,461	9,064

Table 8
Establishments found to be underpaying 1986 to 1992

Divisions	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992
London	608	270	317	229	172	294	425
South East	646	503	537	478	313	413	385
Eastern	974	405	462	432	271	213	283
South West	832	961	1,156	960	909	893	1,076
Midlands	943	525	747	822	749	835	979
North West	1,397	541	869	1,104	1,124	1,083	1,256
Yorkshire and Humberside	805	511	631	569	593	792	875
Northern	844	404	369	387	455	711	892
Scotland	656	323	509	547	619	737	847
Wales	500	—	—	—	—	—	—
Great Britain	8,205	4,443	5,597	5,528	5,205	5,971	7,018

Notes:
(1) The statistics of underpayment have been separated into two tables because the divisional boundaries were changed in 1986.
(2) From November 1991 the London, South East and Eastern Divisions have merged to form the new Southern Division.

Table 9
Establishments found failing to post wages council notices
1992

Wages councils	*Divisions*									
	London	*South East*	*East*	*South West*	*Midlands*	*North West*	*Yorkshire and Humberside*	*North*	*Scotland*	*Great Britain*
Aerated waters	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Clothing manufacturing	37	12	0	5	49	24	14	5	6	152
Boot and shoe repairing	7	3	1	18	1	5	1	2	1	39
Button manufacturing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Coffin furniture and cerement making	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	2
Cotton waste reclamation	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Flax and hemp	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Fur	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
General waste materials reclamation	0	2	0	0	2	1	5	2	1	13
Hairdressing	158	43	40	110	72	107	109	64	92	795
Hat, cap and millinery	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Lace finishing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Laundry	3	2	2	9	4	6	7	1	8	42
Linen and cotton handkerchief and household goods and linen piece goods	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Made-up textiles	0	1	0	5	0	0	1	2	0	9
Ostrich and fancy feather and artificial flower	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Perambulator and invalid carriage	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Retail bespoke tailoring	2	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	5
Rope, twine and net	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	3
Sack and bag	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Toy manufacturing	0	0	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	4
Retail trades (non-food)	203	170	134	329	367	402	278	173	191	2,247
Retail food and allied trades	237	188	161	412	404	525	478	397	368	3,170
Licensed non-residential establishments	74	65	70	244	246	222	133	169	187	1,410
Licensed residential establishments and licensed restaurants	77	40	75	170	103	136	87	105	114	907
Unlicensed place of refreshment	120	70	50	159	142	141	103	57	62	904
TOTAL	919	597	535	1,468	1,394	1,569	1,216	979	1,031	9,708

Table 10
Establishments found failing to keep adequate records of wages paid
1992

Wages councils	*Divisions*									
	London	*South East*	*East*	*South West*	*Midlands*	*North West*	*Yorkshire and Humberside*	*North*	*Scotland*	*Great Britain*
Aerated waters	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Clothing manufacturing	6	5	0	1	2	0	3	0	0	17
Boot and shoe repairing	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2
Button manufacturing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Coffin furniture and cerement making	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cotton waste reclamation	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Flax and hemp	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Fur	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
General waste materials reclamation	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Hairdressing	9	8	1	21	9	19	14	22	7	110
Hat, cap and millinery	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Lace finishing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Laundry	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	4

Wages councils	Divisions									
	London	South East	East	South West	Midlands	North West	Yorkshire and Humberside	North	Scotland	Great Britain
Linen and cotton handkerchief and household goods and linen piece goods	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Made-up textiles	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ostrich and fancy feather and artificial flower	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Perambulator and invalid carriage	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Retail bespoke tailoring	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2
Rope, twine and net	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sack and bag	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Toy manufacturing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Retail trades (non-food)	11	42	14	78	42	74	25	31	27	344
Retail food and allied trades	47	83	19	109	77	149	124	141	139	888
Licensed non-residential establishments	12	25	11	52	32	64	21	38	22	277
Licensed residential establishments and licensed restaurants	4	20	6	36	6	27	9	9	10	127
Unlicensed place of refreshment	23	38	7	49	16	30	20	18	10	211
TOTAL	113	223	59	348	184	363	216	259	217	1,982

Table 11
Establishments found failing to keep adequate records of hours worked
1992

Wages councils	Divisions									
	London	South East	East	South West	Midlands	North West	Yorkshire and Humberside	North	Scotland	Great Britain
Aerated waters	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Clothing manufacturers	20	11	0	2	26	15	10	1	5	90
Boot and shoe repairing	0	4	1	4	0	6	0	1	2	18
Button manufacturing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Coffin furniture and cerement making	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cotton waste reclamation	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Flax and hemp	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Fur	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
General waste materials reclamation	0	0	1	0	2	0	0	1	2	6
Hairdressing	73	83	32	121	85	87	119	101	136	837
Hat, cap and millinery	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Lace finishing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Laundry	2	1	1	7	1	2	1	0	5	20
Linen and cotton handkerchief and household goods and linen piece goods	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Made-up textiles	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Ostrich and fancy feather and artificial flower	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Perambulator and invalid carriage	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Retail bespoke tailoring	0	2	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	5
Rope, twine and net	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
Sack and bag	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Toy manufacturing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Retail trades (non-food)	75	212	78	242	232	239	199	148	176	1,601
Retail food and allied trades	121	242	118	289	293	725	391	369	350	2,898
Licensed non-residential establishments	42	96	67	200	164	156	85	176	165	1,151
Licensed residential establishments and licensed restaurants	42	65	60	140	62	120	72	83	99	743
Unlicensed place of refreshment	77	83	38	105	78	85	58	48	51	623
TOTAL	452	799	396	1,112	944	1,435	936	930	992	7,996

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many underpayments of wages were detected in each year since 1979.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested is provided in the following table:

Year	Number of underpayments of wages detected
1979	23,223
1980	29,314
1981	25,482
1982	20,406
1983	20,832
1984	18,043
1985	16,948
1986	15,533
1987	9,129
1988	10,860
1989	11,066
1990	11,129
1991	12,812
1992	14,779

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many workers were covered by wages councils in 1992; and if he will make a statement on the results of wages council checks.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: It is estimated that the number of workers covered by wages councils in 1992 was 2,561,000. The checks made by the wages inspectorate show that most employers covered by wages councils were paying wages council rates.

Astra Training Centres

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received from training and enterprise councils over the collapse of the Astra training centres and/or their acquisition by Mr. Patrick Doyle; on what dates each such representation was received and from which training and enterprise council; what plans he has to meet representatives of the training and enterprise councils to discuss their concerns; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: We have received no such representations from any training and enterprise council. Any request from a training and enterprise council for a meeting would be considered in the normal way.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what requests he has made, or correspondence he has sent to Arthur Andersen and Co., in relation to its role as receiver for the Astra training centres; what was the date and nature of such correspondence and contact; and if he will make a statement.

Miss Widdecombe: The Department requested and received information from Arthur Andersen confirming the continued existence of Astra's pension fund and the appointment to the fund by the receiver of an independent trustee. The receiver also informed the Department on 12 October which Astra skill centres had been sold as going concerns.

Since Arthur Andersen was appointed as receiver in July there have been telephone and written contacts, and one meeting, in connection with the Department's continued interest as freeholder a head leaseholder of a number of properties occupied by Astra.

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what residual powers, rights and duties Her Majesty's Government possess in respect of the former skill centres acquired by Astra, and its staff, *(a)* in respect of determining subsequent ownership of the centres and *(b)* in other respects.

Miss Widdecombe: Her Majesty's Government have no residual powers, rights or duties relating to the former skill centres acquired by Astra in relation to the determination of the subsequent ownership of the centres. Some of the property interests acquired by Astra from the Department in 1990 were subject to clawback provisions, under which the Department is entitled to a share of any development gains made in the 10 years after privatisation. If these property interests are acquired by a purchaser of an Astra skill centre the clawback arrangements he will be bound by them for the balance of the 10-year period.

Paternity Leave

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what action he will take to encourage employers to provide paternity leave.

Miss Widdecombe: Matters such as this are best dealt with by agreement between the parties concerned, taking account of their particular circumstances.

Training and Enterprise Councils

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of gross domestic product has been provided to training and enterprise councils, annually since they were established; what is the total cost of TECs to date; and how many previously unemployed persons have received training leading to recognised qualifications in this period.

Miss Widdecombe: Full information would be available only at disproportionate cost. The training and enterprise council—TEC—network in England was completed in October 1991. In 1992-93 TECs spent £1·3 billion on training, education and enterprise programmes.

Estimates from the spring 1993 "Labour Force Survey" show that around 174,000 unemployed people were training towards a qualification compared with 140,000 in the spring 1992 survey.

Health and Safety

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish a list of all research commissioned or carried out by his Department or the Health and Safety Commission into the operation of health and safety legislation in small firms; what figures were obtained as to the number and rate of fatal and/or serious accidents in small firms compared with larger firms; what subsequent action has been taken by his Department and/or the Health and Safety Commission to improve health and safety in small firms; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 21 October 1993]:* The Health and Safety Commission—HSC—has not commissioned or carried out external research into the operation of health and safety in small firms.

The Health and Safety Executive—HSE—has carried out two separate analyses of the relative accident records of small and large firms.

A report on the first, based on accidents notified under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences (RIDDOR) Regulations 1985, was published in the January 1991 issue of *Employment Gazette*, pages 20-24, available in the Library. The study suggested that rates of reported major injuries and of fatalities were higher in small firms—defined as those with 100 employees or fewer. However, the number of fatalities was sufficiently small for the difference in rate to be accounted for by the fact that small firms tend to operate in more hazardous industries.

The second analysis, based on information from the 1990 "Labour Force Survey"—LFS—indicated that, comparing firms with fewer than 25 employees and those with more, injury rates per 100,000 employees are higher among larger firms. These results were published in the *Employment Gazette* for December 1992, pages 621-38.

Research carried out by the Employment Department is listed in the annual report on research. The 1993 report will be published on 25 October and a copy will be placed in the Library.

The HSC is currently considering ways in which the effectiveness of its approach to regulation of health and safety for small firms and self-employed people might be improved.

EDUCATION

Outdoor Education Centres

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations he has received on the impact of granting budgeting powers to individual schools on local education authority outdoor education centres; what research has been conducted by his Department on the subject; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend has received a number of representations. The Department has not commissioned any research into this question, but the Sports Council is undertaking a research project into LEA residential outdoor centres as a community resource for sport and education: the Department is keeping in touch with that work.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Education by whom his Department was represented at the national conference on local authority outdoor education centres held at 1 Kensington Gore, London, on 16 July.

Mr. Forth: There was no representation from this Department at the conference, but officials from the Department for National Heritage, which is the main parent Department for sport and recreation, were present.

Schools, Sheffield

Mr. Bill Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what weight he gives, in considering representations from governors and parents of schools in Sheffield, to the overall policies and objectives set out by Sheffield local education authority.

Mr. Robin Squire: In so far as statutory proposals for the organisation of schools reflect the overall policies and objectives set out by a local education authority, my right hon. Friend looks at each case on its merits, having regard to all relevant factors including statutory objections and other representations made to him.

English Curriculum

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will publish in full the responses received to the proposed revision of the English curriculum; and if he will provide a detailed breakdown of the responses on the 1 to 6 scale in section G of the consultation document.

Mr. Robin Squire: Consultation on the proposals for revisions to the English order was carried out by the National Curriculum Council (NCC), and a report on that consultation is being published this week by the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority, the successor body to the NCC.

DEFENCE

Nuclear Submarines

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what studies his Department has commissioned from the Royal Naval college, Greenwich, on the potential scope for accidents involving the release of radiation at dedicated naval bases or Z-berths for nuclear submarines.

Mr. Hanley: The Royal Naval college, Greenwich is primarily a teaching establishment. The function of the department of nuclear science and technology at the college is to undertake training in support of the naval nuclear propulsion programme—including plant operation and maintenance, and nuclear accident management. Like other advanced academic establishments, the college undertakes theoretical work relevant to its teaching function, including mathematical modelling related to nuclear reactor accident response.

Spending

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what percentage of gross national product is spent on defence in *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* Germany, *(c)* Japan and *(d)* France.

Mr. Hanley: Defence expenditure for the United Kingdom, Germany and France in 1992 as a proportion of GDP, is set out in figure 11 of the 1993 "Statement on the Defence Estimates" (Cm 2770) and is respectively 4·1 per cent., 2·2 per cent. and 3·4 per cent. Japan is expected to devote around 1 per cent. of its GDP to defence in 1992-93.

Low Flying

Mr. Trotter: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information he has on the number of sorties conducted by *(a)* foreign aircraft in the United Kingdom

low-flying system and *(b)* United Kingdom aircraft in the low-flying system of other nations over the most recent period for which figures are available.

Mr. Hanley: The number of sorties flown by foreign aircraft in the United Kingdom low-flying system during 1992 was 2,045. During 1993 to the end of September 1,251 sorties have been flown. These figures cover only those sorties flown by foreign aircraft not based in the United Kingdom.

Detailed figures for RAF low flying overseas are not held centrally. A limited amount of information is however, available on low flying carried out by the RAF in Germany and at Goose Bay, Canada. Between April and December 1992 RAF fast jet aircraft flew some 2,400 low-level sorties in Germany, and some 1,800 have been flown so far this year. In 1992 RAF aircraft flew 1,028 low-level sorties at Goose Bay, and 581 have been flown this year.

Mr. Patrick Doyle

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish a list of all meetings held and correspondence exchanged in the past 10 years between his Department and Mr. Patrick Doyle, now of AST Training; what was the nature of such meetings or correspondence; what plans he has to meet Mr. Patrick Doyle; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: My Department has no record of having any contact with Mr. Doyle. I have no plans to meet him.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Technology Foresight Programme

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the launch of the technology foresight programme on 13 September, indicating what additional resources have been committed to the programme.

Mr. Waldegrave: The purpose of foresight is to develop working partnerships between industry and academia in identifying market and technology opportunities. I am delighted at the constructive response from both to the consultative seminars we are holding across the country on how this might best be achieved. The programme is being guided by a steering group of industrialists and academics chaired by the chief scientific adviser. A budget of approximately £1 million has been allocated to the programme over this and the next financial year.

Civil Servants (Public Meetings)

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster in what circumstances Ministers may require civil servants to address public meetings on their behalf.

Mr. Waldegrave: Authority can be given to civil servants to make public speeches explaining declared Government policy or discussing the processes of government. On occasions civil servants have also been authorised to read speeches on policy matters prepared for Ministers who have been prevented at the last minute from doing so themselves. In such cases the fact that the civil servant is reading the Minister's text is made clear. These have been the practices of successive Governments.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what efforts are currently being made by his Department to encourage threshold states to accede to the nuclear non-proliferation treaty prior to the 1995 review conference.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We continue to encourage non-parties to the non-proliferation treaty to accede to the treaty at the earliest possible date.

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if Her Majesty's Government will make it their policy to advocate the indefinite extension of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty at the 1995 review conference and at all preparatory meetings.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We will continue to reiterate in all appropriate fora the importance we attach to securing the unconditional and indefinite extension of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty at the 1995 extension and review conference.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what efforts are currently being undertaken by his Department to encourage state parties to the nuclear non-proliferation treaty to attend the 1995 nuclear non-proliferation treaty review conference.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Prior to the first preparatory committee to the nuclear non-proliferation treaty extension and review conference in May this year, with the co-depositaries to the treaty—the United States and the Russian Federation—we lobbied all states party to come to the Prepcom. Over three-quarters attended. We shall undertake similar exercises before the remaining three Prepcoms and the 1995 conference itself, as well as taking other opportunities to emphasise the importance we attach to maximum attendance in 1995.

Kenya

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what advice is currently offered by his Department to persons proposing to visit Kenya; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Foreign and Commonwealth Office consular travel advice for Kenya is:

"Incidents of mugging and violent crime occur throughout Kenya. Do not go about Nairobi or coastal towns on foot at night, and avoid empty beaches. There has been an increase in the incidence of armed car hijackings especially in the Nairobi area.

There have also been recent disturbances in Mombasa old town but the main tourist areas at the coast remain peaceful. Even when escorted, traffic using the Malindi/Garsen/Lamu road is vulnerable to attack by bandits. The road should not be used.

Game reserves remain generally calm, but travel to North East Province or the Isiolo or Marsabit districts of Eastern Province is potentially dangerous, except to Samburu Game Reserve or with tour operators to Shaba Game Reserve. Exercise particular care when travelling in out-of-the-way places."

Overseas Staff and Premises

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the cost for the current financial year of his Department having *(a)* premises and *(b)* personnel overseas; and what were the comparable figures for *(a)* 12, *(b)* 24, *(c)* 36 and *(d)* 48 months ago.

Mr. Goodlad: The cost of *(a)* premises and *(b)* personnel overseas for the FCO—including the ODA—for the current and the previous four financial years is as follows:

	Premises £ million	*Personnel £ million*
1989-90	113·9	197·4
1990-91	112·0	212·2
1991-92	118·2	224·8
1992-93	129·3	239·4
1993-94	132·8	245·7

The figures for premises include the cost of notional rent for properties owned by Her Majesty's Government, as required by Her Majesty's Treasury. For 1993-94 this figure is £38·9 million.

Inhumane Weapons

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the progress towards ratification by Her Majesty's Government of *(a)* the 1977 additional protocols to the Geneva convention and *(b)* the 1981 inhumane weapons convention.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: *(a)* We have reached a decision to ratify the additional protocols, and we plan to do so as soon as the necessary legislation can be enacted in domestic law.

(b) We are now able to turn our attention to the 1981 United Nations weaponry convention, and we hope to reach a decision soon on ratification of that convention.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Fisheries Inspectors

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will give details of the number of fisheries inspectors employed by each EC member.

Mr. Jack: The most recent information on numbers of EC fisheries officers employed in member states is contained in a Commission report on monitoring implementation of the common fisheries policy, published in March 1992. Details are as follows:

	Port-based	*HQ-based*
Belgium	Duties carried out by Naval Authorities and Maritime Police	1
Denmark	145	n/a
Germany	47	n/a
France	Carried out by Maritime Police	n/a
Ireland	n/a	n/a
Netherlands	180	n/a
Portugal	Carried out by Customs, Navy and others	12
Spain	Carried out by Marine Civil Guard, defence forces and others	[2]42
United Kingdom	142	[1]26

[1] Figures updated from more recent information obtained this year.
[2] Includes recruitment of 25 inspectors (of which 15 were planned when data were collected).
n/a = Not available.

Common Agriculture Policy

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the estimated total cost of the common agricultural policy in *(a)* 1993 and *(b)* 1994; and what was the actual total in 1990, 1991, 1992 and 1993.

Mr. Jack: The information for CAP guarantee expenditure is as follows:

	Mecu	*£ million*
1990	27,041	19,197
1991	31,950	22,357
1992	32,177	22,770
[1]1993	35,352	27,836
[2]1994	36,465	28,448

[1] Revised budget.
[2] Draft budget.

Year	*Exchange rates*
1990	£1=1·4086 ecu
1991	£1=1·4291 ecu
1992	£1=1·4131 ecu
1993	£1=1·2700 ecu
1994	£1=1·2818 ecu

Intervention Beef

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the cost of storing one tonne of intervention beef for one year at the last date for which figures are available.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Responsibility for this matter is delegated to the Intervention Board executive agency and I have asked the chief executive to reply to the hon. Gentleman direct.

Letter to Mr. Elliot Morley from Guy Stapleton, dated 22 October 1993:

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has asked me to reply to your priority written Parliamentary Question (2136) tabled for answer on 19 October 1993:—

"To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, what was the cost of storing one tonne of intervention beef for one year at the last date for which figures are available".

Intervention beef is stored in commercial cold stores. The rates paid by the Agency are determined by open competition and

vary in line with changes in the demand for cold storage. Over the past twelve months, the average cost of storing intervention beef for one year, including inspection receipt, handling and delivering-out charges, has been around £120 per tonne (exc. VAT).

I am sending a copy of this letter to the House of Commons Library and the Public Information Office.

Fishing

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what investigation her Department has carried out regarding alleged smuggling of undersized fish by other EC countries in British waters; and if she will make a statement;

(2) what discussions she intends to have with other EC member states with regard to breaches in EC fishing regulations within British waters.

Mr. Jack: The rules of the common fisheries policy are enforced on vessels of all nationalities in United Kingdom waters through an extensive programme of inspections, both at sea and in port. Prosecutions in the United Kingdom of infringements by other member states' vessels are notified to the flag state. There is close liaison between United Kingdom fishery officers and the enforcement authorities in a number of other EC states, and we are working to strengthen and extend these further. I raised the question of undersize fish and enforcement issues when I met the EC Fisheries Commissioner Yannis Paleokrassas on 12 October 1993.

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans she has to raise the matter of alleged Spanish pirate fishing fleets operating in British waters with the Spanish Government and the EC; if she will give details of the actions her Department will take; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: I sent a copy of the television programme in which the allegations were made to the EC Fisheries Commissioner and the Spanish Fisheries Minister. I subsequently met the Commissioner on 12 October and was much heartened by his very positive response. He shares my concern to secure more consistent enforcement of fisheries policy throughout the Community and to find new ways in which there could be co-operative joint efforts to ensure that all member states give a higher priority to effective enforcement provisions. I shall be continuing to press this matter with my colleagues in other member states.

Mr. Patrick Doyle

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will publish a list of all meetings held and correspondence exchanged in the past 10 years between her Department and Mr. Patrick Doyle, now of AST Training; what was the nature of such meetings or correspondence; what plans she has to meet Mr. Patrick Doyle; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: We have no record of having any contact with Mr. Doyle and have no plans to meet.

Milk Marketing Board

Mr. Brazier: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when she will consult on the Milk Marketing Board's reorganisation scheme.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I and the Secretary of State for Wales have today invited comments from interested organisations in England and Wales on the scheme of reorganisation submitted to us by the Milk Marketing Board for England and Wales (MMB) under the Agriculture Act 1993.

The MMB has proposed in its reorganisation scheme that the milk marketing scheme should end on 1 April 1994. On that day certain of the MMB's assets would be transferred to a voluntary co-operative, Milk Marque, membership of which would be open to all producers in England and Wales. The scheme also provides for the flotation of the MMB's commercial subsidiary Dairy Crest. Eligible producers would receive shares in Dairy crest and certificates of entitlement in Milk Marque. Certain assets and liabilities would be retained by the MMB, which would continue in residuary form after the end of the milk marketing scheme to wind up its affairs.

We have asked to receive comments by 29 November 1993.

Fertilisers

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what precautionary instructions and advice have been issued to farmers in respect of safeguarding the storing of fertilisers; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: I have been asked to reply.

The Health and Safety Executive has issued a range of guidance relating to the storage of fertilisers and most recently this subject has been covered in its publication entitled "Farmwise". Agriculture inspectors also advise farmers on the safe storage of fertilisers during their site visits.

Fishing Vessels

Mr. Cox: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the number of fishing vessels registered at ports in the United Kingdom on 1 June 1979 and on 1 June 1993.

Mr. Norris: I have been asked to reply.

There is no information on the numbers on 1 June 1979. The most relevant information available is as follows:

	Number
December 1979	15,161
June 1993	10,166

WALES

Toll Roads

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has to ensure adequate consultations on and evaluation of toll road proposals at all key stages.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Under the New Roads and Street Works Act 1991 the procedures for authorisation of a toll road are similar to those of the Highways Act 1980 that apply to publicly financed roads; there will therefore be a similar approach to public consultation and public inquiry.

Any scheme which was taken forward by means of individual legislation would be subject to detailed scrutiny by Parliament.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will issue guidelines for the development of toll road proposals.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Privately financed toll roads can be provided only in accordance with the New Roads and Street Works Act 1991, or by individual legislation. Guidelines on the Act were contained in a circular issued to local authorities by the Department of Transport and the Welsh Office in March 1992. Evaluation of a prospective concessionaire's proposals will be a matter for the highway authority, but a statement is published with a draft toll order, under the 1991 Act, setting out the key points of a concession agreement.

Environment Wales Initiative

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when the first report of the environment Wales initiative was published; how many copies were printed; to whom it has been circulated; and if he will make a statement on further initiatives he plans following the lessons learned from the environment Wales programme.

Mr. Redwood: The environment Wales first annual report was published in August 1993. Five hundred copies were printed and received a wide distribution including the chief executives of district and county councils in Wales, the voluntary environmental sector, companies in the private sector including Business in the Community, selected media interests and of course Welsh Members of the House. I have arranged for additional copies to be placed in the Library of the House.

The initiative is now half way through its second very successful year. The report speaks for itself; it reflects the degree of commitment and innovation shown by all those involved. In particular it indicates the success that the organisations participating in the initiative have had in generating funds, in addition to the Welsh Office grant, especially from private sector sources. A review of the initiative will be carried out next year which will consider its future direction in the light of experience during the first three years of its operation.

Team Care Valleys Project

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what follow-up action he proposes to capitalise on the findings of the team care valleys project; what consultations he has had on the lessons learnt; what proposals he has to publish the results; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: The team care valleys project ended on 31 August 1993 and the report of an independent assessment of its performance is awaited.

The successor valleys health group is preparing a business plan. It will be guided by an advisory board which will include senior health care professionals and academics. It will also take into account the views of the independent assessors, when they are available.

Trawsfynydd Power Station

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the result of the Trawsfynydd nuclear power station entry in the Wales tourist board's annual competition in the best newcomer category; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Trawsfynydd nuclear power station's visitor centre was one of the 30 entries in the "Best Newcomer" category of the Wales tourism awards. It did not, however, win an award.

Local Development Projects

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what local development projects have been undertaken in Wales in the last five years; and what are their costs.

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 16 July 1993]:* I wrote to the hon. Gentleman on 4 August and placed a copy of my letter in the Library of the House.

Nursery and Higher Education

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how many training places have been *(a)* made available and *(b)* filled for nursery teachers and nursery nurses in Wales in each year from 1985;

(2) what proportion of 18 and 19-year-olds entered full-time higher education in Wales in each year since 1986.

Sir Wyn Roberts *[holding answer 22 and 23 July 1993]:* I wrote to the hon. Gentleman on 16 September and placed a copy of my letter in the Library of the House.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Moats

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list the *(a)* surveys and *(b)* excavations that are currently being carried out of moated sites of archaeological interest in England and Wales.

Mr. Brooke: English Heritage's monuments protection programme is reviewing moated sites as part of the exercise to evaluate all known archaeological remains in England. It is not possible to provide a comprehensive list of all sites where surveys or excavations are currently being carried out because such activities can be undertaken by many different organisations and for a variety of reasons. Any works to a moated site which is a scheduled monument would require prior scheduled monument consent.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales is responsible for archaeological matters in Wales.

Mr. Patrick Doyle

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will publish a list of all meetings held and correspondence exchanged in the past 10 years between his Department and Mr. Patrick Doyle, now of AST Training; what was the nature of such meetings or correspondence; what plans he has to meet Mr. Patrick Doyle; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: The Department of National Heritage has been in existence only since April 1992. Since that time we have not held any meetings, nor entered into correspondence, with Mr. Patrick Doyle, now of AST Training.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Expenditure

Sir Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what estimate he has as to the effect on social security expenditure of all kinds, including passport benefits, of raising the income tax threshold to £100 per week.

Mr. Burt: The effect would be a reduction of around £160 million per year.

It is not possible to estimate the effect this change would have on the NHS low income scheme.

Computerisation

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his latest estimate of the cost of computerising the administration and payment of benefits by his Department's local offices and within the central administration.

Mr. Burt: The latest estimate of the total cost of computerising the administration and payment of benefits by the Department is in the table.

	£ billion
Total cost of the Operational Strategy 1985-86 to 1998-89	2·64
Total costs incurred by end of the financial year 1992-93	1·55

Social Security Appeal Tribunals

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what meetings the president of the social security appeal tribunals has had, and with whom, on the admittance of late appeals in the last five years.

Mr. Burt: This is a matter for the president of the independent tribunal service, his honour, Judge Thorpe, and he will be writing to the hon. Member direct on this matter.

Maintenance Payments

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the average increase in maintenance payments since the introduction of the Child Support Agency; and what percentage of absentee parents have not been traced.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter to Mr. Peter L. Pike from Ros Hepplewhite, dated 22 October 1993:

As Chief Executive of the Child Support Agency it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking what is the average increase in maintenance payments since the introduction of the Child Support Agency; and what percentage of absentee parents have not been traced.

The Child Support Act provides for maintenance to be assessed by means of a standard formula that produces predictable and realistic amounts. However, as the Agency has only been operating since April this year it is too early to be able to say what overall effect the Agency has had on the level of maintenance payments. It has always been made clear that the amount of maintenance worked out by the Agency under the formula may be higher than a previous court order in some cases. Average maintenance payments were £25 to £30 a week and under the formula the average is expected to be £45 to £50 a week.

At the end of August, in less than one per cent. of cases where an application form had been returned has completed tracing action, so far, been unable to locate the absent parent.

I hope you will find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the Official Report and a copy will also be placed in the Library.

Invalidity Benefit

Mr. Jenkin: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he expects to publish the findings of the research into invalidity benefit carried out by his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: The Department's research into invalidity benefit consists of five studies, all of which have now been published. Copies of the reports have been placed in the Library.

The reports make clear that other countries are also experiencing growth in long-term incapacity benefits, that the GP's present role does not always sit easily within the current system, and that questions of incapacity for work tend not to be decided by medical criteria alone but are allied to a range of other social factors. We are considering the findings carefully within the context of our review of social security.

"Invalidity Benefit: A Preliminary Qualitative Study of the Factors Affecting Its Growth" and "GPs and IVB" were published on 3 September; "Invalidity Benefit, A Survey of Recipients" and "Invalidity Benefit, An International Comparison" on 29 September; and "Invalidity Benefit, A Longitudinal Survey of New Recipients" on 15 October.

Correspondence

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when the hon. Member for Walsall, North will receive a reply over sickness benefit to his letter of 7 September written to the Secretary of State for Health and transferred: reference 4/3644/36.

Mr. Scott: My noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State wrote to the hon. Member yesterday.

Mr. Patrick Doyle

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish a list of all meetings held and correspondence exchanged in the past 10 years between his Department and Mr. Patrick Doyle, now of AST Training; what was the nature of such meetings or correspondence; what plans he has to meet Mr. Patrick Doyle; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: We have no record of any contact with Mr. Doyle and have no plans to meet.

Benefits Agency

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list *(a)* those buildings in Leeds currently used by Benefits Agency staff and *(b)* the date at which the office space was bought or leased.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Benefits Agency is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter to Mr. Derek Fatchett from Michael Bichard, dated 21 October 1993:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency it is my responsibility to answer questions raised about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking if he will list *(a)* those buildings in Leeds currently used by Benefits Agency staff and *(b)* the date at which the office space was bought or leased.

The following is a list of those buildings in Leeds occupied by staff of the Benefits Agency. The date shown in the right hand column is the date from which the office space was bought or leased.

	Date
Government Buildings, Otley Road, Lawnswood, Leeds Built	1926-49
Royal Exchange House, Leeds[1]	1 February 1967
Royal Exchange House, Leeds[1]	20 April 1967
Leeds North Outstation, Tower House, Merrion Way	1 October 1970
Royal Exchange House, Leeds[1]	12 January 1973
44/60, Richardshaw Lane, Leeds	7 May 1973
Priestley House, Leeds (lease 1)	24 June 1973
Techno House, Horsforth, Leeds (lease 1)	1 October 1973
Royal Exchange House, Leeds[1]	30 November 1973
Leeds West, Century House, Church Lane, Pudsey, Leeds	29 September 1974
Priestley House, Leeds (lease 2)	9 January 1975
Techno House, Horsforth, Leeds (lease 2)	11 February 1975
Leeds North West, 21/22, Park Place, Leeds	25 June 1976
Leeds South, 72, Merrion Street, Leeds	10 December 1978
Liverpool Victoria House, Otley Road, Leeds	15 January 1979
Leeds South, 89/92, Merrion Street, Leeds	17 May 1979
City House, Leeds (lease 1)	1 June 1979
Leeds South PCO, 76/80, Commercial St, Rothwell Leeds (lease 1)	1 December 1979
Leeds South PCO, 76/80, Commercial St, Rothwell Leeds (lease 2)	1 December 1979
Warwick House, Wade Lane, Leeds	29 September 1980
Springwood House, Horsforth, Leeds (lease 1)	1 June 1981
Springwood House, Horsforth, Leeds (lease 2)	1 June 1981
City House, Leeds (lease 2)	25 March 1985
Leeds East, Southern House, 529, York Road, Leeds	1 October 1985
Royal Exchange House, Leeds[1]	25 March 1988
Leeds North, Hume House, Tower House Street, Leeds	26 March 1989
Royal Exchange House, Leeds[1]	23 April 1990
37/39, St. Paul's Street, Leeds	26 December 1990
Morley PCO, 8, Wesley Street, Morley, Leeds	1 April 1992
Quarry House, Wuarry Hill, Leeds	6 July 1992
1 Trevelyan Square, Boar Lane, Leeds	20 September 1992

[1] Six separate leases

I hope that you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the Official Report and a copy will also be placed in the Library.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Gross Domestic Product

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the gross domestic product per capita in 1990 for the United Kingdom and for each county in the United Kingdom *(a)* in pound sterling and *(b)* expressed in US dollars at the exchange rate used to produce the gross domestic product per capita figures in table 31 of the United Nations Development Programme's human development report 1993.

Mr. Nelson: *(a)* The latest estimates of United Kingdom GDP per capita in 1990 pound sterling were published in the "United Kingdom National Accounts Blue Book 1993 Edition", which is available in the House of Commons Library. The latest figures available for the counties within the United Kingdom are for 1989, and were published in the November 1991 issue of *Economic Trends*, which is available in the House of Commons Library. The figures for the regions of Scotland were revised earlier this year, and provided in a written answer to the question from my hon. Friend the Member for Southport (Mr. Banks) on 12 February 1993 at columns *802-3*.

(b) Estimates of GDP for the regions and counties of the United Kingdom are derived by summing factor incomes, and are therefore available only on a factor cost basis. The conversion to purchasing power parity US dollars, as shown at the national level in the "UN Human Development Report 1993", can be carried out only using GDP estimates at market prices, not at factor cost.

Crown Estate Commissioners

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many copies of the Crown Estate Commissioners annual report for the year ended 31 March were printed; and at what cost each copy was produced.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Six thousand copies of the commissioners' annual report for the year ended 31 March 1993 were printed. Each copy cost £5·10 to produce.

VAT

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the revenue which would arise from a 1 per cent. increase in value added tax.

Sir John Cope: Table 7 of the publication "Tax Ready Reckoner and Tax Reliefs" shows that raising the standard rate of VAT by 1 percentage point would raise £2,245 million in 1994-95.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the revenue raised by a value added tax level of 8 per cent. on *(a)* passenger transport, *(b)* water and sewerage service, *(c)* children's clothing, *(d)* children's shoes, *(e)* newspapers and magazines and *(f)* books.

Sir John Cope: In July 1993 the Treasury published "Tax Ready Reckoner and Tax Reliefs". Table 9 of this publication shows the estimated cost of the main zero rated items in 1993-94 compared with applying the standard rate of VAT. The relevant figures are as follows:

	Revenue £ million
Domestic passenger transport	1,150
Water and sewerage services	800
Children's clothing and shoes	600
Books, newspapers and magazines	1,100

These figures can be adjusted pro rata to arrive at a rough estimate of the yield from applying a different rate of VAT to these items. The figures make no allowance for changes in behaviour that would result from applying VAT to these items.

Mr. Haselhurst: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the yield in a full year of *(a)* 5 per cent. and *(b)* 8 per cent. VAT on everything which is currently zero rated, including domestic fuel.

Sir John Cope *[holding answer 21 October 1993]:* Applying VAT to all currently zero rated items, including domestic fuel and power would raise the following:

VAT rate Per cent.	Revenue £ billion
5	5·0
8	8·0

These figures are based on the year 1993-94 and make no allowance for changes in behaviour.

Taxation

Mr. Mandelson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate for the number of persons currently living in the United Kingdom on the basis of untaxed capital remittances abroad.

Mr. Dorrell: I regret that the information is not available.

Airport Tax

Sir David Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish an estimate of the yield there would be to the Exchequer from an airport departure tax of £5 levied on everyone leaving from a United Kingdom airport for an overseas destination.

Sir John Cope: In 1992 there were approximately 36 million passenger departures from United Kingdom airports to overseas destinations according to the "International Passenger Survey". On this basis, the yield from an airport departure tax of £5 per passenger would have been approximately £180 million.

Company Car Tax

Mr. Mills: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will urgently publish a detailed guide to the procedures to be followed by employers and employees in the assessment of their obligations on company car tax including definition in detail of assessment of car list price; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: Guidance for employers on the new system for taxing company cars on the basis of their list price from 6 April 1994 will be published by the Inland Revenue on 29 October and will be available from all tax enquiry centres and tax offices. A guide for employees will be published on 8 November. Both give details of how the list price of a car for tax purposes was defined in the Finance Act 1993, following consultation in 1992.

The Inland Revenue also issued on 27 September a press release confirming that the new system is based on the list price of individual cars. A copy is in the Library.

Mr. Patrick Doyle

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a list of all meetings held and correspondence exchanged in the last 10 years between his Department and Mr. Patrick Doyle, now of AST Training; what was the nature of such meetings or correspondence; what plans he has to meet Mr. Patrick Doyle; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: As far as can be established, the Treasury has had no contact with Mr. Doyle. I have no plans to meet him.

Clubs (VAT)

Mr. Beith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 22 July, to the hon. Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale), *Official Report*, column *303*, whether the non-profit-making organisations to which he refers include non-profit-making private members' clubs which supply sporting and recreational services to their members; and whether club representative bodies are to be consulted about the proposed value added tax exemption.

Sir John Cope: The precise scope of the exemption has yet to be determined but it is likely to cover supplies of sporting and physical education services by non-profit-making members' clubs but not those made by proprietary clubs. Customs and Excise has issued a consultation paper and welcomes representations from any interested parties.

Medical Equipment

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what discussions he has held about the levying of VAT upon medical aids such as CCTV print magnifiers and transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulator machines; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Cope: I met representatives of the Disabled Living Foundation on 20 July and discussed the question of VAT on medical equipment. CCTV print magnifiers are relieved from VAT when supplied to visually impaired people. Customs and Excise has been unable to accept that transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulators—TENS—fall within the existing VAT reliefs, but a major supplier of TENS equipment has appealed the point to the independent VAT tribunal and a hearing should take place later in the autumn.

Domestic Fuel (VAT)

Mr. Haselhurst: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what will be the yield in a full year of 17·5 per cent. VAT on domestic fuel.

Sir John Cope *[holding answer 21 October 1993]:* At the time of its announcement in the last Budget it was estimated that applying VAT to domestic fuel and power would raise £2·85 billion in 1996-97, the first year that revenue will fully reflect the standard rate of 17½ per cent.

SCOTLAND

Transport Funding

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give all details of European regional development funds which have been allocated for transport initiatives in the last 12 months and which are proposed for the next 12 months.

Mr. Stewart: No ERDF funds have been allocated to specific transport initiatives in the last 12 months. However, ERDF has part-funded many transport infrastructure measures including ferry services, passenger rail services, bus stations and cycle routes, and such projects will continue to be aided through the various Scottish objective 2 and 5b programmes as well as the new objective 1 programme in the Highlands and Islands. It is too early to say what schemes or initiatives might come forward in 1994.

Fisheries (Bird Killing Licences)

Mr. Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his answer of 27 April, *Official Report*, columns *377-78*, in respect of how many of the licence applications to kill cormorants, goosanders or red-breasted mergansers for the prevention of serious damage to fisheries under section 16 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, received in Scotland in 1992, the Department carried out a site visit to assess evidence of serious damage to fisheries.

Sir Hector Monro: No site visits were made. Assessment of the potential damage to fisheries is based on a variety of factors, including the diets of the birds.

Mr. Graham: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether the Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department consults Scottish Natural Heritage before issuing individual licences to kill cormorants, goosanders or red-breasted mergansers under section 16 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Sir Hector Monro: As required by section 16(10) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 the Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department regularly consults Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) on the circumstances under which licences should be granted to shoot these species of birds. Applicants for licences are encouraged to consult local SNH staff before submitting their applications.

Trade Descriptions Act

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many prosecutions there have been in the past 10 years under section 14 of the Trades Descriptions Act 1968 for knowingly or recklessly making a false statement about the provision of accommodation in the course of business; and what was the penalty in each case of guilt being established.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is not separately recorded and could not be obtained except at disproportionate cost.

Student Finances

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about the future administration of student awards in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. Friend has decided that the student awards branch of the Scottish Office Education Department should be placed under consideration as a candidate for executive agency status, under the "next steps" initiative.

Cervical Cytopathology

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will list those recommendations contained in the report of the inquiry into cervical cytopathology at Inverclyde royal hospital, Greenock which *(a)* have been implemented already, *(b)* he will implement within the next six months, *(c)* are to be introduced within 12 months and *(d)* are not to be implemented; and if he will make a statement.

(2) when he expects to receive a report from the chief executive of the NHS in Scotland concerning the response of the Argyll and Clyde health board to the findings and recommendations contained in the report of the inquiry into cervical cytopathology of Inverclyde royal hospital, Greenock; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 21 October 1993]:* The Government have indicated their acceptance of the broad thrust of the recommendations contained in the McGoogan report and is proceeding to implement those directed at the Scottish Office Home and Health Department. The aim is to implement these as quickly as is practical but the process involves consultations and discussions with professional bodies, health boards and trusts on the details. Of the seven recommendations addressed to the Department the Government have already announced the decisions to set up a central co-ordinating unit for cervical screening at an estimated cost of £100,000 per annum; to fund the Scottish proficiency testing scheme at an estimated cost of £20,000 per annum and to issue guidance to health boards and trusts on the proposals in respect of training, staffing, health education and rationalisation of laboratories. The membership of working groups on quality control and guidelines for reporting perceived discrepancies has still to be confirmed.

For those recommendations directed to the Argyll and Clyde health board and its laboratories, the report of the task force set up by the board to advise on the action to be taken is expected to be formally submitted to the management executive by the end of October.

The Government are determined to ensure that progress on implementation proceeds as quickly as circumstances allow. The position will be continually monitored.

RENAVAL Programme

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much money has been spent in *(a)* Inverclyde, *(b)* Glasgow and *(c)* Fife under the terms of the European Community's RENAVAL programme in each of the past four years; what level of projects were supported in this way; to what extent and when the current programme will finish; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 21 October 1993]:* The RENAVAL programme ends on 31 December 1993. I will write to the hon. Member about the more detailed aspects of his question.

Mr. Patrick Doyle

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a list of all meetings held and correspondence exchanged in the past 10 years between his Department and Mr. Patrick Doyle, now of AST Training; what was the nature of such meetings or correspondence; what plans he has to meet Mr. Patrick Doyle; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 21 October 1993]:* The Scottish Office has found no record of any meetings or correspondence with Mr. Patrick Doyle, now of AST Training. My right hon. Friend has no plans to meet Mr. Doyle.

Helensburgh

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give details of the individuals or organisations which supported the proposed addition of Helensburgh into Argyll and Bute council during the consultation exercise on local government reform.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 21 October 1993]:* The respondents to our public consultation who specifically supported the creation of a new authority based on Argyll and Bute district council plus the Helensburgh area are as listed.

C. I. J. and A. G. Harvey
Mr. Peter Hillis
Mr. George A. Hood
Tarbert and Skipness Community Council
Stirling and Gilmour, Solicitors
Dumbarton Scottish Conservative Association (Helensburgh Conservative Committee)
Helensburgh Community Council
Cove and Kilcreggan Community Council

In addition a number of responses expressed a preference for all of Dumbarton district or particular parts of it to be linked with Argyll and Bute. The proposal has also won significant support in surveys conducted at a local level in the area.

Sour Gas

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the power stations which have been authorised to use sour gas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: I have been asked to reply.

Section 14(2) of the Energy Act 1976 requires that notice be given to me of any proposal to enter into contractual or other arrangements to obtain a supply of gas as fuel for a power station. I am empowered under section 14(3) to direct that any proposal of which I am notified should not be carried out, or should be carried out in accordance with specified conditions.

There is no requirement for the notice to distinguish between sour and other gas. However, the following proposals have been notified under section 14(2) which may involve sour gas. I have not given any directions under section 14(3) preventing or modifying them.

Peterhead (North of Scotland Hydro Electric Board)—1,550 Mw
Kelt, Ryedale (Kelt (UK) Ltd.)—50 Mw
Connah's Quay, Clwyd (PowerGen)—1,350 Mw

HOME DEPARTMENT

Emergency Planning

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of the proposed distribution of Home Office emergency planning grant aid for *(a)* 1993-94, *(b)* 1994-95 and *(c)* 1995-96 to enable the deficiencies identified in his predecessor's statement of 10 July 1991, *Official Report,* columns *391-94,* to be remedied; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The new grant distribution arrangements, which come into operation on 1 April 1994, increase the proportion of resources which are allocated to metropolitan areas. Since the new Civil Defence (General Local Authority Functions) Regulations 1993 came into force on 1 August 1993, grant aid has been available for metropolitan districts and boroughs for the first time.

These measures are intended to assist metropolitan authorities in overcoming the problems in some areas which were referred to by the then Home Secretary in his statement of 10 July 1991.

Police (Deaths)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information was provided to the Sheehy committee on *(a)* the number and percentage of policemen who died within five years of retirement and *(b)* the number who died before the age of 60 years.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The Government Actuary's Department provided the inquiry with a summary of the main assumptions used for the police pension scheme. These include the probability of death in-service for police officers aged 20 to 55 and the expectation of life of police officers retiring at ages 50 and 60.

Sheehy Inquiry

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the payments of *(a)* fees and *(b)* expenses made to Sir Patrick Sheehy and each other member of the inquiry for producing their report on the police.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The chairman and members of the inquiry did not accept fees. The costs of travel and subsistence in connection with the inquiry's work were reimbursed.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what experience of police duties and the management of criminals Sir Patrick Sheehy, Mr. Eric Caines, Mr. Colin Campbell or Mr. John Bullock had prior to being appointed to the Sheehy inquiry.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The chairman and members of the inquiry had no professional experience of working closely with the police service before being appointed. Their experience was of managing large organisations inside and outside the public sector.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish full statistics of the time spent by Sir Patrick Sheehy and each other inquiry member out with beat officers on duty.

Mr. Charles Wardle: A full list of the visits to forces which were undertaken by the inquiry members, which included opportunities to accompany officers on patrol, is provided at appendix I of volume 2 of the inquiry's report —Cm 2280.II.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether the members of the Sheehy inquiry were provided with the full details of the number of policemen injured on duty.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Yes.

Prisons

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish the criteria by which convicted criminals are placed in closed or open prisons.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter to Mr. Martin Redmond from Derek Lewis, dated 22 October 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the criteria by which convicted prisoners are placed in closed or open prisons.

The criteria are set out in guidance to Prison Service establishments contained in Circular Instructions 7/1988 and 2/1991. Copies are in the House of Commons Library and have been made available to penal interest groups. I have sent personal copies to you.

I have no plans to publish this material more widely.

Prison Releases

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department which of Her Majesty's prison establishments issue references for future prospective employers to inmates who are currently being released after completing their sentence; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter to Mr. Martin Redmond from Derek Lewis, dated 22 October 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about prison establishments which provide to inmates on release references for future prospective employers.

The particular information which you have requested is not held centrally. The Prison Service has an obligation to help prisoners lead law-abiding and useful lives after their release. Prisoners may therefore be provided on their release with documents which, for example, describe the education and vocational training qualifications and work experience which they obtained in custody. These are likely to be relevant to any prospective employer and may assist the prisoner in obtaining a job.

If there are particular cases you would like to follow up may I suggest that you contact the governor of the establishment from which the prisoner was released. I shall, of course, be happy to deal with any further clarification you may wish to have on the question of references.

Summer Time

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will estimate the net effects of maintaining summer time in winter in terms of casualties, employment and simplicity for travellers.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I refer my hon. Friend to the 1989 Green Paper "Summer Time: A Consultation Document" (Cm. 722) which, as part of the assessment of the option of moving to single-double time, considered the effects of maintaining summer time in the winter on various aspects of national life including physical accidents, employment and travel.

New Prisons

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the total cost of the new prison building programme due to be completed in 1994; and how many prison places will have been provided.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter to Ms Joan Ruddock from Derek Lewis, dated 22 October 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the new prison building programme due to be completed in 1994.

When Doncaster prison is opened in 1994 this will see the completion of a building programme which will have provided 11,265 new places at 21 new prisons since 1985. The total cost of the programme will be £1·2 billion.

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many new Prison Service establishments have been completed since 1983; and if he will list those establishments together with *(a)* the total cost of each establishment and *(b)* the main building contractor in each case.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 21 October 1993]:* I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 19 October at columns *214-16.*

Fine Defaults

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the total number of people imprisoned for fine defaults in the years *(a)* 1990, *(b)* 1991, *(c)* 1992 and *(d)* 1993; and what percentage they represent of all receptions of sentenced prisoners.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter to Ms Joan Ruddock from Derek Lewis, dated 22 October 1993:

RECEPTIONS OF FINE DEFAULTERS

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question asking for information on the number of receptions of fine defaulters in the years *(a)* 1990, *(b)* 1991, *(c)* 1992 and *(d)* 1993 and what percentage they represent of all receptions of sentenced prisoners.

Information for 1990 and 1991 was published in the 1991 edition of "Prison statistics England and Wales" (Cm 2157) and I attach a copy of table 7.1 for ease of reference. Information for

1992 is only readily available for fine defaulters from 1 March 1992 to 31 August 1992. During this six month period 9,329 fine defaulters (8,815 males and 514 females) were received into Prison Service establishments in England and Wales. I am sorry to inform you that the corresponding information about receptions of sentenced prisoners is not yet available, and that none of the information for 1993 is yet available.

Extract from Prison Statistics—England and Wales—1991

Table 7.1 Population, receptions and estimated average time spent in Prison Service establishments: by sex, 1981 to 1991

England and Wales

Fine defaulters

	1981	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*
Population at 30 June											
All fine defaulters	918	909	900	792	563	511	626	576	484	466	409
Males	879	871	854	752	540	491	598	549	460	441	397
Females	39	38	46	40	23	20	28	27	24	25	12
Total sentenced population	36,669	36,000	35,438	35,496	37,344	36,450	39,303	38,548	38,013	35,220	35,114
Fine defaulters as a percentage of total sentenced population	2·5	2·5	2·5	2·2	1·5	1·4	1·6	1·5	1·3	1·3	1·2
Population serving sentences of imprisonment of 6 months or less[1]	5,442	5,588	6,006	6,205	6,285	4,787	4,856	3,563	3,744	3,238	3,650
Fine defaulters as a percentage of population serving sentences of imprisonment of 6 months or less	16·9	16·3	15·0	12·8	9·0	10·7	12·9	16·2	12·9	14·4	11·2
Receptions											
All fine defaulters	21,153	24,492	23,241	21,761	20,493	19,159	18,723	16,817	16,985	16,659	18,973
Males	20,046	23,168	21,920	20,275	19,108	18,084	17,804	15,881	16,117	15,814	17,997
Females	1,107	1,324	1,321	1,486	1,385	1,075	919	936	868	845	976
All receptions under sentence	88,110	94,377	93,414	92,810	96,189	86,153	86,358	81,376	76,430	67,510	72,313
Fine defaulters as a percentage of all receptions under sentence	24·0	26·0	24·9	23·4	21·3	22·2	21·7	20·5	22·2	24·7	26·2
All receptions under sentence of imprisonment of 6 months or less[1]	45,219	52,195	51,415	50,242	49,287	43,109	41,446	39,391	42,209	36,813	41,245
Fine defaulters as a percentage of all receptions under sentence of imprisonment of 6 months or less	46·8	46·9	45·2	43·3	41·6	44·4	45·2	42·7	40·2	45·3	46·0
Average time served (days)[2]											
Males	14·5	14·1	14·1	12·9	11·3	10·9	10·9	9·9	8·1	7·0	7·5
Females	10·5	11·0	10·1	8·7	8·1	7·9	8·4	7·1	6·0	6·0	6·8

[1] Excludes detention trainees: includes youth custody trainees and persons sentenced to detention in a young offender institution.
[2] Excluding those remaining in custody as fine defaulters on completion of a custodial sentence for criminal offence.

Mr. Patrick Doyle

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish a list of all meetings held and correspondence exchanged in the past 10 years between his Department and Mr. Patrick Doyle, now of AST Training; what was the nature of such meetings or correspondence; what plans he has to meet Mr. Patrick Doyle; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Howard: We have been unable to trace any record of contact with Mr. Doyle, and have no plans to meet him.

Penal Costs

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the average cost per month of holding someone in prison in *(a)* 1990-91, *(b)* 1991-92, *(c)* 1992-93 and *(d)* currently; and what was the total cost for each year available.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 18 October 1993]:* Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter to Ms Joan Ruddock, from Derek Lewis, dated 22 October 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the costs of holding someone in prison.

The costs are shown below at 1993-94 prices.

Year	*Total net operating cost of prison establishments £ million*	*Net operating cost per inmate per month £*
1990-91	1,009·6	1,897
1991-92	1,110·6	2,037
1992-93[1]	1,166·8	2,213
1993-94[2]	1,138·7	2,063

[1] Provisional.
[2] Forecast.

The reduction in costs between 1992-93 and 1993-94 is largely due to lower superannuation contributions.

Homosexual Prisoners

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his policy on sending openly homosexual prisoners to HMP Ford.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 19 October 1993]:* Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter to Ms Joan Ruddock from Derek Lewis, dated 22 October 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the allocation of homosexual prisoners to Ford prison.

Openly homosexual prisoners are not sent to Ford prison as the allocation criteria excludes actively known homosexuals, except life sentenced prisoners, whose moves have been authorised by the Secretary of State as part of a progression towards release.

Young Offenders

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many 15-year-olds remanded in custody in 1992, spent *(a)* up to one week, *(b)* one to two weeks, *(c)* two to four weeks, *(d)* four to eight weeks, *(e)* eight weeks to three months, *(f)* three to six months and *(g)* over six months, in prison before their court case was concluded;

(2) how many 15-year-olds remanded into custody in 1993 to the latest date available spent *(a)* up to one week, *(b)* one to two weeks, *(c)* two four weeks, *(d)* four to eight weeks, *(e)* eight weeks to three months, *(f)* three to six months and *(g)* over six months in prison before their court case was concluded.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 19 October 1993]:* Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter to Ms Joan Ruddock from Derek Lewis, dated 22 October 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Questions about the length of time remanded 15 year olds have spent in custody before their court case was concluded in 1992 and 1993.

I regret to inform you that the information is not available in the form you have requested. The latest available information relates to the time spent in custody since the inmate's first reception into a Prison Service establishment up until the 30 June in each of the years you have requested. I enclose four tables showing the length of time untried and convicted unsentenced 15 year old inmates have spent in custody from the date of their first reception into a Prison Service establishment up until the 30 June 1992 and 30 June 1993.

The figures quoted include any intervening time spent on bail but exclude any time spent in police cells beforehand.

Untried 15 year olds held in Prison Service establishments in England and Wales on 30 June 1992; by length of time since first reception into a Prison Service establishment[1]

Length of time since first remand into a Prison Service establishment	*Number of prisoners[2]*
Up to and including 1 week	7
Over 1 up to and including 2 weeks	3
Over 2 up to and including 4 weeks	4
Over 4 up to and including 8 weeks	1
Over 8 weeks up to and including 3 months	3
Over 3 up to and including 6 months	1
Over 6 months	3
TOTAL	22

[1] Time since first reception on remand into a Prison Service establishment. This includes any intervening time spent on bail, but excludes any time spent in police cells beforehand.
[2] Provisional figures.

Convicted Unsentenced 15 year olds held in Prison Service establishments in England and Wales on 30 June 1992; by length of time since first reception into a Prison Service establishment[1]

Length of time since first remand into a Prison Service establishment	*Number of prisoners[2]*
Up to and including 1 week	1
Over 1 up to and including 2 weeks	0
Over 2 up to and including 4 weeks	2
Over 4 up to and including 8 weeks	1
Over 8 weeks up to and including 3 months	0
Over 3 up to and including 6 months	1
Over 6 months	0
TOTAL	5

[1] Time since first reception on remand into a Prison Service establishment. This includes any intervening time spent on bail, but excludes any time spent in police cells beforehand.
[2] Provisional figures.

Untried 15 year olds held in Prison Service establishments in England and Wales on 30 June 1993; by length of time since first reception into a Prison Service establishment[1]

Length of time since first remand into a Prison Service establishment	*Number of prisoners[2]*
Up to and including 1 week	11
Over 1 up to and including 2 weeks	9
Over 2 up to and including 4 weeks	1
Over 4 up to and including 8 weeks	3
Over 8 weeks up to and including 3 months	2
Over 3 up to and including 6 months	2
Over 6 months	0
TOTAL	28

[1] Time since first reception on remand into a Prison Service establishment. This includes any intervening time spent on bail, but excludes any time spent in police cells beforehand.
[2] Provisional figures.

Convicted Unsentenced 15 year olds held in Prison Service establishments in England and Wales on 30 June 1993; by length of time since first reception into a Prison Service establishment[1]

Length of time since first remand into a Prison Service establishment	*Number of prisoners[2]*
Up to and including 1 week	0
Over 1 up to and including 2 weeks	2
Over 2 up to and including 4 weeks	1
Over 4 up to and including 8 weeks	1
Over 8 weeks up to and including 3 months	0
Over 3 up to and including 6 months	2
Over 6 months	0
TOTAL	6

[1] Time since first reception on remand into a Prison Service establishment. This includes any intervening time spent on bail, but excludes any time spent in police cells beforehand.
[2] Provisional figures.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department in how many instances of assault reported to the prison authorities the victim was a 15-year-old inmate in *(a)* 1992 and *(b)* 1993 to the latest available date.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter to Ms Joan Ruddock from Derek Lewis, dated 22 October 1993:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your recent Question asking in how many instances of assault reported to the prison authorities the victim was a 15 year old inmate in *(a)* 1992 and *(b)* 1993 to the latest available date.

I regret to inform you that the information you have requested is not recorded centrally.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) which prisons and young offender institutions have held 15-year-olds as *(a)* remanded prisoners and *(b)* sentenced prisoners in (i) 1992 and (ii) 1993 to the latest date available;

(2) where 15-year-olds currently *(a)* remanded in custody and *(b)* sentenced to custody were being held, (i) on 1 January and (ii) at the latest date available;

(3) how many 15-year-olds were being held in custody *(a)* on 1 January and *(b)* on the latest date for which figures are available; how many of them were *(a)* on remand pending trial or entering pleas, *(b)* on remand pending sentence or *(c)* sentenced; and, in each category, how many were male and how many were female.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 19 October 1993]:* Responsibility for these matters has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter to Ms Joan Ruddock from Derek Lewis, dated 22 October 1993:

15 year old inmates in prison service establishments

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Questions asking for the location and numbers of untried, convicted unsentenced and sentenced 15 year old inmates in Prison Service establishments in 1992 and 1993.

I regret that we are unable to supply you with information for 1 January as requested. The readily available information relates to the population of 15 year old males and females in Prison Service establishments on 30 June 1992, 30 June 1993 and 31 August 1993. I therefore attach three tables detailing the population of untried, convicted unsentenced and sentenced inmates by establishment, split by sex for these dates. The information is drawn from central records which are subject to the errors inherent in a large computerised database.

Population [1] of 15-year-old juveniles by type of custody in Prison Service establishments on 30 June 1992.

	Untried	Unsent	Sentenced
Remand (Male)			
Brinsford	3	0	2
Brockhill	1	0	0
Cardiff	0	0	1
Feltham	4	0	4
Glen Parva	2	1	0
Hindley	1	0	0
Low Newton	5	3	0
Moorland	3	1	0
Norwich	1	0	0
Local (Male)			
Latchmere House	0	0	1
Closed YOIs (Male)			
Deerbolt	0	0	25
Feltham	0	0	1
Stoke Heath	0	0	1
Juvenile YOIs (Male)			
Feltham	2	0	8
Onley	0	0	16
Werrington	0	0	19
Closed YOIs (Female)			
Styal	0	0	1
Total	22	5	79

[1] Provisional data

Population [1] of 15-year-old juveniles by type of custody in Prison Service establishments on 30 June 1993

	Untried	Unsent	Sentenced
Remand centres (male)			
Brinsford	7	1	0
Cardiff	0	0	1
Exeter	0	0	1
Feltham	1	2	3
Glen Parva	4	0	0
Hindley	4	1	0
Holme House	0	0	1
Low Newton	3	1	0
Moorland	8	1	1
Closed YOIs (male)			
Deerbolt	0	0	23
Feltham	0	0	3
Open YOIs (male)			
Thorn Cross	0	0	8
Wetherby	0	0	11
Juvenile YOIs (male)			
Brinsford	0	0	5
Feltham	1	0	9
Guys Marsh	0	0	6
Onley	0	0	9
Werrington	0	0	14
Closed YOIs (female)			
Bullwood Hall	0	0	1
Styal	0	0	1
Total	28	6	97

[1] Provisional data.

Population [1] of 15 year old juveniles by type of custody in Prison Service establishments on 31 August 1993

	Untried	Unsent	Sentenced
Remand (Male)			
Brinsford	4	1	0
Cardiff	1	0	1
Feltham	2	0	2
Glen Parva	6	1	1
Hindley	4	1	0
Holme House	2	0	0
Low Newton	3	3	0

	Untried	Unsent	Sentenced
Moorland	8	5	0
Closed YOIs (Male)			
Deerbolt	0	0	32
Feltham	0	0	2
Open YOIs (Male)			
Thorn Cross	0	0	0
Wetherby	0	0	10
Juvenile YOI (Male)			
Brinsford	0	0	5
Feltham	2	3	7
Guys Marsh	0	0	11
Onley	0	0	13
Werrington	0	0	9
Lancaster Farms	2	0	0
Remand (Female)			
New Hall	0	0	1
Closed YOI (Female)			
Styal	0	0	1
Total	34	14	95

[1] Provisional data.

Prison Staff

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what were the *(a)* targeted staffing levels and *(b)* actual staffing levels at each prison in England and Wales;

(2) if he will provide a breakdown of staff numbers in each prison in England and Wales, by rank, gender and race.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 18 October 1993]:* Responsibility for these matters has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter to Ms Joan Ruddock from Derek Lewis, dated 22 October 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Questions about staffing in the Prison Service.

I attach at Annex A a list of target staffing figures and staff in post at each Prison Service establishment on 31 August. As to the differences, for historical reasons some target staffing figures reflect former complements which were unfunded. On 1 April we devolved to governors the responsibility for recruiting prison officers and, subject to the maximum set by the TSF, deciding the number and mix of staff within their running costs budgets.

It may be helpful if I explain the largest gaps between the target staffing figures and staff in post:

Brixton—The target staffing figure on 31 August had still to be adjusted to reflect a transfer of work to Belmarsh; it has since been reduced by 33 to 737;

Hull—The target staffing figure incorporates new posts created as a result of a change of role at the establishment; these posts are in the process of being filled as required;

Leeds—The target staffing figure incorporates the additional posts for two new wings which had not opened by 31 August; the staff in post numbers were still building up in anticipation of opening;

Risley—The staff in post, but not the target staffing figure, include around 30 staff in a temporary allocation centre.

A breakdown of staff in post at every Prison Service establishment, showing grade, gender and ethnic background could only be produced at disproportionate cost. The readily available information at Annex B shows the number and proportion of permanent staff in each grade who are women or members of the ethnic minorities for the Prison Service as a whole.

The figures for staff from the ethnic minorities are based on responses to a voluntary survey of staff ethnic origins and include all who described their own ethnic origin as other than white. Our database of staff ethnic origins now covers approximately 74 per cent. of staff in non-industrial grades. We are taking steps to fill the gaps in that database, and we also hope to extend the database to cover staff in the industrial grades.

Total staff target staffing figures and staff in post in prison service establishments at 31 August 1993 (Part-time staff treated as 0·5)

Establishments	Target staffing figures	Staff in post
Acklington	331·5	328·5
Albany	299·0	299·5
Aldington	72·0	71·0
Ashwell	185·5	179·5
Askham Grange	82·5	75·5
Aylesbury	262·5	256·0
Bedford	269·5	269·5
Belmarsh	802·0	786·0
Birmingham	619·5	591·0
Blantyre House	69·0	68·0
Blundeston	256·5	249·0
Brinsford	346·5	339·0
Bristol	413·0	406·0
Brixton	770·0	720·5
Brockhill	107·5	106·5
Bullingdon	411·5	415·0
Bullwood Hall	134·5	131·5
Camp Hill	287·0	277·0
Canterbury	242·0	227·0
Cardiff	326·0	327·5
Castington	183·0	185·5
Channings Wood	262·0	258·0
Chelmsford	300·0	299·0
Coldingley	214·5	214·5
Cookham Wood	97·0	94·0
Dartmoor	386·5	389·0
Deerbolt	247·0	243·5
Dorchester	148·5	153·5
Dover	211·5	202·0
Downview	186·0	181·0
Drake Hall	128·0	124·5
Durham	555·0	532·0
East Sutton Park	56·0	55·0
Eastwood Park[1]	—	29·0
Elmley	413·0	405·5
Erlestoke	189·5	182·0
Everthorpe	192·5	184·5
Exeter	350·0	328·0
Featherstone	305·5	305·0
Feltham	544·0	524·5
Ford	186·0	185·0
Frankland	521·5	520·0
Full Sutton	675·0	666·0
Garth	342·0	342·5
Gartree	296·0	290·5
Glen Parva	464·5	453·5
Gloucester	203·0	215·5
Grendon/Spring Hill	286·0	264·0
Guys Marsh	202·5	190·0
Haslar	79·0	80·0
Hatfield	136·0	135·0
Haverigg	216·0	209·0
Hewell Grange	103·5	98·0
Highdown	423·5	407·5
Highpoint	358·5	358·0
Hindley	265·5	266·5
Hollesley Bay	353·5	326·5
Holloway	505·0	493·0
Holme House	409·0	404·0
Hull	403·0	371·5
Huntercombe/Finnamore Wood	176·0	186·0
Kingston	119·5	119·5

Establishments	Target staffing figures	Staff in post
Kirkham	213·5	214·0
Kirklevington	72·0	72·0
Lancaster	141·5	139·0
Lancaster Farms	272·0	268·0
Latchmere House	77·5	76·5
Leeds	733·5	685·5
Leicester	311·5	308·0
Lewes	310·0	307·0
Leyhill	182·5	178·5
Lincoln	387·5	386·5
Lindholme	378·5	368·5
Littlehey	275·0	272·5
Liverpool	788·0	773·0
Long Lartin	495·0	494·0
Low Newton	180·0	181·5
Maidstone	340·5	322·0
Manchester	453·0	456·0
Moorland	395·0	394·0
Morton Hall	78·5	76·5
New Hall	174·5	175·5
North Sea Camp	105·0	103·5
Northallerton	143·0	142·0
Norwich	428·5	418·5
Nottingham	198·0	196·0
Onley	265·5	258·5
Parkhurst	493·5	475·5
Pentonville	527·5	512·0
Portland	282·0	266·5
Preston	387·5	376·5
Pucklechurch	100·5	96·0
Ranby	213·5	211·0
Reading	188·0	187·5
Risley	448·0	471·5
Rochester	269·5	266·5
Rudgate	122·5	118·0
Send	82·5	81·5
Shepton Mallet	148·0	145·5
Shrewsbury	214·0	210·5
Stafford	352·0	342·5
Standford Hill	173·0	169·5
Stocken	222·5	218·5
Stoke Heath	237·0	234·0
Styal	235·0	225·5
Sudbury/Foston	195·5	200·0
Swaleside	336·0	344·5
Swansea	213·5	208·5
Swinfen Hall	164·5	159·5
The Mount	213·0	218·0
The Verne	295·0	297·5
Thorn Cross	137·0	136·5
Thorp Arch	130·0	128·0
Usk/Prescoed	167·0	167·5
Wakefield	637·5	630·5
Wandsworth	737·0	696·0
Wayland	253·5	252·0
Wellingborough	201·5	200·0
Werrington	82·0	79·0
Wetherby	127·0	133·5
Whatton	130·0	130·0
Whitemoor	609·5	612·5
Winchester	396·5	394·0
Woodhill	514·5	490·0
Wormwood Scrubs	720·0	696·0
Wymott	365·0	358·0

[1] No target staffing figure given for Eastwood Park which is closed for refurbishment.

Her Majesty's Prison Service: Breakdown of staff according to grade, gender and ethnic origin (position as at 7 September 1993)

Grade	Total	Women	per cent.	Other than white[2]	per cent.
Director General	1	—	—	—	—
Director (Grade 3)	5	2	40·00	—	—
Grade 4 (including Principal Medical Officers)	7	1	14·29	—	—
Grade 5	13	4	30·77	—	—
Assistant Director	8	—	—	—	—
Grade 6	21	3	14·29	—	—
Grade 7	131	16	12·21	3	2·29
Governor 1	37	—	—	—	—
Governor 2	80	7	8·75	—	—
Governor 3	113	12	10·62	—	—
Governor 4[1]	304	37	12·17	3	0·99
Governor 5[1]	483	35	7·25	2	0·41
Principal Officer[1]	1,401	51	3·64	7	0·50
Senior Officer[1]	3,310	144	4·35	33	1·00
Officer[1]	19,173	1,796	9·37	356	1·86
Temporary Officer	8	8	100·00	—	—
Auxiliary Officer	1,517	296	19·51	29	1·91
Night Patrol	940	83	8·83	29	3·09
Chaplains	250	31	12·40	4	1·60
Nursing Grades	379	312	82·32	30	7·92
Psychologist Grades	158	105	66·46	1	0·63
Farm Manager Grades	80	1	1·25	0	0·00
F/T Medical Officer Grades	122	12	9·84	52	42·62
P/T Medical Officer Grades	116	6	5·17	23	19·83
Senior Professional and Technical Officer	4	1	25·00	1	25·00
Higher Professional and Technical Officer	120	2	1·67	3	2·50
Professional and Technical Officer	69	8	11·59	7	10·14
Senior Instruction Officer	100	1	1·00	—	—
Higher Instruction Officer	26	2	7·69	—	—
Instructional Officer	1,028	141	13·72	12	1·17
Senior Executive Officer	84	20	23·81	2	2·38
Higher Executive Officer	290	108	37·24	9	3·10
Executive Officer	615	357	58·05	29	4·72
Administrative Officer	2,014	1,497	74·33	142	7·05
Administrative Assistant	679	539	79·38	64	9·43
Storeperson	581	28	4·82	5	0·86
Typing and Secretarial Grades	623	618	99·20	13	2·09

Grade	Total	Women	per cent.	Other than white[2]	per cent.
Pharmacist Grades	44	34	77·27	5	11·36
Support Bands 1 and 2	219	196	89·50	10	4·57
Librarian	1	1	100·00	—	—
Regional Catering Manager	5	—	—	—	—
Industrials	2,843	186	6·54	N/A	—
Church Education Officer	1	—	—	—	—
Animals Inspector	1	—	—	—	—
Information Officers	4	1	25·00	—	—
TOTAL	38,008	6,702	17·63	874	2·30

[1] Includes specialist grades; works, hospital, physical education etc.
[2] Based on voluntary response to a staff ethnic origins survey.

Prisons (Blood Transfusion)

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his policy on allowing prisoners to give blood.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 19 October 1993]:* Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter to Ms Joan Ruddock from Derek Lewis, dated 22 October 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the policy on allowing prisoners to give blood.

The Prison Service has no general policy on this matter because in practice the National Blood Transfusion Service does not collect blood from prisoners.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Coal

Sir Peter Emery: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on what progress has been made by the Government on their policies announced in their White Paper on coal.

Mr. Eggar: As I indicated in my statement on 20 October, *Official Report*, columns 277-78, we have announced our intention that British Coal's mining assets should be offered for sale in five regional packages; we have issued two consultation papers covering the pensions and concessionary fuel regimes after privatisation; we expect shortly to receive the comprehensive advice of the Health and Safety Commission on all aspects of the post-privatisation safety regime; we are repealing the Coal Mines Regulation Act 1908 with effect from 20 November; Dr. Martin Holdgate has agreed to become chairman of the Energy Advisory Panel; British Coal has offered for licence 20 pits that it does not wish to keep in production and is currently considering 12 tenders for seven of those pits; and, subject to EC clearance, we are offering a subsidy to British Coal in support of additional sales from Ellington colliery to British Alcan's power station at Lynemouth.

Embargoed Police Equipment

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the equipment which is designated as police or security equipment included in the United Nations embargo list.

Mr. Needham: The United Nations does not itemise police or security equipment in any United Nations Security Council resolution. Exports of military and paramilitary police equipment are controlled to all destinations by part III, group I of the Export of Goods Control Order 1992.

Home-based Telecommunications

Mr. Wigley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the current budget of the Department for research and development on home-based telecommunications.

Mr. McLoughlin: DTI expenditure on research and development projects on home-based working with the aid of telecommunications is forecast at around £0·25 million over the next three years. The projects' total value when other partners' contributions are taken into account will be at least double this amount. Because telecommunications may support work practices relevant to both the office and the home, there will also be research not attributed to home-based working which will have some relevance to it.

Projects included a one-year study of the business and economic implications of teleworking; the connected community project—in which Apple Computers and BT have contributed equipment to a community to improve its business and community activities—and several projects under the computer-supported co-operative work (CSCW) programme relevant to home-based working.

There is also a major European Community programme, telematics systems for rural areas, worth 14 million ecu. Two projects within this programme are led by the United Kingdom:

MITRE – Market implementation of teleworking in rural areas; and
PATRA – Psychological aspects of teleworking in rural areas.

Nuclear Safeguards

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make it his policy to advocate an increase to the International Atomic Energy Agency budget for safeguards activities at the review conference on the nuclear non-proliferation treaty in 1995 and all preparatory meetings.

Mr. Eggar: The proper forum for the discussion of the IAEA's budget is the agency's board of governors. The

IAEA general conference in September this year requested the IAEA's director general to intensify his efforts towards improving the effectiveness and cost-efficiency of the safeguards system. My Government support this initiative and will continue to argue for the provision of resources sufficient for the agency to discharge all its safeguards responsibilities in a cost-effective manner.

Copyright

Sir Ivan Lawrence: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is his policy towards the proposed harmonisation of copyright in the EC; when action will become necessary on the issue; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Government support harmonisation of copyright laws in the European Community where this is necessary for the proper functioning of the internal market, and particularly when the result is to increase protection elesewhere in the Community for works of United Kingdom origin. The European Commission has already embarked on an extensive programme of copyright harmonisation, the current situation being as follows:

(a) a directive on the copyright protection of computer programs has been adopted and was implemented in the United Kingdom on 1 January 1993;

(b) a directive on rental and lending rights and certain rights related to copyright was adopted on 19 November 1992;

(c) a directive on copyright and related rights applicable to satellite broadcasting and cable transmission was adopted on 27 September 1993;

(d) a common position was reached on 22 July 1993 on a directive harmonising the term of protection of copyright and certain related rights;

(e) a draft directive on the legal protection of databases is under negotiation; and

(f) the Commission is currently considering action on home taping of sound and audiovisual recordings, and is studying moral rights, reprography, artists' resale right and the collective administration of rights.

Fuel Costs

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what information he has on the total expenditure in *(a)* the domestic sector and *(b)* all other sectors on (i) gas, (ii) electricity and (iii) all other fuels, in each of the past three years; and if he will estimate expenditure in the current year.

Mr. Eggar: The information requested is shown in the table:

Estimated expenditure on energy by final users

£ million

	1990	*1991*	*1992*
Domestic sector			
Natural gas	4,865	5,775	5,685
Electricity	6,255	7,105	7,460
All other fuels	1,160	1,240	1,140
TOTAL	12,280	14,120	14,285
All other sectors			
Natural gas	2,345	2,505	2,405
Electricity	8,450	9,035	9,645
All other fuels	23,100	23,850	23,910
TOTAL	33,895	35,390	35,960
All final consumers			
Natural gas	7,210	8,280	8,090
Electricity	14,705	16,140	17,105
All other fuels	24,260	25,090	25,050
TOTAL	46,175	49,510	50,245

Source: UK Digest of Energy Statistics 1993.

Notes:

1. The figures have been rounded to the nearest £5 million.
2. The "all other fuels" figure includes the estimated commercial value of coal supplied free or at concessionary prices to miners.
3. The domestic sector figures exclude purchases of motor spirit, derv fuel, and lubricating oils which are treated as part of the transport sector.

Most data used to compile this table are collected annually and estimates for 1993 will not be available until mid-1994. However, for the domestic sector figures are available for the first six months of 1993 and show total domestic energy expenditure 1·5 per cent. lower than in the first six months of 1992, with expenditure on gas 1·5 per cent. higher but expenditure on electricity and all other fuels 3 per cent. and 6 per cent. lower respectively.

Land Mines

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make it his policy to declare a moratorium on the export of land mines from the United Kingdom.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I have been asked to reply.

We are not contemplating separate legislation to cover the export of land mines from the United Kingdom. We believe that our current stringent controls on the export of defence equipment, which includes control on all mines, are sufficient to stop the sale of these weapons to countries which may use them in an irresponsible manner.

Regional Assistance

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) when he will reply to the letter of the hon. Member for Thurrock dated 26 August relating to assisted area status and objective 2 status; and what is the reason for the delay in his reply;

(2) on what dates in September he met representatives of Southend borough to discuss assisted area and objective 2 status for the Southend travel-to-work area; which hon. Members attended the meetings; which hon. Members representing any part of the Southend travel-to-work area were not invited to the meetings; and what plans he has to discuss assisted area objective 2 status for the Southend travel-to-work area with representatives of the Thurrock borough council and the hon. Member for Thurrock.

Mr. Sainsbury *[holding answer 20 October 1993]:* Among a large number of requests for meetings about the review of objective 2 and 5(b) areas, I received one from the hon. Member for Thurrock in his letter of 26 August and another from my right hon. Friend the Member for Southend, West (Mr. Channon).

I met my right hon. Friend, my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) and five representatives from Southend borough council on 8 September.

In response to the hon. Member's letter of 26 August, my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Technology telephoned the hon. Member to offer a separate meeting with him and representatives of Thurrock borough council. This offer was, however, declined by the hon. Member and by the council and no further action was therefore taken on the letter.

I have no plans at this stage of the review for further meetings with local authorities. The Government's proposals for objective 2 areas, which include part of Thurrock within the east Thames corridor area, and also part of Southend, are now being considered by the European Commission.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 25 October 1993

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Birkenhead Precinct

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, representing the Church Commissioners, how the proceeds of selling the commissioners' holding in the Birkenhead precinct have been reinvested.

Mr. Alison: Proceeds from sales of commissioners' property are, generally speaking, applied towards the consolidation of the investment portfolio. Recent sale proceeds, including those from Grange precinct, have been used mainly to fund the remainder of the commissioners' development programme and to reduce borrowings.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Voting Procedures

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he has any plans to change the House's voting procedures; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I have no such plans.

Parliamentary Television Feed

Mr. Allen: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will make a statement on securing direct television feeds to hon. Members' offices from the Chamber.

Mr. Newton: Until recently the only Members authorised by the Broadcasting Committee to receive a clean television feed from the Chamber in their offices within the House were the Speaker and the Chairman of Ways and Means. However, at its meeting on 19 July, the Committee agreed that for the purposes of facilitating the management of the business of the House, the following additional Members' offices should be supplied with a clean television feed: the Prime Minister; the Leader of the Opposition; the Leader of the House; the Shadow Leader of the House; the Leader of the Liberal Democrats; and the Whips Offices of the Government, the Official Opposition and the Liberal Democrats. The installation of the necessary cabling and television sets was carried out during the summer recess.

So far as individual hon. and right hon. Members are concerned, the hon. Gentleman will be aware from previous answers on this subject that the Committee has approved in principle the supply of a feed to all Members' offices, provided that the service is available to all parts of the Parliamentary estate simultaneously. The Committee has also accepted, however, that because of the complexity and cost of the cabling work involved in such an undertaking, further progress must await decisions on the broader question of the provision of a parliamentary data and video network to Members' offices. Proposals on this subject, which are currently under consideration by the Information Committee, are not expected to come before the House until the beginning of 1994 at the earliest.

Members' Employees

Mr. Allen: To ask the Lord President of the Council how many employees of hon. Members are paid out of the office costs allowance; and how many hon. Members have given their employees a contract of employment.

Mr. Newton: At 30 September 1993, 1,656 employees of hon. Members were directly paid salaries which were charged to the employing Members' office costs allowance. A total of 617 hon. Members have given one or more of their employees a contract of employment.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Lord President of the Council how many individuals currently in receipt of employee payments from the office costs allowance are married or otherwise related to current hon. Members.

Mr. Newton: This information is not available.

Mr. Allen: To ask the Lord President of the Council how many hon. Members have not yet given any of their staff a contract of employment; how many individual staff do not have contracts; what action he is taking to ensure contracts are provided; what sanction he has against hon. Members who refuse to issue contracts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: Twenty-four Members have not lodged a copy of the contract of employment in respect of any of their staff who are classified as employees.

Copies of contracts have not been sent to the Fees Office in respect of 264 employees of Members. The Fees Office continually monitors the position and periodically reminds hon. Members of their obligation to provide contracts.

I am not aware of any Members who have refused to issue contracts and I have no plans to make a statement.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Allen: To ask the Lord President of the Council how many parliamentary questions have been answered in the last 12 months with the statement that the required figures are not available.

Mr. Newton: This information is not in a readily available form and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Inhumane Weapons

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many states have made representations to his Department with regard to the holding of a conference to review the inhumane weaspons convention.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We are in touch with EC and NATO partners about the proposal to convene a review conference on the United Nations weaponry convention, but no states have so far made representations to us on this issue.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list those states that have *(a)* signed and *(b)* ratified the 1977 additional protocols to the Geneva conventions.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The following states have ratified, accepted or acceded to additional protocol I to the Geneva conventions:

Albania
Algeria
Angola
Antigua and Barbuda
Argentina
Armenia
Australia
Austria
Bahamas
Bahrain
Bangladesh
Barbados
Belgium
Belize
Benin
Bolivia
Botswana
Brazil
Brunei Darussalam
Bulgaria
Burkina
Burundi
Byelorussia
Cameroon
Canada
Central African Republc
Chile
China
Colombia
Comoros Islands
Congo
Costa Rica
Croatia
Cuba
Cyprus
Czechoslovakia
Denmark
Djibouti
Ecuador
El Salvador
Equatorial Guinea
Finland
Gabon
The Gambia
Germany
Georgia
Ghana
Greece
Guatemala
Guinea
Guinea Bissau
Guyana
Holy See
Hungary
Iceland
Italy
Ivory Coast
Jamaica
Jordan
People's Democratic Republic of Korea
Kuwait
Kyrgyzstan
Laos
Latvia
Liberia
Libya
Liechtenstein
Luxembourg
Macedonia
Madagascar
Malawi
Maldives
Mali
Malta
MauritaniaMauritius
Mexico
MoldovaMozambique
Namibia
The Netherlands
New Zealand
Niger
Nigeria
Norway
Oman
Paraguay
Peru
Poland
Portugal
Qatar
Romania
Russia
Rwanda
Samoa
Saudi Arabia
Senegal
Seychelles
Sierra Leone
Slovakia
Slovenia
Solomon Islands
Spain
St. Kitts and Nevis
St. Lucia
St. Vincent and the Grenadine
Suriname
Sweden
Switzerland
Syria
Tanzania
Togo
Tunisia
Turkmenistan
Uganda
Ukraine
United Arab Emirates
Uruguay
Uzbekistan
Vanuatu
Vietnam
Western Samoa
Yemen Arab Republic
Yugoslavia
Zaire

The following states have signed but not ratified additional protocol I:

Egypt
Honduras
Iran
Ireland
Mongolia
Morocco
Nicaragua
Pakistan
Panama
Philippines
San Marino
United Kingdom
United States.

The following states have ratified, accepted or acceded to additional protocol II:

Albania
Algeria
Antigua and Barbuda
Argentina
Armenia
Australia
Austria
Bahamas
Bahrain
Bangladesh

Barbados
Belgium
Belize
Benin
Bolivia
Botswana
Brazil
Brunei Darussalam
Bulgaria
Burkina
Burundi
Byelorussia
Cameroon
Canada
Central African Republic
Chile
China
Comoros Islands
Congo
Costa Rica
Croatia
Czechoslovakia
Denmark
Djibouti
El Salvador
Equatorial Guinea
Finland
France
Gabon
The Gambia
Germany
Georgia
Ghana
Greece
Guatemala
Guinea
Guinea Bissau
Guyana
Holy See
Hungary
Iceland
Italy
Ivory Coast
Jamaica
Jordan
Kazakhstan
Republic of Korea
Kuwait
Kyrgyzstan
Laos
Latvia
Liberia
Libya
Liechtenstein
Luxembourg
Macedonia
Madagascar
Malawi
Maldives
Mali
Malta
Mauritania
Mauritius
Moldova
Namibia
The Netherlands
New Zealand
Niger
Nigeria
Norway
Oman
Paraguay
Peru
Philippines
Poland
Portugal
Romania
Russia
Somoa
Senegal
Seychelles
Sierra Leone
Slovakia
Slovenia
Solomon Islands
Spain
St. Kitts and Nevis
St. Lucia
St. Vincent and the Grenadines
Suriname
Sweden
Switzerland
Tanzania
Togo
Tunisia
Turkmenistan
Uganda
Ukraine
United Arab Emirates
Uruguay
Uzbekistan
Vanuatu
Western Samoa
Yemen Arab Republic
Yugoslavia

The following states have signed but not ratified additional protocol II:

Egypt
Honduras
Iran
Ireland
Mongolia
Morocco
Nicaragua
Pakistan
Panama
San Marino
United Kingdom
United States

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list those states that have *(a)* signed and *(b)* ratified the inhumane weapons convention.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The following states have ratified, accepted or acceded to the convention:

Australia, Austria, Benin, Bosnia-Hercegovina, Bulgaria, Byelorussia, China, Cuba, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Ecuador, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Hungary, India, Japan, Latvia, Laos, Liechtenstein, Mexico, Mongolia, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Niger, Norway, Pakistan, Poland, Russia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, Tunisia, Ukraine and Yugoslavia.

The following states have signed but not ratified the convention:

Afghanistan, Argentina, Belgium, Canada, Egypt, Iceland, Ireland, Italy. Luxembourg, Morocco, Nicaragua, Nigeria, the Philippines, Portugal, Romania, Sierra Leone, Spain, Sudan, Togo, Turkey, United Kingdom, United States and Vietnam.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has on how many states have made representations to the United Nations Secretary-General with regard to the holding of a conference to review the inhumane weapons convention.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Our information is that only France has made representations to the United Nations Secretary General to request the convening of a review conference on the United Nations weaponry convention.

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he expects that the United Kingdom will ratify the 1981 inhumane weapons convention.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: As I told the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) in my reply to his question on 22 October at column 371, we hope to reach a decision soon on ratification of the 1981 UN weaponry convention.

High Commission, Nairobi

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the cost of the construction of the new British High Commission office in Nairobi, Kenya; and when this work is expected to be completed.

Mr. Goodlad: The estimated outturn construction cost is £5·3 million and the High Commission is programmed to move into the new premises in summer 1995.

European Movement

Mr. Michael Spicer: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs to what extent the European Movement continues to receive funds from his Department.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The Foreign and Commonwealth Office gave the European Movement a grant of £30,000 in 1992 to fund a series of regional conferences on the Maastricht treaty. The European Movement will receive a grant of £10,000 this year. No commitment has been given for future years.

Gul Masih

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received on the case of Gul Masih, a Christian sentenced to death under the blasphemy laws in Pakistan; and what action he has taken.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: There has been considerable parliamentary and public interest in this case. While an appeal is pending and the case is sub judice, we have not taken any formal action. We have however on several occasions made clear informally to the Pakistani authorities the strength of feeling this case has aroused in the United Kingdom. We will consider what action we should take when the appeal has been heard.

Human Rights Week

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what support he has given to Amnesty International's Human Rights Week; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We take every opportunity to promote respect for human rights. We recognise Amnesty International's important role in identifying human rights abuses and bringing pressure to bear on governments which commit them. We welcome Amnesty International's efforts to highlight the obnoxious practices of political killings and disappearances.

Human Rights

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what changes have taken place in the procedures of the European Court of Human Rights and the European Commission of Human Rights since the Vienna declaration; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There have been no changes because discussions on reform of the procedures of the European Commission and Court of Human Rights are still in progress. The Vienna declaration called for the work on reform to be completed, and a draft protocol amending the European Convention on Human Rights to be finalised, in time for the Council of Europe ministerial meeting in May 1994. The United Kingdom will contribute fully to this process.

Chinese Regional Laws

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if the texts of regional law in China are available to his Department.

Mr. Goodlad: The texts of most Chinese regional laws are now published in Chinese and are freely available.

Anti-personnel Mines

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if the United Kingdom will support the United States resolution at the United Nations General Assembly calling for a moratorium on the export of anti-personnel mines; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We are in touch with the United States about their draft resolution but we will not be able to take a final position on it until we see the final text.

Israel Trade Boycott

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on discussions with the Arab States on moves to rescind the secondary and tertiary aspects of the Arab trade boycott of Israel.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We welcome the progress towards the relaxation of the secondary and tertiary boycotts. We hope that further progress can be made soon in light of recent developments in the peace process. We continue to urge Arab states to lift the boycott.

European Union

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs in what circumstances and when the style European Community will be replaced by the style European Union.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The European Communities, that is to say the European Community, the European Coal and Steel Community and Euratom, will remain in being after the Maastricht treaty enters into force. They are not replaced by the European Union. No decisions have yet been taken on where it may be appropriate to replace "European Communities" by "European Union" as a descriptive title.

Fee-paying Schools

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many officials in his Department have *(a)* children in fee-paying schools for whom Her Majesty's Government meet the bill because the officials are posted abroad and *(b)* children in fee-paying schools for whom Her Majesty's Government meet the bill

after the officials have returned because their children remain in the school; and if he will detail the cost for the last 15 years for each of these two categories.

Mr. Goodlad: In the time available it has not been possible to retrieve all of the information requested. I shall write to the hon. Member in due course with the balance of the information.

In academic year 1992-93:

(a) 313 officials of the Diplomatic Service serving overseas had children in fee-paying schools in the United Kingdom, plus an unquantifiable number who had children educated locally at post. The cost was £3·9 million in the United Kingdom and £2 million overseas.

(b) 182 diplomatic service officials serving in the United Kingdom had children in fee-paying schools. The cost was £3·93 million.

The comparable figures for the three previous years, are as follows:

1991-92	*(a)*	340, £3·91 million, £1·78 million
	(b)	200, £3·75 million
1990-91	*(a)*	374, £3·88 million, £1·67 million
	(b)	223, £3·65 million
1989-90	*(a)*	390, £3·55 million, £1·57 million
	(b)	240, £3·54 million

This breakdown does not exist for earlier years, in which the total cost for *(a)* boarding school allowance and *(b)* local education was:

	(a) Boarding school allowance (£ million)	*(b) Local education (£ million)*
1988-89	7·08	1·53
1987-88	7·03	1·5
1986-87	6·81	1·3
1985-86	6·44	1·19
1984-85	6·24	1·22
1983-84	5·94	1

The Overseas Development Administration has five officials serving overseas who have children in fee-paying schools in the United Kingdom. The cost in 1992-93 was £45,228·77. One official serving in the United Kingdom has children in a fee-paying school and the cost was £15,620·00. For earlier years the costs were:

	United Kingdom (£)	*Overseas (£)*
1991-92	2,093	63,170·81
1990-91	nil	65,879·69
1989-90	38,694·67	86,247·82

We do not "meet the bill" for schools in the United Kingdom. Her Majesty's Government make a contribution towards the basic fees, up to a ceiling which is based on the average fee of headmasters' conference schools.

Iraq

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the agreement reached between Mr. Ekeus as special representative for the United Nations Security Council and the Iraqi Government on 22 July in regard to implementation of United Nations Security Council resolutions in Iraq.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Security Council members, including the United Kingdom, have expressed support for Mr. Ekeus's actions. The Security Council, and UNSCOM, will continue to press for sustained Iraqi implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions.

Population Control, China

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he expects the citizens of Hong Kong to be forced to comply with Chinese legislation implementing or specifying *(a)* the need to obtain permission to marry, *(b)* the one-child policy, *(c)* the legal obligation to have an intra-uterine device inserted in the woman after one child, *(d)* the obligation for one of the partners in a marriage to be sterilised after the birth of a second child and *(e)* the obligation to abort any subsequent pregnancy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: No. The Sino-British joint declaration, a legally binding agreement registered at the United Nations, provides that Hong Kong's present rights and freedoms, including the freedom to marry and the right to raise a family freely, will be maintained. In general Chinese laws will not be applied to Hong Kong.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if China is a signatory to any United Nations statement guaranteeing freedom to marry and the right to raise a family freely; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: Yes. China has signed the convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women, which is a legally binding document. We have consistently urged the Chinese authorities to sign other relevant conventions and covenants, including the international convention on civil and political rights (ICCPR) and the international covenant on economic and social rights (ICESR), and to improve their human rights performance generally.

ENVIRONMENT

Bears

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many import permits have been allowed over the last three years for products derived from *(a)* Asiatic black bears, *(b)* any other bear listed under appendix 1 of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species and *(c)* any bear listed under appendix 2 of CITES.

Mr. Yeo: No import permits have been issued in the last three years for products derived from the Asiatic black bear —Selenarctos thibetanus—or any other species of bear listed in appendix I of CITES. Seventy-four import permits have been issued for products derived from species of bears listed in appendix II of CITES.

Living Space

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the average domestic living space available for each individual in the United Kingdom; what are the comparable figures for other EC countries, for the latest year for which figures are available; and what were the comparable figures 10 years earlier.

Sir George Young: Our most recent estimate, based on the 1991 census, the 1991 English, Scottish and Northern Ireland house condition surveys and the 1986 Welsh house condition survey, is that the average domestic living space available to each individual in the United Kingdom is 32 sq. m. Comparable figures for other EC countries and for 10 years earlier are not available.

Landlords

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many private sector landlords are approved landlords.

Sir George Young: None: my Department has no power to approve landlords.

National Rivers Authority

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will call for a report from the National Rivers Authority as to how many staff are employed at its Northumbria office; what their functions are; what plans there are for reductions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: No. The questions raised by the hon. Member concern the internal management of the NRA, and are a matter for the board.

PSA (Civil Servants)

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many civil servants, previously employed by the Property Services Agency, have now taken redundancy following the sale of PSA Noreast; and what was the cost of the redundancies.

Mr. Baldry: There have been eight redundancies to date as a result of the sale of PSA BM Noreast. The estimated cost of these redundancies is £212,000.

A further seven members of staff employed by PSA BM Noreast, who had earlier agreed to leave on voluntary redundancy terms, have left since 1 October 1993 at an estimated cost of £378,000.

Wind Farms

Mr. Renton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consideration he has given to the environmental impact of wind-farms on beautiful landscapes; and if he will withdraw the subsidy for the generation of electricity by wind turbines situated on high ground.

Mr. Yeo: The Government's policy is to encourage the development of renewable energy wherever it has the prospect of being economically attractive and environmentally acceptable. Planning policy guidance note 22 sets out the Government's planning policies on renewable energy in more detail and advises that local planning authorities must always weigh the desirability of exploiting a clean, renewable energy resource against the visual impact which wind turbines may have on the landscape. We believe it is better to leave it to the local planning authority to determine the suitability of different sites for wind turbines rather than to build site-related provision into the non-fossil fuel obligation arrangement.

Local Government Review

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what advice or guidance has been given to the Local Government Commission concerning the possible creation of new local authorities which straddle the commission's review areas.

Mr. Baldry: In drafting its final report to my right hon. Friend, in respect of a particular review, the Commission should make recommendations only in respect of the area specified by him in his direction to it.

The procedure guidance issued to the Commission in July 1992 provides that:

"where the Commission judges it necessary, at any stage of a review, to make recommendations concerning localities bordering on that area, it should make a formal request to the Secretary of State, with reasons, for a variation in the direction requiring the review to be conducted."

Military Bases (Closures)

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what advice he is giving to local planning authorities on how to deal with the closure of large military bases in their areas; what plans he has to introduce a planning policy guidance not on this subject; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: Local planning authorities should take account of such bases in preparing their development plans, and consider producing site development briefs where appropriate. Circular 18/84 advises on the disposal of surplus Crown land.

Waste Disposal

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made by his Department to date in developing a national plan for waste.

Mr. Yeo: The Government have indicated the need for some form of national waste policy summary when the Environment Agency has been established, to replace the waste disposal plans currently drawn up by waste regulation authorities. We are considering the timing and content of such a policy summary.

Ordnance Survey

Sir Anthony Durant: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what financial profit or loss to the Ordnance Survey will arise from its three-year contract with Her Majesty's Land Registry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: The information is commercial-in-confidence. However, the pricing of the bid complied with Her Majesty's Treasury and Cabinet Office guidance and was compiled on a fully commercial basis.

Thermal Oxide Reprocessing

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what permission has been given to interested foreign organisations and individuals to submit their response to the second consultation on the thermal oxide reprocessing plant authorisations in their native language, and on what dates; in what foreign languages submissions have been received; what arrangements have been made to

translate these submissions; how long this has taken; at what cost; and if he will summarise the foreign submissions in regard to whether they expressed support or opposition to Thorp.

Mr. Yeo: Foreign organisations or individuals have not sought permission to submit responses in their native language. Responses to the consultation are being counted and assessed. Information about the responses will be made available once they have all been considered.

Homelessness

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing for each local authority in south-east Northumberland the number of persons accepted as homeless in each year since 1979.

Sir George Young: For the information for the years 1979 to 1991 inclusive, I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Angus, East (Mr. Welsh) on 17 June 1992 at columns *569-70*

The information for 1992 for local authorities in south-east Northumberland is as follows:

Households accepted as homeless in 1992[1]

	Number
Blyth Valley	330
Castle Morpeth	[2]24
Wansbeck	317

[1] Excluding intentionally homeless households.
[2] Castle Morpeth only reported figures for two quarters.

City Challenge

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many current city challenge authorities have developed exit strategies.

Mr. Yeo: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 22 July 1993 at column *347*.

Council Tax

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many appeals are currently outstanding regarding the council tax.

Mr. Baldry: As at 30 September 1993, 580,721 proposals for the alteration of the valuation list were outstanding in England.

Housing, Lancashire

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what provisions have been made to assist authorities with clearance procedures for new housebuilding; and if he will list what help has been given to each local authority in Lancashire.

Sir George Young *[holding answer 22 October 1993]:* I shall write to the hon. Member following my meeting with him and other members of the Bishop of Burnley's delegation on Monday 25 October to discuss the Lancashire housing inquiry panel's recent report on housing in Lancashire.

Sour Gas

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the power stations in England and Wales which have been authorised to use sour gas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: I have been asked to reply.

Section 14(2) of the Energy Act 1976 requires that notice be given to me of any proposals to enter into contractual or other arrangements to obtain a supply of gas as fuel for a power station. I am empowered under section 14(3) to direct that any proposal of which I am notified should not be carried out, or should be carried out in accordance with specified conditions.

There is no requirement for the notice to distinguish between sour and other gas. However, the following proposals have been notified under section 14(2) which may involve sour gas. I have not given any directions under section 14(3) preventing or modifying them.

Peterhead (North of Scotland Hydro Electric Board)—1,550 Mw
Kelt, Ryedale (Kelt (UK) Limited)—50 Mw
Connah's Quay, Clwyd (PowerGen)—1,350 Mw

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

Yugoslavia

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the latest position regarding humanitarian aid to the former Yugoslavia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[pursuant to his reply, 18 October 1993, c. 103]:* The total of Britain's financial commitments for humanitarian aid to the former Yugoslavia is £141 million, not £152 million as stated.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Justices' Clerks

Mr. Tracey: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what are the judicial responsibilities currently performed by the holders of the office of justices' clerk.

Mr. John M. Taylor: Justices' clerks, or upon delegation, any court clerks, have certain quasi-judicial functions in relation to family cases. In criminal cases, some essentially administrative functions formerly exercised by a single justice have been delegated to justices' clerks or on their delegation to court clerks.

Mr. Tracey: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department (1) what assessment he has made of the effects of the White Paper "A New Framework for Local Justice" on the independence of justices' clerks when advising magistrates in relation to their judicial duties otherwise than in individual cases;

(2) what assessment he has made of the effects of the White Paper "A New Framework for Local Justice" on the independence of justices' clerks in the performance by them of their judicial responsibilities.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Lord Chancellor and I have considered carefully the implications of the White Paper,

studied the views put forward by various bodies, and taken note of the effects of the reforms in those areas where the changes have already been introduced. We are satisfied that the changes will not interfere with judicial independence and we shall emphasis this by including in legislation a provision which makes clear that justices' clerks and other court staff are not liable to direction in respect of the legal advice given to magistrates in court.

Alzheimer's Disease

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what plans he has to review the legal position of Alzheimer's disease sufferers who are unable to grant power of attorney to relatives or who have no close relatives; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Law Commission is reviewing the law and procedures relating to decision-making on behalf of mentally incapacitated adults.

Probate Registry

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will make a statement on the future of the Probate Registry, Cardiff-road, Llandaff, Cardiff, subsequent to the removal of the registry to the new county court complex.

Mr. John M. Taylor: There are no plans to change in any way the status or operation of Llandaff district probate registry following its relocation at the new county court complex currently being built.

Courts and Legal Services Act

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department when he intends to bring into force section 13 of the Courts and Legal Services Act 1990.

Mr. John M. Taylor: It is intended to bring section 13 of the Courts and Legal Services Act 1990 into effect at the end of 1994.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Whiskies

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many people and/or jobs are involved directly or indirectly in *(a)* the whisky and *(b)* the whiskey industry in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Nelson: I regret the information is not available. The standard industrial classification does not separately identify the whisky or whiskey industries from other industries involved in spirit distilling and compounding.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer by what percentage per capita consumption of *(a)* all alcoholic drinks and *(b)* whisky or whiskey has changed in the United Kingdom since 1979.

Sir John Cope: The following figures relate to expenditure by domestic consumers and exclude business expenditure. Consumption per capita of all alcoholic drinks declined in real terms by 6 per cent. between 1979 and 1992. Figures relating to whisky and whiskey are unavailable for years prior to 1984. Consumption per capita for whisky and whiskey combined fell in real terms by 21 per cent. between 1984 and 1992. Separate figures for whisky and whiskey are unavailable.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the sale of whisky and whiskey in the United Kingdom at the last date for which figures are available expressed as a percentage of the figure for 1979.

Sir John Cope: Figures for sales of whisky and whiskey for years prior to 1984 are unavailble. Between 1984 and 1992 sales of whisky and whiskey combined rose from £1,561 million to £2,053 million at current market prices. This represents an increase of 32 per cent. Expressed in terms of constant 1990 prices, expenditure on whisky and whiskey combined fell by 19 per cent. from £2,105 million in 1984 to £1,704 million in 1992. These figures relate to expenditure by domestic consumers and exclude business expenditure.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the average retail cost of a 70 cl bottle of Scotch whisky in *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* each of the other EC states and *(c)* the United States of America.

Mr. Nelson: In September 1993 the retail prices index sample gave an average price £10·94 for a 70 cl bottle of whisky in the United Kingdom. Scotch whisky is not specified in the RPI sample which is mainly made up of blended brands. The information for *(b)* and *(c)* can be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what were the total earnings from export of *(a)* whisky and *(b)* whiskey, distilled in Northern Ireland for each year since 1979.

Mr. Nelson: I regret that trade figures are not available for production from different parts of the United Kingdom, and whiskey distilled in Northern Ireland is therefore not separately distinguished. The value of exports of whisky from the United Kingdom as a whole in each year is as follows.

	£ million
1979	710
1980	748
1981	787
1982	875
1983	864
1984	937
1985	1,001
1986	1,075
1987	1,142
1988	1,298
1989	1,480
1990	1,727
1991	1,853
1992	1,981

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the actual and percentage change in the duty imposed on a 70 cl bottle of whisky since 1979.

Sir John Cope: The following is the information:

Date of change	*Alcohol duty on 70 cl spirits (40 per cent. above)* £	*Per cent. change from previous rate*
27 March 1980	3·32	13·7
11 March 1981	3·81	14·6
10 March 1982	4·05	6·4

Date of change	Alcohol duty on 70 cl spirits (40 per cent. above) £	Per cent. change from previous rate
16 March 1983	4·25	5·0
14 March 1984	4·33	1·9
20 March 1985	4·42	1·9
20 March 1990	4·86	10·0
19 March 1991	5·31	9·3
10 March 1992	5·55	4·5

Total change in duty since 1979 is 90 per cent. as compared with 135 per cent. in the general RPI.

Wine

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the volume of wines imported from *(a)* countries within the EC and *(b)* countries outside the EC at the last year for which figures are available, expressed as a percentage of the figure for 1979.

Mr. Nelson: The available information on the physical volume of trade in wines, separately distinguishing countries which are now members of the European Community, is as follows:

	Volume in 1992 as percentage of volume in 1979
EC members	148
Other countries	225

Alcohol Duties

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what consideration he has given to basing the excise duty on wine, beers and spirits on alcohol content and not category of beverage; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Cope: No Government have ever accepted that relative alcoholic strength should be the sole determining factor for setting duty rates. Unitary taxation would greatly limit my right hon. and learned Friend's room for manoeuvre on fiscal policy, by removing the flexibility to take account of other factors.

Alcohol Contents

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the alcohol contents of *(a)* a single measure of whisky or whiskey and *(b)* a glass of wine as sold in public houses in England and Wales; and what is the excise duty imposed in each case.

Sir John Cope: Following is the information:

	Alcohol content (millilitres)	Excise duty (pence)
Spirits measure (1/6 gill at 40 per cent. abv)	9·5	18·8
Glass of wine (12·5 cl at 11·5 per cent. abv)	14·4	16·5

Wheel Clamping

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of contributions made to the Exchequer by companies involved in wheel clamping.

Mr. Dorrell: I regret that information is not available. The classification of companies for direct and indirect taxation does not permit wheel clamping companies to be identified separately.

VAT

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how his Department has calculated the effect on carbon dioxide emissions of the imposition of VAT on fuel; and what proportion of the reduction of carbon dioxide emissions will fall on *(a)* domestic fuel supplies and *(b)* industrial and other supplies.

Sir John Cope: I refer the hon. Member to the memorandum submitted by Her Majesty's Treasury to the House of Commons Treasury and Civil Service Committee's inquiry into the March 1993 Budget—TCSC 4th Report, 1992-93 session, March 1993 Budget, Cmnd 5788.

EC Contributions

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer under what provisions the United Kingdom is required to increase its gross national product percentage contribution to the EC; and by what date any necessary legislation is required to be passed.

Sir John Cope: The Edinburgh European Council agreed, as part of its conclusions on the Community's finances over the period to 1999, that the current ceiling of 1·2 per cent. of EC GNP on the Community's own resources should remain in force until 1994; and that the ceiling should then rise to 1·21 per cent. of EC GNP in 1995 and by gradual steps thereafter to 1·27 per cent. in 1999. In order to give effect to this agreement from 1 January 1995, it will be necessary to amend the Community's own resources decision—88/376/EEC, Euratom—and for the amended decision to be adopted by the member states. In the case of the United Kingdom, adoption would mean amending section 1(2) of the European Communities Act, 1972. The member states' actual contributions to the EC budget are determined in the annual budgetary procedure, within the ceiling in force.

Income Tax

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the revenue raised by *(a)* an increase of 1p on income tax across all bands of income tax and *(b)* the sums resulting from such an increase on each individual band of income tax.

Mr. Dorrell: At 1994-95 levels of income and assuming statutory indexation of allowances and the basic rate limit with the lower rate band set at £3,000 as announced in the March 1993 Budget the full-year yields are as follows:

	£ million[1]
1p increase in the lower rate	100
1p increase in the basic rate	1,800
1p increase in the higher rate	450
1p increase in each rate	2,350

[1] The figures include consequential effects on the yield from capital gains tax and the figure for the lower rate includes the effects of the change on advance corporation tax and on consequent liability to mainstream corporation tax.

Taxation

Mr. Mandelson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what were the sums of money actually collected by the Inland Revenue for the fiscal years 1988-89, 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92, in *(a)* capital gains tax, *(b)* inheritance tax, *(c)* corporation tax and *(d)* dividend withholding tax.

Mr. Dorrell: Information on tax receipts by head of tax can be found in table 1·2 of "Inland Revenue Statistics 1993". There is no dividend withholding tax.

Mr. Mandelson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what were the sums of money reclaimed and paid to foreign trusts, persons and companies, from dividend withholding tax for the fiscal years *(a)* 1988-89, *(b)* 1989-90, *(c)* 1990-91 and *(d)* 1991-92.

Mr. Dorrell: The United Kingdom does not have a dividend withholding tax.

Bankruptcies

Mr. Mandelson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the total sum of money owed to the Treasury as a result of personal and corporate bankruptcies and liquidations for each of the fiscal years 1988-89, 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92.

Mr. Dorrell: The total sum of money owed to the Treasury as a result of personal and corporation bankruptcies and liquidations covering the fiscal years 1988-89, 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92 is as follows:

(£ thousand)

Year	*Inland Revenue*	*Customs and Excise*
1988	469,500	173,800
1989	375,540	151,800
1990	393,946	190,300
1991	631,698	514,200
1992	1,308,826	751,700

The figures for the Inland Revenue are for the accounts year which ends on 31 October each year and the figures for Customs and Excise are for the calendar year.

Taxation

Mr. Mandelson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps his Department has taken to examine the tax position of unincorporated bodies receiving funds from bank accounts in offshore tax havens; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: An unincorporated body which is resident in this country is liable to United Kingdom tax on its worldwide income, on which it makes returns. The Inland Revenue subjects a proportion of total returns to detailed inquiry, which may involve the examination of foreign source income.

Mr. Mandelson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimates he has made of the number of United Kingdom persons, individual and corporate, who have set up trusts and companies offshore since 1980; and if he will place all such estimates in the Library.

Mr. Dorrell: I regret that information on which to base such an estimate is not available.

Mr. Mandelson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many cases which have been investigated by the Inland Revenue and are currently being investigated by the Serious Fraud Office and by the Metropolitan police and regional fraud squads, involve the use of offshore tax havens in the perpetration of the suspected fraud.

Mr. Dorrell: Figures are not available.

Jet Engine Fuel

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to impose taxation upon jet engine fuel.

Sir John Cope: Decisions on changes in taxation are a matter for the Budget statement.

Tax Avoidance

Mr. Mandelson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will list, by date, each study into tax avoidance via offshore ownership made by the Inland Revenue or the Treasury, or on behalf of his Department, since 1984; and if he will place all such studies and reports in the Library;

(2) what reports have been compiled by the Treasury and the Board of the Inland Revenue into tax avoidance and evasion via offshore trusts and companies since 1985; and if he will place those reports in the Library.

Mr. Dorrell: Whilst developments in this area are kept under constant review, no reports or studies have been produced for publication.

Foreign Landowners

Mr. Mandelson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his Department's estimate of the acreage of land in England and Wales owned by foreign companies and trusts.

Mr. Dorrell: No figures are held on which such an estimate could be based.

Composting Plants

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy to offer tax incentives to encourage investment in commercial composting and anaerobic digestion plants.

Mr. Dorrell: The hon. Member would not expect me to make a statement on taxation matters at this time of year.

Prime Ministers

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proposals he has to change the severance payments for Prime Ministers under the Ministerial and other Pensions and Salaries Act 1991; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Portillo: Section 4 of the Ministerial and other Pensions and Salaries Act 1991 excludes Prime Ministers from receiving a severance payment under the Act.

There are no proposals to change this arrangement.

Foreign Trusts

Mr. Mandelson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the number of persons, trusts or corporations resident in the United Kingdom, who are the beneficiaries of trusts set up abroad; and if he will place in the Library all reports by his Department into the above matter since 1983.

Mr. Dorrell: I regret that information on which to base the estimate requested in the first part of the question could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. No reports have been published on matters concerning the second part of the question.

Offshore Sterling Deposits

Mr. Mandelson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the average level of sterling deposits, governmental and cash, held in *(a)* Switzerland, *(b)* Luxembourg, *(c)* Liechtenstein, *(d)* Monaco, *(e)* Jersey, *(f)* Guernsey, *(g)* the Isle of Man, *(h)* Bermuda, *(i)* Bahamas, *(j)* the British Virgin Islands and *(k)* the Cayman Islands; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nelson: The most recent published figures for sterling deposits in Jersey, Guernsey, the Isle of Man, the British Virgin Islands and the Cayman Islands are as follows:

	£ billion
Jersey	21·9
Guernsey	9·2
Isle of Man	8·0
British Virgin Islands	nil
Cayman Islands	3·1

Figures for Switzerland, Luxembourg, Liechtenstein, Monaco, Bermuda and the Bahamas are not available in the form requested.

Mr. Mandelson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate for the volume of cash transferred to tax havens abroad from the United Kingdom which appears to be associated with fraud, for each year since 1988.

Mr. Dorrell: Reliable estimates cannot be made.

Mr. Mandelson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimates he has for capital remittances made for profits and gains in the United Kingdom, to companies and trusts in Jersey, Guernsey, Isle of Man, Bermuda, Bahamas, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Monaco and Switzerland, for each of the fiscal years since 1985.

Mr. Dorrell: I regret that information on which to base such an estimate is not available.

Jet Engine Fuel

Rev. William McCrea: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans the Government have to impose taxation upon jet engine fuel.

Sir John Cope: Decisions on changes in taxation are a matter for the Budget statement.

National Savings

Mr. Loyden: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the future of national savings.

Mr. Nelson: I meet the Director of Savings regularly. National Savings continues to play an important role in the Government's funding programme, and in providing opportunities for the public to invest in savings products.

Privatised Utilities

Mr. Hain: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if, for each privatised utility, he will publish information, for the latest year available, in respect of *(a)* total Government holding, expressed as a percentage of the utilities' share, and *(b)* the current value of the Government holding.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 22 October 1993]:* The table shows the ordinary shares held by the Government in the privatised utility companies as a percentage of issued share capital and by market valuation.

Government shareholdings in privatised utility companies

Company	*Shareholding as a proportion Per cent.*	*Value of share-holding (£ million)*
British Gas	0·0	0·2
BT	1·1	304·9
Anglian Water	0·9	14·4
Northumbrian Water	0·4	1·8
North West Water	0·8	15·3
Severn Trent	1·0	20·3
Southern Water	0·7	7·4
South West Water	0·1	0·7
Thames Water	0·9	20·0
Welsh Water	0·7	6·6
Wessex Water	0·5	4·1
Yorkshire Water	0·8	8·7
Eastern Electricity	1·7	26·9
East Midlands Electricity	1·1	14·6
London Electricity	1·1	14·9
Manweb	1·8	14·1
Midlands Electricity	1·4	18·5
Northern Electric	1·7	13·1
Norweb	1·6	17·7
Seeboard	2·0	17·0
Southern Electric	1·2	20·4
South Wales Electricity	1·4	9·2
South Western Electricity	1·9	14·2
Yorkshire Electricity	1·3	16·4
National Power	39·3	2,063·9
PowerGen	40·7	1,430·6
Scottish Hydro-Electric	3·4	53·4
Scottish Power	3·6	118·3
Northern Ireland Electricity	3·8	20·0

Note: Values of shareholdings calculated at close, 19 October.

Low Incomes

Sir Ralph Howell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 18 October, *Official Report*, column *14*, how many of the 23·2 million persons who have incomes of less than £100 per week are *(a)* students, *(b)* persons between 18 and 65 years of age, *(c)* pensioners and *(d)* males between 18 years and 65 years; and what is his estimate of the loss in revenue if none of these persons paid income tax.

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 22 October 1993]:* Of the estimated 23·2 million people who have incomes below £100 per week in 1993-94 about 1·2 million are aged 16 or 17, 15·7 million are aged between 18 and 65, of whom 5·2 million are males, and 6·3 million are aged 65 or over.

The loss in revenue if none of these people paid income tax would be about £400 million.

PRIME MINISTER

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Prime Minister who is responsible for deciding the maximum permissible cost of answering a written parliamentary question; if that cost is different for different Departments; and how often that amount is reviewed.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

If an answer to any written question is likely to cost more than £450—the current cost threshold, calculated by the Treasury—the answering Minister will decide whether to refuse to answer on the ground of disproportionate cost, or whether to answer it whole or in part regardless of cost. This threshold, which applies to all Departments, is reviewed annually.

Cabinet Committees

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Prime Minister when he next proposes to issue the list of ministerial committees of the Cabinet.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

An updated list of the ministerial committees of the Cabinet, with their terms of reference and membership, will be published shortly.

Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Prime Minister what meetings the Minister for Social Security and Disabled People has had with the sponsors of the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill and representatives of the all-party disablement group in the House about the Government's response to the Bill and their alternative proposals since the Prime Minister's meeting with the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) and supporters of his Bill on 23 February; what was the date and duration of each meeting; and if he will publish the papers tabled for discussion at the meetings.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

There have been two meetings, on 25 March and 17 May, each lasting about an hour. No papers were tabled at either meeting.

Child Migrant Scheme

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Prime Minister if he will consider moving total responsibility for funding the Child Migrant Trust from the Department of Health in such a way as to ensure that the various Departments with present or previous responsibility for the child migrant scheme contribute towards to the cost of the trust's work.

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

Responsibility for child welfare transferred in 1971 from the Home Office to the Department of Health and the territorial Departments. We can see no advantage in changing the Government's responsibilities for funding this kind of activity in the way suggested.

Official Hospitality

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Prime Minister how much was spent on official hospitality in his Department in the financial year 1992-93.

Mr. Newton *[holding answer 20 October 1993]:* I have been asked to reply.

The expenditure by the Office of my right hon. Friend, the Prime Minister, on official hospitality in the financial year 1992-93 was £30,023. This is a reduction of £10,953 or 27 per cent. compared with 1991-92.

TRANSPORT

Speed Control

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 19 January, *Official Report*, column *175*, when he now expects the village speed control working group to publish its final report and recommendations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: Monitoring results from the individual trial sites are all expected to be received before the end of the year, and analysis is under way. A final report will now be made in spring 1994. In advance of the report, valuable lessons are already being learnt as the trials progress. The messages in the report will be disseminated widely to local highway authorities and other groups who have an interest in this area. To follow on from the village speed working group—VISP—I am planning a further series of trials of traffic calming measures for villages on trunk roads next year, starting with Thorney in Cambridgeshire.

Leasing Funds

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what criteria were used in the decision to allocate £150 million of leasing funds to British Rail; and what were the reasons that the money was allocated to Network SouthEast.

Mr. Freeman: The purpose of the £150 million leasing concession was to encourage the development of a leasing market for passenger trains. The decision to lease trains for Network SouthEast was made by British Rail on the ground that the business case for doing so was superior to that for trains for the west coast main line.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what plans he has for any further financing or leasing deals for British Rail similar to that recently awarded to Network Southeast;

(2) if he will permit British Rail to seek private financing for the leasing of rolling stock for the west coast main line.

Mr. Freeman: I will support further leasing proposals for the west coast main line, or any other route, provided they meet the Treasury's criteria for classification as an operating lease and they are good value for money.

West Coast Main Line

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what steps he will be taking, in conjunction with British Rail, to improve services on the west coast main line; and what plans he has for the modernisation of track and signalling on that route;

(2) if he will guarantee the future of the west coast main line as a high-speed route between London, Warrington and Glasgow.

Mr. Freeman: The Government fully appreciate the importance of modernising the west coast main line. British Rail has set aside funds for design work to renew the infrastructure. From April next year, following our reform of the railways, responsibility for infrastructure will pass to Railtrack. In the meantime, the Government have taken the initiative in appointing Hambros bank to devise proposals for a joint venture to renew the infrastructure on the west coast main line. This is a new departure in the private finance initiative for railways. Instead of waiting for the private sector to come forward with proposals which may or may not be acceptable to the Government, Hambros has been tasked to find a solution which meets the Government's guidelines and will be attractive to the private sector. Hambros will be reporting later in the autumn.

Toll Roads

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will issue guidelines for the development of toll road proposals.

Mr. Key: Privately financed toll roads can be provided only in accordance with the New Roads and Street Works Act 1991, or by individual legislation. Guidelines on the Act were contained in a circular that was issued to local authorities by the Department of Transport and the Welsh Office in March 1992. Evaluation of a prospective concessionaire's proposals will be a matter for the highway authority, but under the 1991 Act, a statement must be published with a draft toll order, setting out the key points of a concession agreement.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will ensure that toll road proposals are subject to adequate consultations on and evaluation at all key stages.

Mr. Key: Under the New Roads and Street Works Act 1991 the procedures for authorisation of a toll road are similar to those of the Highways Act 1980 that apply to publicly financed roads; there will therefore be a similar approach to public consultation and public inquiry. Any scheme which is taken forward by means of individual legislation would be subject to detailed scrutiny by Parliament.

Birmingham North Relief Road

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he intends to publish the results of the public consultation undertaken by Midland Expressway Ltd. in respect of the Birmingham north relief road.

Mr. Key: The results of the official public consultation exercise held in autumn 1991 are contained in the preferred route statement which was published on 3 March 1992, at the same time as the announcement of the signing of the concession agreement between the Secretary of State for Transport and Midland Expressway Ltd. The results of subsequent consultations with local authorities and other interested groups were included in the environmental statement which was published in June 1993.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consultation he proposes with Staffordshire local authorities in respect of those parts of the concession relating to the Birmingham north relief road agreement which deal with non-tolling matters.

Mr. Key: As with all major highway schemes there has been and will continue to be regular consultation with all affected local authorities throughout the development of the scheme.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals he has to ensure that the Birmingham north relief road would be available free of charge for traffic diverted to it.

Mr. Key: I have no such proposals. I see no possibility of road users being compelled to use the Birmingham northern relief road rather than the various alternative routes with which it will compete.

Disposable Nappies

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps Her Majesty's Government are taking to encourage parents to dispose hygienically of disposable nappies at lay-bys or motorway stops.

Mr. Key: My Department co-operates with the Tidy Britain Group in publicity to encourage the safe disposal of litter of all kinds.

South Coast Road Expenditure

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much his Department has spent over the last 10 years on maintenance and improvement of the A26 between Lewes and Newhaven, the A27 between Lewes and Polegate and the A259 between Newhaven and Seaford.

Mr. Key: Definitive figures for some elements of expenditure in the earlier part of the period in question cannot now be provided without substantial research of archived files. However, our records indicate that about £0·4 million was spent on maintenance and £0·3 million on improvement of this length of the A26. For the A27 trunk road between Lewes and Polegate, the figures are about £5·5 million for maintenance and £2·3 million for improvement. The A259 between Newhaven and Seaford is not a trunk road, and responsibility for it rests with East Sussex county council.

Motorway Surfaces

Mr. Page: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what have been the results of studies into the effectiveness of porous asphalt for motorway surfaces.

Mr. Key: Compared with other road surfacings currently in use, porous asphalt offers lower traffic noise and less spray from vehicles in wet conditions. The material has not so far proved as durable as conventional surfacings, there is an increased maintenance requirement and at present its use on roads carrying large numbers of heavy lorries is not advised.

Vehicle Safety

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport in what circumstances it is the policy of traffic examiners not to issue prohibition notices on vehicles with only one defect; and what is the rationale for this policy.

Mr. Key: The vehicle inspectorate (VI) is responsible for enforcing roadworthiness standards. Prohibitions are issued by VI examiners in accordance with a published categorisation of defects guide. There is no VI policy to waive a prohibition where only one defect has been found during an examination.

National Travel Survey

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to include journeys of one mile or under within the national travel survey.

Mr. Key: Information on journeys of under one mile have been collected on national travel surveys since they began in 1965. Only a few tables in the 1989-91 report exclude such journeys.

Goods Vehicles

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the number of heavy goods vehicles currently licensed in the 1·5 to 6 tonne range.

Mr. Key: For the purpose of vehicle excise duty (VED), a heavy goods vehicle is regarded as being a vehicle weighing more than 3·5 tonnes, VED rates for heavy goods vehicles are set in bands relating to the vehicle weight and axle configuration with the lowest band covering vehicles between 3·5 and 7·5 tonnes. At the time of the last vehicle census, in December 1992, there were 146,507 vehicles licensed in this band.

A1, Northumberland

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will make a statement on the progress of his plans to upgrade the A1 road in Northumberland to dual carriageway standard, giving the timetable for dualling each section, and the target date for completion of dualling the English section;

(2) if he will make a statement on further schemes for dualling or improving overtaking opportunities on the A1 road north of Morpeth.

Mr. Key: Two sections of dual carriageway have been completed and opened to traffic at Marshall Meadows and Browneside this year. Two schemes to complete the dualling of the Alnwick bypass are in preparation and a scheme to complete the continuous dualling between Newcastle and north of Alnwick is in the road programme.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport announced a review of the road programme in August. Further progress on the upgrading of the A1 will depend on potential schemes meeting environmental, economic and safety objectives, the overall availability of resources, and the relative claims of potential schemes elsewhere in the county.

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much funding has been allocated to date in upgrading the A1 in Northumberland; and if he will make a statement on the progress.

Mr. Key: Since 1970, in excess of £60 million at current prices has been spent on a comprehensive programme of upgrading the A1 in Northumberland. Currently there are three schemes in the programme valued at £25 million to complete the continuous dualling between Newcastle and north of Alnwick.

In addition two sections of dual carriageway have been completed and opened to traffic at Marshall Meadows and Browneside this year.

Vehicle Inspectorate

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give details and amounts of money paid by the DVLA to the vehicle inspectorate.

Mr. Key: In financial year 1992-93 DVLA paid £4,976 to the vehicle inspectorate, for inspections of vehicles involved in applications to transfer cherished vehicle registration marks.

Overseas Staff and Premises

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the cost for the current financial year of his Department having *(a)* premises and *(b)* personnel overseas; and what were the comparable figures for *(a)* 12, *(b)* 24, *(c)* 36 and *(d)* 48 months ago.

Mr. Norris: The information requested is not readily available in respect of personnel overseas before 1991-92 due to changes in the Department's accounting arrangements. The latest available figures are as follows:

Costs arising from premises overseas

Year	*£*
1989-90	75,000
1990-91	73,000
1991-92	79,000
1992-93	84,000
1993-94 outturn to September 1993	47,000

Costs arising from personnel overseas

Year	*£*
1991-92	421,700
1992-93	463,700
1993-94 outturn to September 1993	256,000

In addition, some Department of Transport staff are on loan to the FCO to serve overseas, but the costs are borne by the FCO: others are seconded to overseas Governments, but the costs are covered by those Governments.

Rail Privatisation

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what forecast he has made of how many passenger operating companies will operate, under his proposals for the privatisation of British Rail, through Brixton, Loughborough Junction, Herne Hill, West Norwood, Tulse Hill and Gipsy Hill.

Mr. Freeman: Each of these stations will be served by one franchisee, except for Herne Hill and Tulse Hill which will be served by two.

Lewes Link Lines

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how much his Department has spent on maintenance and improvement over the last 10 years on the Lewes to London, Lewes to Seaford and Lewes to Eastbourne railway lines.

Mr. Freeman: It is for British Rail to decide priorities for expenditure on maintenance and improvements to the network. In addition to routine maintenance, in April 1991 re-signalling and track improvements were carried out around Eastbourne station at a cost of £2 million, and the station refurbished at a cost of £840,000. Other major projects on the Sussex coast line in the last 10 years have included the renovation of the preserved station buildings at Lewes at a cost of £245,000, which is nearing completion; the recently completed installation of a new electrical control room at Brighton at a cost of £342,000; and the relaying of track lost in a landslide at Glynde in April 1991 at a cost of £10,000.

Bicycles (Carriage on Trains)

Mr. Bates: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has about the numbers of cycles carried by regional railways following the introduction of the £3 cycle fee.

Mr. Freeman: None. My Department does not hold detailed information of this nature.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Mining Industry

Mr. Allen: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how soon after the closure of the consultation period on the future of the mineworkers' pension scheme he will make a public statement as to that future; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The Government will give very careful consideration to all responses received on the consultation paper on British Coal pensions after privatisation. It is too early to say how soon conclusions will be reached but Parliament will of course be informed as soon as possible of the Government's proposals.

Nuclear Power Industry

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the timetable and terms of reference for the Government's review of policy for the future of the nuclear power industry; which Department will take the lead in this review; and what will be the role of the Scottish Office.

Mr. Eggar: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave on Wednesday 20 October to the hon. Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill) at column *245*.

Opencast Coal

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is his estimate of the total amount of coal available for opencasting in Northumberland and Durham.

Mr. Eggar: British Coal has informed me that, as at March 1993, total reserves of coal estimated to remain unworked in approved opencast sites in Northumberland, Durham and Tyne and Wear were 16,696 million tonnes.

Nuclear Power Stations

Mr. Dafis: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make it his policy to require the nuclear installations inspectorate to publish full safety reports upon the Bradwell, Hinkley A, Dungeness A and Sizewell A power stations.

Mr. Eggar: The Health and Safety Executive's nuclear installations inspectorate's findings on the long-term safety reviews for Bradwell, Hinkley Point A, Berkeley, Hunterston A, Calder Hall, and Chapelcross have already been published. Reports of the principal findings of the LTSRs for the remaining Magnox power stations will be published in due course. The NII also intends to publish a report on the generic issues arising out of the LTSRs early in 1994.

Coal Investment

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what amount of the £20 billion authorised investment by the Government in the coal industry since 1979 was invested in collieries which have since been closed or which are under threat of closure.

Mr. Eggar: The figure of £20 billion funding referred to represents deficiency and social grants to British Coal and payments under the redundant mineworkers payments scheme. The Government have authorised British Coal to spend nearly £8 billion on capital investment over the same period.

Investment at individual collieries is normally a matter for British Coal although grant approval is needed where capital expenditure exceeds £50 million on a single project. In the period concerned the only projects which came into this category were Selby—capital expenditure to date is about £1,500 million—and Asfordby—capital expenditure to date is about £250 million.

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what amount has been invested since 1979 in the collieries at *(a)* Taf Merthyr, *(b)* Deep Navigation, *(c)* Merthyr Vale, *(d)* Trelewis Drift and *(e)* Betws.

Mr. Eggar: Investment in individual collieries is a matter for British Coal.

Civil Servants

Mr. Byers: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many civil servants are working at the offices of his Department in Victoria street, London.

Mr. Eggar: My Department has 2,215 civil servants working at our offices in Victoria street.

Conversion Loans

Mr. Jonathan Evans: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of the continued appropriateness of his Department's covering of the exchange risks of companies that take European Coal and Steel Community conversion loans in foreign currencies rather than sterling.

Mr. Sainsbury: I have, in conjunction with my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland and Wales, thoroughly reviewed the exchange risk guarantee scheme, which is run jointly by my Department, the Scottish Office and the Welsh Office. This review has been based on the findings of independent evaluators who assessed the extent to which the scheme achieved its objectives at an acceptable cost. The evaluators found in the scheme no substantial benefits to set against its cost. The DTI, the Scottish Office and the Welsh Office will therefore cease to offer exchange risk cover on any new global loans made by the Commission to United Kingdom financial intermediaries from today.

Termination of the exchange risk guarantee scheme will not affect the availability of the ECSC conversion loans themselves, nor of the associated interest rate rebates related to job creation. The loans will continue to be available to United Kingdom firms, either in foreign currency at their own exchange risk or in sterling on similar terms. Existing global loans will continue to be eligible for cover to the extent that they are drawn down in foreign currencies.

I have today placed in the Library of the House copies of the independent evaluators' reports on the scheme.

South Africa

Mr. Jonathan Evans: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the future of the EC code of conduct for companies with interests in South Africa.

Mr. Needham: The EC Foreign Affairs Council announced on 4 October that the requirement for companies to report under the code has been discontinued. EC heads of mission will, however, be required to report annually on developments in the area of labour conditions with particular attention to equality of opportunity.

British Coal (Redundancies)

Mr. O'Neill: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to extend the present enhanced redundancy arrangements for British Coal employees beyond 31 December 1993.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 20 October 1993:]* I announced on 20 October that the Government had informed British Coal that they were prepared to extend its funding for the current redundancy terms for miners until 30 April 1994.

Nuclear Accidents

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps Her Majesty's Government have taken to establish an Anglo-Irish bilateral agreement with the Irish Republic for the transmission of information subsequent to a nuclear accident as proposed by European Commission opinion of 30 April 1992 on the thermal oxide reprocessing plant at Sellafield, as published in the *Official Journal* of the European Communities No. L138, 36-37, 21 May 1992.

Mr. Yeo: I have been asked to reply.

In addition to existing nuclear incident notification arrangements with the Irish authorities, a more formal bilateral agreement is being explored at regular meetings of United Kingdom and Irish officials.

EDUCATION

Outdoor Education Centres

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations he has received from the Central Council of Physical Recreation on the impact of education reforms on local education authority outdoor education centres.

Mr. Forth: None.

Schools

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many pupils are now being educated in grant-maintained schools; what is the number of grant-maintained schools in England and Wales; what is the percentage of secondary schools in England and Wales that are grant-maintained; and how many applications for grant-maintained status are outstanding and being considered by his Department.

Mr. Robin Squire: Grant-maintained schools in Wales are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales. The figures in this answer relate to England only.

About 480,000 pupils are now being educated in 693 self-governing (GM) schools. Fourteen per cent. of secondary schools are now self-governing. A further 61 schools have been approved for self-governing status but are not yet operating.

One hundred and thirty-six applications for self-governing status are under consideration in the Department, and proposals are awaited from a further 31 schools who have voted yes to self-governing status.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is *(a)* the total number of schools, *(b)* the number of county schools, *(c)* the number of voluntary-aided schools, *(d)* the number of grant-maintained schools which were formerly county schools and *(e)* the number of grant-maintained schools which were formerly voluntary-aided schools within the (i) primary and (ii) secondary sectors in each local education authority area.

Mr. Robin Squire *[holding answer 21 October 1993]:* The latest information on the status of maintained primary and secondary schools in each local education authority in England is shown in the table.

Maintained schools in each local education authority in England
October 1993

Local education authority	Primary schools					Secondary schools				
				Self-governing					Self-governing	
	All schools[1]	County schools	Voluntary aided schools	Formerly county	Formerly voluntary aided	All schools[1]	County schools	Voluntary aided schools	Formerly county	Formerly voluntary aided
Corporation of London	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Camden	41	20	21	0	0	12	5	5	0	2
Greenwich	79	62	17	0	0	15	10	4	0	0
Hackney	70	54	16	0	0	10	6	4	0	0
Hammersmith	39	25	14	0	0	10	4	5	0	1
Islington	57	41	16	0	0	9	6	3	0	0
Kensington and Chelsea	27	12	15	0	0	5	1	2	0	1
Lambeth	77	55	21	0	1	10	4	0	1	4
Lewisham	72	50	21	1	0	14	8	4	0	0
Southwark	76	52	23	0	1	14	7	3	1	3
Tower Hamlets	74	53	21	0	0	15	9	3	0	1
Wandsworth	72	51	19	2	0	11	4	1	4	2
Westminster	42	15	27	0	0	8	3	4	0	0
Barking	55	49	6	0	0	8	7	1	0	0
Barnet	89	58	29	2	0	21	10	4	4	3
Bexley	65	51	10	2	0	17	12	1	1	3
Brent	65	45	19	1	0	14	6	0	5	1
Bromley	78	61	10	1	1	17	6	0	9	2
Croydon	98	80	13	0	0	22	13	5	2	2
Ealing	92	78	12	2	0	13	6	2	5	0
Enfield	70	52	18	0	0	17	9	3	2	2
Haringey	77	56	20	0	0	9	7	2	0	0
Harrow	54	46	8	0	0	11	8	2	0	1
Havering	74	64	9	0	0	20	12	4	2	2
Hillingdon	74	54	10	7	2	17	5	1	10	1
Hounslow	63	54	9	0	0	14	9	1	0	2
Kingston upon Thames	36	21	14	0	0	10	6	0	1	1
Merton	49	39	10	0	0	12	7	3	0	0
Newham	67	56	9	0	0	15	11	3	1	0
Redbridge	56	47	9	0	0	14	11	1	1	0
Richmond upon Thames	39	24	15	0	0	8	7	1	0	0
Sutton	43	34	8	0	1	14	6	0	5	3
Waltham Forest	61	51	8	0	0	18	15	1	2	0
Birmingham	336	251	68	0	2	84	56	10	6	6
Coventry	111	81	25	0	0	19	15	3	0	0
Dudley	83	64	11	1	0	23	14	2	5	1
Sandwell	112	94	13	0	0	21	18	1	1	0
Solihull	70	46	19	1	0	14	12	2	0	0
Walsall	106	83	13	0	0	21	13	2	3	3
Wolverhampton	101	71	14	0	0	20	15	3	2	0
Knowsley	68	32	35	0	0	11	7	3	0	1
Liverpool	198	105	84	0	0	37	17	18	0	2
St. Helens	73	31	33	0	0	13	8	4	0	0
Sefton	94	43	45	0	0	23	16	5	0	0
Wirral	106	74	27	0	0	23	18	3	2	0
Bolton	105	55	38	1	0	18	11	3	1	1
Bury	71	34	24	0	0	15	11	4	0	0
Manchester	175	103	54	0	0	31	19	11	0	0
Oldham	104	62	34	0	0	16	12	4	0	0
Rochdale	76	40	22	2	0	14	10	3	1	0
Salford	88	44	29	0	0	21	14	6	0	0
Stockport	110	81	20	0	0	18	14	3	0	0
Tameside	82	50	22	0	0	20	14	3	3	0
Trafford	78	54	23	0	0	16	11	1	3	0
Wigan	125	38	74	0	0	23	14	6	0	0
Barnsley	96	73	15	0	0	15	13	0	0	0
Doncaster	128	106	17	0	0	34	32	2	0	0
Rotherham	115	96	16	0	0	19	16	1	0	0
Sheffield	165	141	19	0	1	32	30	0	0	2
Bradford	167	117	32	1	0	88	72	8	5	1
Calderdale	92	61	22	1	0	16	11	1	1	1
Kirklees	160	104	23	0	0	38	31	1	2	0
Leeds	249	178	49	0	1	47	38	8	0	1
Wakefield	130	102	17	0	0	39	32	3	0	0
Gateshead	82	62	19	0	0	13	11	2	0	0
Newcastle upon Tyne	82	59	23	0	0	22	19	3	0	0
North Tyneside	61	47	14	0	0	27	26	1	0	0
South Tyneside	59	40	12	0	0	11	9	2	0	0
Sunderland	106	87	18	0	0	17	14	3	0	0
Isles of Scilly	4	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0
Avon	368	234	42	0	0	61	50	5	2	0

Local education authority	Primary schools					Secondary schools				
				Self-governing					Self-governing	
	All schools[1]	County schools	Voluntary aided schools	Formerly county	Formerly voluntary aided	All schools[1]	County schools	Voluntary aided schools	Formerly county	Formerly voluntary aided
Bedfordshire	218	168	28	1	2	72	54	6	8	0
Berkshire	275	172	42	4	1	59	39	6	9	0
Buckinghamshire	290	203	33	6	0	45	29	2	7	0
Cambridgeshire	267	182	30	6	0	46	26	1	13	2
Cheshire	455	291	106	1	0	72	56	10	3	0
Cleveland	203	148	47	0	0	53	40	11	0	0
Cornwall	249	199	41	0	0	31	31	0	0	0
Cumbria	311	158	81	3	2	44	27	3	5	2
Derbyshire	451	309	54	5	1	61	39	5	11	0
Devon	443	292	75	0	0	65	55	4	4	1
Dorset	201	97	59	0	1	56	31	5	8	1
Durham	298	223	52	0	0	44	39	5	0	0
East Sussex	221	130	42	0	0	38	34	3	0	0
Essex	582	401	83	20	7	108	46	7	48	2
Gloucestershire	264	140	49	3	1	43	19	1	16	2
Hampshire	584	430	57	6	3	109	86	6	12	2
Hereford and Worcester	288	140	64	0	0	81	58	5	1	4
Hertfordshire	433	308	85	1	4	94	62	11	11	5
Humberside	354	259	29	1	0	64	55	5	0	0
Isle of Wight	46	25	9	0	0	21	17	2	0	0
Kent	578	361	77	5	4	151	78	8	39	8
Lancashire	605	242	300	0	1	111	69	20	2	4
Leicestershire	335	210	42	0	0	83	69	4	5	0
Lincolnshire	299	159	37	9	0	67	35	3	12	2
Norfolk	398	256	43	8	1	54	38	2	10	0
North Yorkshire	394	201	58	0	0	61	49	8	0	0
Northamptonshire	274	168	35	7	0	66	46	7	12	0
Northumberland	143	99	34	0	0	62	52	4	1	0
Nottinghamshire	426	339	51	0	0	85	68	10	3	0
Oxfordshire	241	98	51	0	1	44	37	3	0	0
Shropshire	215	106	30	0	0	41	30	2	4	1
Somerset	229	101	38	1	0	40	31	1	0	0
Staffordshire	415	251	74	0	0	88	69	8	3	1
Suffolk	255	153	28	0	0	77	68	4	0	0
Surrey	376	243	88	6	0	58	37	6	9	3
Warwickshire	244	132	40	0	0	39	23	6	8	0
West Sussex	246	154	44	0	0	44	31	9	0	0
Wiltshire	297	131	61	3	0	49	31	2	4	1
ENGLAND	18,971	12,232	3,740	121	39	3,831	2,688	418	361	97

[1] Includes county, voluntary aided, voluntary controlled, special agreement and self-governing (GM) schools.

National Curriculum

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) if he will give a breakdown of the membership of each of the committees which have been established to advise his Department about the national curriculum and associated matters; and if he will indicate in each case those representatives which have been appointed to represent the primary school sector;

(2) if he will make a statement giving details of his policy in connection with the level of representation of *(a)* the primary school sector and *(b)* the secondary school sector upon those committees which provide advice to his Department about the national curriculum and associated matters.

Mr. Robin Squire: The School Curriculum and Assessment Authority, under the chairmanship of Sir Ron Dearing, has the main responsibility for advising my right hon. Friend on the national curriculum and associated matters.

My right hon. Friend announced the authority's membership on 14 September. All 14 members have been appointed on the basis of their individual expertise and experience rather than as representatives. They include a teacher and a headteacher from the primary school sector, a college principal with wide experience of primary education, the headmaster of a seven to 18 school, three secondary heads and the headteacher of a special school.

Older Adult Learners

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make it his policy to place specific obligations upon the further education funding councils, further education colleges and local authorities concerning provision for older adult learners.

Mr. Boswell: Under the Further and Higher Education Act 1992, the further education funding councils and local education authorities are between them responsible for securing the provision of all kinds of further education for adults. The educational opportunities secured by the new structure of duties are available to all adult learners, including older adults, and earlier this year the Department for Education was pleased to sponsor a conference on older adults as part of Adult Learners' Week.

Primary Schools

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps he is taking to ensure that the primary school sector is fully and adequately represented on all committees established to advise his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: The main criterion for choosing the members of advisory bodies is the experience and expertise which they can contribute. When it is appropriate to do so my right hon. Friend will ensure that an advisory body includes members who have experience of primary education.

Opting Out

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if his Department will fund the organisation, Parents Opposed to Opting-Out; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Robin Squire: My right hon. Friend has received an approach from Parents Opposed to Opting-Out, and will be responding shortly.

Grant-maintained Schools Centre

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many staff are employed at the grant-maintained schools centre; and what plans he has to extend the size or role of the centre.

Mr. Robin Squire: There are currently 29 staff employed by the grant-maintained schools centre. The centre is a company limited by guarantee, which receives grant from the Department for certain specified purposes. The overall size of the centre is a matter for its directors. My right hon. Friend announced on 16 March at column *143* that additional grant would be made available to the centre to support the dissemination of factual information about grant-maintained status. For this purpose, regional advice centres are planned for Bolton, Kirklees, Birmingham and London, which will be grant-aided by the Department.

EDUCATION

Social Science and Arts

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many students embarked on a higher education social science or arts course in 1992; and how many have done so in the current year.

Mr. Boswell: In the academic year 1992-93 there were 56,000 students commencing post-graduate arts courses and 13,000 social science courses in England. A further 244,000 embarked on undergraduate courses, of these 197,000 were studying an arts subject and 47,000 social science. Comparable figures for 1993-94 are not yet available.

Special Needs

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the sum of money that each local authority spent on special educational needs in 1991-92 in the further education sector.

Mr. Boswell: The information requested is not collected centrally.

Spending Statistics

Sir David Knox: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how much was spent per *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary school pupil in each of the local authorities in England and, on average, in England as a whole in the most recent year for which figures are available; and what were the comparable figures in 1978-79 at constant prices.

Mr. Forth: Figures for expenditure on nursery and primary pupils are not collected separately. Spending per pupil by each English LEA and on average in nursery and primary schools combined and in secondary schools in 1978-79 and 1991-92 at 1992-93 prices is as shown in the table.

Unit cost per pupil 1992-93 prices

	1978-79		*1991-92*	
	Nursery and Primary £	*Secondary* £	*Nursery and Primary* £	*Secondary* £
ILEA	1,678	2,280	—	—
Corporation of London	—	—	2,609	0
Camden	—	—	1,943	2,432
Greenwich	—	—	1,830	2,296
Hackney	—	—	2,176	2,799
Hammersmith	—	—	2,047	2,739
Islington	—	—	2,328	2,938
Kensington	—	—	2,287	3,200
Lambeth	—	—	2,083	2,978
Lewisham	—	—	1,717	2,376
Southwark	—	—	1,828	2,460
Tower Hamlets	—	—	2,253	2,946
Wandsworth	—	—	2,212	3,275
Westminster	—	—	n/a	n/a
Barking	1,175	1,754	1,550	2,254
Barnet	1,180	1,748	1,674	2,326
Bexley	1,018	1,552	1,371	2,058
Brent	1,424	1,919	1,670	2,490
Bromley	1,085	1,659	1,443	2,442
Croydon	1,122	1,639	1,593	2,373
Ealing	1,371	1,818	1,754	2,836
Enfield	985	1,385	1,636	2,321
Haringey	1,390	1,793	1,927	2,650
Harrow	1,387	1,863	1,661	2,373
Havering	1,116	1,636	1,396	2,255
Hillingdon	1,127	1,692	1,661	2,625
Hounslow	1,166	1,653	1,567	2,161
Kingston-upon-Thames	1,136	1,575	1,543	2,473
Merton	1,239	1,564	1,723	2,622
Newham	1,393	1,759	1,671	2,470
Redbridge	1,049	1,656	1,489	2,308
Richmond upon Thames	1,169	1,591	1,738	2,114
Sutton	1,040	1,510	1,437	2,161
Waltham Forest	1,192	1,894	1,625	2,622
Birmingham	1,007	1,524	1,370	2,151
Coventry	1,068	1,496	1,300	2,116
Dudley	881	1,351	1,411	2,126
Sandwell	1,024	1,533	1,540	2,277
Solihull	957	1,435	1,352	2,126
Walsall	1,021	1,485	1,400	2,108
Wolverhampton	1,099	1,564	1,554	2,354
Knowsley	1,018	1,600	1,432	2,296
Liverpool	1,164	1,673	1,386	2,356
St. Helens	934	1,499	1,341	2,104
Sefton	965	1,421	1,313	2,017
Wirral	951	1,440	1,325	2,113
Bolton	929	1,415	1,380	2,132
Bury	973	1,396	1,302	1,900

	1978-79		1991-92	
	Nursery and Primary	Secondary	Nursery and Primary	Secondary
	£	£	£	£
Manchester	1,250	1,846	1,421	2,285
Oldham	948	1,393	1,582	2,261
Rochdale	1,057	1,591	1,310	2,134
Salford	982	1,505	1,299	2,192
Stockport	926	1,398	1,319	2,135
Tameside	1,001	1,466	1,419	2,100
Trafford	1,038	1,396	1,281	2,107
Wigan	954	1,485	1,257	2,288
Barnsley	1,082	1,519	1,374	2,043
Doncaster	1,275	1,382	1,323	1,997
Rotherham	1,001	1,468	1,465	2,151
Sheffield	1,136	1,589	1,476	2,181
Bradford	1,175	1,387	1,652	1,796
Calderdale	1,043	1,502	1,570	2,010
Kirklees	965	1,343	1,423	2,056
Leeds	1,166	1,225	1,642	1,979
Wakefield	1,052	1,371	1,494	2,113
Gateshead	1,102	1,496	1,562	2,117
Newcastle upon Tyne	1,326	1,762	1,646	2,066
North Tyneside	1,130	1,519	1,402	2,075
South Tyneside	1,253	1,569	1,435	2,041
Sunderland	1,063	1,522	1,427	2,047
Isles of Scilly	1,499	3,133	1,849	4,161
Avon	1,068	1,513	1,435	2,048
Bedfordshire	1,217	1,541	1,511	2,036
Berkshire	1,021	1,488	1,506	2,156
Buckinghamshire	1,018	1,608	1,358	2,095
Cambridgeshire	1,001	1,508	1,417	2,023
Cheshire	1,013	1,527	1,364	2,106
Cleveland	1,060	1,471	1,271	2,111
Cornwall	940	1,496	1,403	1,957
Cumbria	1,049	1,547	1,460	2,175
Derbyshire	976	1,457	1,452	2,199
Devon	951	1,452	1,394	2,004
Dorset	1,035	1,471	1,410	1,922
Durham	1,113	1,485	1,386	2,020
East Sussex	1,010	1,550	1,421	2,018
Essex	948	1,485	1,261	2,274
Gloucestershire	990	1,449	1,425	1,757
Hampshire	943	1,494	1,457	2,132
Hereford and Worcester	962	1,421	1,473	1,961
Hertfordshire	1,105	1,670	1,482	2,237
Humberside	1,057	1,457	1,422	2,065
Isle of Wight	1,043	1,393	1,488	1,937
Kent	957	1,491	1,263	2,075
Lancashire	923	1,452	1,535	2,225
Leicestershire	979	1,496	1,498	2,253
Lincolnshire	979	1,550	1,348	2,081
Norfolk	1,032	1,513	1,465	2,116
North Yorkshire	1,063	1,508	1,442	2,152
Northamptonshire	934	1,432	1,355	1,970
Northumberland	1,088	1,494	1,477	1,964
Nottinghamshire	985	1,480	1,625	2,492
Oxfordshire	1,060	1,485	1,635	2,108
Shropshire	934	1,505	1,497	2,349
Somerset	926	1,387	1,349	1,951
Staffordshire	1,068	1,544	1,397	2,045
Suffolk	1,054	1,373	1,250	1,698
Surrey	1,029	1,659	1,460	2,202
Warwickshire	948	1,466	1,338	2,090
West Sussex	934	1,435	1,338	2,085
Wiltshire	965	1,463	1,408	1,947
ENGLAND AVERAGE	988	1,429	1,469	2,145

Note:

1. N/a—Figures currently being reviewed by City of Westminster local education authority.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the average per-capita grant to grant-maintained schools in each year since 1989.

Mr. Robin Squire: The average per-capita recurrent grant to grant-maintained schools in each year since 1989 is as follows:

Financial year	Primary £	Secondary £
1989-90	Nil	1,970
1990-91	Nil	2,250
1991-92	1,800	2,400
1992-93	1,900	2,450

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what has been the level of funding from his Department to the grant-maintained schools centre for each financial year from 1988-89 to 1993-94; and for what purpose this funding is intended to be used.

Mr. Robin Squire: Since the establishment of the grant-maintained schools centre in 1988 the following grant has been provided by the Department:

	Grant (£000's)
1988-89	25
1989-90	250
1990-91	425
1991-92	600
1992-93	577
1993-94	[1]198

[1] Grant paid to date in 1993-94.

Grant is provided: to enable the GMSC to offer factual information and advice to schools about GM status (since March 1993); to support information and advice services for existing GM schools; and to underpin the work of the standing advisory committee for GM schools.

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the aggregate budget for grant-maintained schools in 1991-92 and 1992-93.

Mr. Robin Squire: The total amount of grants paid for grant maintained schools in 1991-92 and 1992-93 is as follows:

1991-92	1992-93
£181,900,000	£482,500,000

The bulk of this expenditure is annual maintenance grant which is recouped from the former maintaining authority.

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) what plans he has to compensate grant-maintained schools for the extension of value added tax on fuel;

(2) what is his Department's estimate of the proportion of the total budget for grant-maintained schools which will be spent on value-added tax after April 1994.

Mr. Robin Squire: It is the Government's policy that special purpose grant should compensate self-governing (grant maintained) schools for the VAT costs they incur. These are currently estimated at 2·5 per cent. of total annual maintenance grant. We will review the estimates in the light of any additional VAT costs placed on self-governing schools. If necessary we will adjust the rate of grant to ensure that self-governing schools are not disadvantaged in comparison with local education authority schools.

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the total amount spent on fuel by grant-maintained schools in 1991-92 and 1992-93.

Mr. Robin Squire: This information is available only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what proposals he has to fund regional offices of the grant-maintained schools centre; where these offices will be based; what criteria are to be used in deciding the location of regional offices; and how much is it proposed to spend on establishing them.

Mr. Robin Squire: My right hon. Friend is making grant available to the grant-maintained schools centre to establish and operate regional advice centres to disseminate factual information about grant-maintained status, in accordance with his reply of 16 March to the hon. Member for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs) at column *143*. The first advice centres are planned for Bolton, Kirklees, Birmingham and London. These locations were identified by the grant-maintained schools centre as the most suitable for the purposes of ensuring access to an advice centre for a majority of schools. The cost of establishing and operating the advice centres in 1993-94 is exptected to be approximately £140,000.

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the total amount of value added tax paid to the Treasury by grant-maintained schools in the financial years 1991-92 and 1992-93.

Mr. Robin Squire: This information is not collected centrally.

Funding Cuts

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assessment his Department has made of the effect which the Government's decision to cut section 11 funding will have on the education of children for whom English is a second language.

Mr. Robin Squire: The assessment of local pupil needs is primarily a matter for schools and local education authorities although the Department continues to monitor, using the services of OFSTED, the education of children for whom English is a second language. Section 11 funding in 1993-94 should be sufficient to support existing projects in the 1993-94 financial year at the current grant rate of 75 per cent. of salary costs. For the subsequent two years, it will be a matter for local authorities and other grant recipients to decide to what extent the shortfall can be offset from within their budgets and where any reductions need to be made.

National Curriculum Testing

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what information his Department has gathered on what loss of pay or other consequences have been enforced by local education authorities against those head teachers, teachers, officials and school governors who supported the boycott last term of national curriculum testing.

Mr. Robin Squire: The Department has not gathered any such information.

Civil Servants

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many civil servants are working at his Department's offices at Sanctuary buildings, Great Smith street, London.

Mr. Boswell: At present, there are 1,123 civil servants located at Sanctuary buildings.

Outdoor Activity Centres

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education when he intends to make a statement about safety in outdoor activity centres following the Lyme bay canoeing accident.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend expects to make an announcement shortly.

Pupil Numbers

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is *(a)* the total number of pupils, *(b)* the number in grant-maintained schools and *(c)* the percentage in grant-maintained schools within (i) primary and (ii) secondary schools in each local education authority area.

Mr Robin Squire *[holding answer 21 October 1993]:* The number of pupils in maintained primary and secondary schools and the number and percentage of pupils in schools currently operating as self-governing (GM) in each local education authority in England is shown in the table. However, pupil numbers shown relate to January 1992, the latest date for which final information is available. Pupils in sixth form colleges have been excluded from the secondary totals.

Pupils[1] in maintained primary and secondary schools in each Local Education Authority in England

LEA	Pupils in Primary Schools			Pupils in Secondary Schools[2]		
	All schools	Self-Governing Schools[3]		All schools	Self-Governing Schools[3]	
		Number	Percentage		Number	Percentage
Corporation of London	221	0	0	0	0	0
Camden	10,515	0	0	10,241	2,314	23
Greenwich	20,748	0	0	13,955	0	0
Hackney	16,324	0	0	7,788	0	0
Hammersmith	8,851	0	0	6,001	1,197	20
Islington	14,533	0	0	7,732	0	0
Kensington and Chelsea	6,186	0	0	3,150	622	20
Lambeth	18,727	233	1	6,233	3,325	53
Lewisham	20,085	198	1	10,525	0	0
Southwark	20,429	413	2	9,065	2,106	23
Tower Hamlets	19,864	0	0	10,941	879	8
Wandsworth	16,906	530	3	8,803	6,196	70
Westminster	9,023	0	0	7,240	0	0
Barking	15,370	0	0	9,164	0	0
Barnet	23,442	774	3	17,898	6,594	37
Bexley	18,091	448	2	14,350	2,850	20
Brent	21,773	583	3	11,675	7,637	65
Bromley	19,836	878	4	16,021	10,187	64
Croydon	25,390	0	0	14,228	3,656	26
Ealing	27,462	512	2	11,102	4,789	43
Enfield	22,551	0	0	16,739	4,388	26
Haringey	18,616	0	0	8,779	0	0
Harrow	18,927	0	0	7,640	486	6
Havering	19335	0	0	15,114	3,848	25
Hillingdon	19,673	2,502	13	13,394	10,055	75
Hounslow	19,225	0	0	13,380	2,090	16
Kingston upon Thames	10,288	0	0	7,324	2,780	38
Merton	14,802	0	0	6,896	0	0
Newham	24,065	0	0	13,621	574	4
Redbridge	18,300	0	0	14,277	1,090	8
Richmond upon Thames	10,358	0	0	7,171	0	0
Sutton	12,625	2203	2	10,627	6,293	59
Waltham Forest	19,204	0	0	10,740	1,839	17
Birmingham	107,102	511	0	60,864	11,253	18
Coventry	29,353	0	0	18,191	0	0
Dudley	27,538	399	1	17,227	4,291	25
Sandwell	31,479	0	0	17,839	652	4
Solihull	19,065	495	3	12,870	0	0
Walsall	27,811	0	0	18,696	5,505	29
Wolverhampton	24,139	0	0	15,600	1,777	11
Knowsley	18,360	0	0	8,906	720	8
Liverpool	50,325	0	0	28,977	1,452	5
St. Helens	17,551	0	0	11,549	0	0
Sefton	26,908	0	0	18,159	0	0
Wirral	30,966	0	0	20,313	1,907	9
Bolton	26,906	441	2	16,335	2,726	17
Bury	16,500	0	0	9,711	0	0
Manchester	46,141	0	0	21,080	0	0
Oldham	24,113	0	0	15,834	0	0
Rochdale	20,999	903	4	12,539	1,010	8
Salford	22,666	0	0	11,246	0	0
Stockport	24,507	0	0	14,515	0	0

LEA	Pupils in Primary Schools			Pupils in Secondary Schools[2]		
	All schools	Self-Governing Schools[3]		All schools	Self-Governing Schools[3]	
		Number	Percentage		Number	Percentage
Tameside	22,414	0	0	12,655	2,309	18
Trafford	19,634	0	0	11,028	2,822	26
Wigan	29,619	0	0	18,823	0	0
Barnsley	21,261	0	0	12,091	0	0
Doncaster	29,364	0	0	20,670	0	0
Rotherham	24,360	0	0	17,256	0	0
Sheffield	45,763	255	1	23,871	1,802	8
Bradford	39,598	293	1	44,877	4,876	11
Calderdale	19,311	76	0	12,806	3,095	24
Kirklees	35,563	0	0	24,804	1,192	5
Leeds	56,027	44	0	51,082	1,138	2
Wakefield	28,719	0	0	20,238	0	0
Gateshead	18,090	0	0	11,558	0	0
Newcastle upon Tyne	22,291	0	0	16,498	0	0
North Tyneside	16,160	0	0	14,187	0	0
South Tyneside	15,433	0	0	9,052	0	0
Sunderland	29,598	0	0	18,568	0	0
Isles of Scilly	173	0	0	112	0	0
Avon	77,726	0	0	52,833	1,455	3
Befordshire	40,969	666	2	43,043	8,178	19
Berkshire	59,999	2,093	3	45,144	7,280	16
Buckinghamshire	60,985	2,259	4	34,556	8,468	25
Cambridgeshire	57,696	1,868	3	39,357	14,781	38
Cheshire	87,769	73	0	61,760	2,314	4
Cleveland	64,699	0	0	35,226	0	0
Cornwall	39,336	0	0	28,397	0	0
Clumbria	42,304	1,087	3	30,194	7,860	26
Derbyshire	82,860	1,564	2	56,326	13,893	25
Devon	77,342	0	0	56,161	3,687	7
Dorset	43,963	391	1	39,103	8,364	21
Durham	55,446	0	0	36,227	0	0
East Sussex	49,084	0	0	31,851	0	0
Essex	120,648	7,518	6	93,421	50,443	54
Gloucestershire	42,010	1,330	3	31,849	18,032	57
Hampshire	127,473	2,974	2	74,056	12,398	17
Hereford and Worcester	47,442	0	0	46,168	3,448	7
Hertfordshire	81,379	860	1	65,907	15,807	24
Humberside	82,367	76	0	54,603	0	0
Isle of Wight	7,066	0	0	10,194	0	0
Kent	123,557	3,467	3	98,781	42,991	44
Lancashire	126,477	270	0	81,133	5,825	7
Leicestershire	78,840	0	0	57,712	3,088	5
Lincolnshire	47,909	3,731	8	36,014	15,242	42
Norfolk	61,337	2,268	4	39,257	8,338	21
North Yorkshire	56,951	0	0	41,931	0	0
Northamptonshire	49,369	2,758	6	43,906	9,001	21
Northumberland	21,019	0	0	28,656	597	2
Nottinghamshire	89,724	0	0	61,423	1,814	3
Oxfordshire	39,423	75	0	33,274	0	0
Shropshire	34,552	284	1	24,482	3,430	14
Somerset	34,620	221	1	27,114	391	1
Staffordshire	91,015	26	0	66,767	4,191	6
Suffolk	42,666	0	0	46,845	0	0
Surrey	75,157	1,524	2	38,035	8,669	23
Warwickshire	45,156	0	0	24,049	4,526	19
West Sussex	50,685	0	0	37,866	0	0
Wiltshire	44,964	987	2	32,931	6,150	19
England	4,089,536	49,061	1	2,818,993	424,985	15

[1]Pupil numbers in schools in January 1992. Pupils in schools which are now self-governing appear in the self-governing columns of the table.
[2]Including pupils in schools operating as self-governing in October 1993.
[3]Excluding Sixth Form Colleges.

WALES

Water Disconnections

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will consider collecting and holding centrally information on the number of industrial water disconnections made by water companies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: No. The collection of statistics on water disconnections is a matter for the Director General of Water Services.

Hill Farming

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many hill farmers in Wales have not yet received their hill livestock compensatory allowances in respect of 1993.

Mr. Redwood: Eight hundred and forty-six of the 14,662 claims remain to be paid. Most are held up while queries are resolved, or field inspections are carried out.

Expenditure

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total central Government expenditure for the Welsh Office for the financial year 1992-93.

Mr. Redwood: Net central Government supply expenditure by the Welsh Office in 1992-93 was £5,973 million.

Arable Area Payments Scheme

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the number of applications in each county in Wales under the *(a)* main arable area payments scheme and *(b)* the simplified scheme in 1993; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: Three hundred applications were made under the main arable area scheme and 2,177 applications under the simplified scheme in Wales. The following table indicates the counties in which the applicants had their main agricultural holdings, although it is possible that the land for which they claimed aid is spread between more than one county.

County	*Main scheme*	*Simplified scheme*	*Total*
Clwyd	36	258	294
Dyfed	85	1,050	1,135
Mid Glamorgan	16	31	47
South Glamorgan	28	65	93
West Glamorgan	2	75	77
Gwent	63	197	260
Gwynedd	18	178	196
Powys	52	323	375
Total	300	2,177	2,477

HOME DEPARTMENT

Offences (Analysis)

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) when he plans to publish his Department's research document "Analysing Offending"; and if he will make a statement;

(2) when the document "Analysing Offending" was completed; and for what reason publication has been delayed.

Mr. Maclean: "Analysing Offending" was published in July of this year by HMSO and has been publicly available from HMSO bookshops and accredited agents since then.

Mr. George Long

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department on what date he received a submission from solicitors acting on behalf of George Long—B25147; and when he expects to reach a decision.

Mr. Maclean: Representations about Mr. Long's convictions for murder in 1979 were received from his solicitors on 24 June 1993. Further inquiries have been made, and my right hon. and learned Friend expects that he will soon be in a position to decide whether there is any action he should take in Mr. Long's case.

Probation Committees

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about how probation committees are constituted; and who are the present members of those covering Kent and Suffolk.

Mr. Maclean: I have been asked to reply.

The regulations governing the constitution of probation committees are set out in schedule 3 to the Powers of Criminal Courts Act 1973, as amended.

At present the Home Office does not maintain lists of probation committee members; and my hon. Friend may therefore wish to write to the secretaries of the Kent and Suffolk committees. With effect from this financial year, probation committees will be required to include in their annual reports the names of committee members and the official address at which they may be contacted.

Rape

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce legislation to abolish the crime of rape.

Mr. Maclean: No.

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce legislation to provide anonymity for men charged with rape unless and until they are convicted.

Mr. Maclean: We are currently reviewing the law relating to anonymity in cases involving sexual offences and will announce our conclusions in due course.

Parole Board

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to make public his full-time appointments to the Parole Board; and if he will make a statement on why full-time appointments are necessary.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: After full consideration, the Parole Board was informed on 3 August this year that six full-time members were to be appointed to the board. A press statement about the appointments was issued on 27 August, a copy of which has been placed in the Library of the House.

Full-time members will bring valuable managerial and training experience to the work of the board and they will have the time to assist the chairman in long-term planning and the development of policy and procedures.

Departmental Offices

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many civil servants are working in the Home Department offices at Queen Anne's gate, London.

Mr. Howard: On 21 October there were 1,455 civil servants working in the Home Office's Queen Anne's gate building.

Blakenhurst Prison

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how long the disturbance at Blakenhurst prison on 17 October lasted; what was the cause; how many prisoners were involved; what damage to prison installations resulted from the protest; and what injuries to inmates or officers resulted from the protest.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the prison service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter to Mr. Doug Hoyle from Derek Lewis, dated 25 October 1993.

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the disturbance at Blakenhurst prison.

Two prisoners on Houseblock 3 damaged the structure and fittings of their cell during the evening of 17 September 1993. There were no injuries to staff or prisoners. The incident lasted approximately thirty minutes. Houseblock 3 had restricted association that evening which may have been the cause of this incident.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the total number of prison officers at Blakenhurst; and how many resignations of prison officers there have been since *(a)* the prison opened and *(b)* 17 October.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the prison service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter to Mr. Doug Hoyle from Derek Lewis, dated 25 October 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the number of prison officers at Blakenhurst; and how many resignations of prison officers there have been since *(a)* the prison opened and *(b)* 17th November.

There are now 271 certificated prisoner custody officers at Blakenhurst. Eleven officers have resigned since the prison opened on 26 May. I will write to you again once the figures for 17 November are available.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what reports have been made of the use of the drug LSD at Blakenhurst prison.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the prison service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter to Mr. Doug Hoyle from Derek Lewis, dated 25 October 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the use of the drug LSD at Blakenhurst prison.

One small square of paper was found during a cell search on 17 September, which was believed to be LSD. It has been sent for police forensic examination, but the results of that examination are not yet available.

On 3 September inmates reported that the drink of a staff member had been adulterated with LSD. The staff member concerned felt no ill-effects, but, as a precaution she was medically examined. It is doubted whether the report was true. I understand that a rumour about the alleged adulteration is circulating outside the establishment.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the role of the American employees of the prison operators at Blakenhurst.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the prison service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter to Mr. Doug Hoyle from Derek Lewis, dated 25 October 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the role of the American employees of the prison operators at Blakenhurst.

One American board member of United Kingdom Detention Services (UKDS) is based at Blakenhurst. He is the Operations Director for UKDS.

One consultant on secondment from the Corrections Corporation of America (CCA) is working at Blakenhurst.

In the past a small number of trainers from CCA have been used by UKDS at Blakenhurst.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prison officers at Blakenhurst are fully trained in control and restraint procedures.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the prison service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter to Mr. Doug Hoyle from Derek Lewis, dated 25 October 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about how many prison officers at Blakenhurst are fully trained in control and restraint procedures.

All prisoner custody officers at Blakenhurst are trained in control and restraint techniques, 64 are trained to C & R level III.

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what work is carried out by the prisoners in Blakenhurst prison; what is the nature of the contracts under which they work; how much is paid to the prisoners; and what happens to the profits made.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the prison service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter to Mr. Doug Hoyle from Derek Lewis, dated 25 October 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to respond to your recent Question about work at HMP Blakenhurst.

Prisoners are currently engaged in kitchen, wing servery, domestic cleaning, works, maintenance, garden, orderlies, light assembly and laundry work. Current pay scales average £6·50 per week, but rates vary according to the work undertaken. Revenue accruing from work is used for prisoner pay or to enhance facilities for prisoners.

Liquor Licensing

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many responses he has had to his consultation on the possible reform of the liquor licensing system in England and Wales; and if he will place in the Library the names of organisations submitting views.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: By 22 October, we had received 621 written responses to the consultation paper. That total excludes responses concerned only with the proposed abolition of the Welsh Sunday opening polls sent to the Welsh Office. A list of the organisations which have provided responses to the Home Office will be placed in the Library shortly.

Criminal Law (Equal Treatment)

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce legislation to amend the criminal law to eliminate any instances of unequal treatment between men and women.

Mr. Maclean: There are no general plans to amend the few areas of the criminal law in which there are differences in the way that men and women are treated. We are, however, reviewing the law relating to anonymity in cases involving sexual offences which in practice, although not in principle, may affect men differently from women.

Prisoners (Esapes)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners have escaped since 1 April while in the custody of *(a)* prison officers, *(b)* police officers and *(c)* Group 4 officers.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the prison service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter to Mr. Martin Redmond from Derek Lewis, dated 25 October 1993.

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the number of prisoners who have escaped since 1 April 1993 whilst in the custody of *(a)* prison officers; *(b)* police officers; and *(c)* Group 4 officers.

The total number of prisoners who have escaped from prison custody since 1 April 1993 to date is 215. Of this 108 escaped from within establishments and 107 from escort.

The following table shows in whose custody the prisoners were when the escapes took place:

	Number
Prison officers (within prison service establishments)	108
Prison officers (escorts)	92
Group 4 custody officers (within HMP The Wolds)	—
Group 4 custody officers (escorts) (HMP The Wolds)	1
Group 4 custody officers (court escort service)	13
UKDS custody officers (within HMP Blankenhurst)	—
UKDS custody officers (escorts) (HMP Blankenhurst)	1
TOTAL	215

The number of prisoners who have escaped from police custody is not recorded centrally.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what financial penalty has been imposed on Group 4 in respect of prisoners who have escaped while in its custody; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the prison service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter to Mr. Martin Redmond from Derek Lewis, dated 25 October 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about escapes of prisoners from the custody of Group 4.

No financial penalty has been imposed on Group 4 in respect of such escapes. Past experience of both the police and the Prison Service has shown that it is not possible to eliminate escapes from escort, other than at unacceptable cost and with the use of unacceptable methods. Group 4 has faced the same difficulties.

Asylum

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many asylum seekers are currently being detained in Her Majesty's prison establishments awaiting the outcome of their asylum applications; what is the average length of time they are held in prison; and what are the comparable figures for (i) 12, (ii) 24, (iii) 36 and (iv) 48 months ago.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information is not available in the form requested. However, on 21 October 1993, 225 asylum seekers had been detained for one month or more in prison establishments including the Home Office holding centre, Haslar. Of these, 76 had been held for between one and three months; 70 for between three and six months; and 79 for over six months.

Interview Tapes

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what guidelines or regulations are applicable to the police for the retention of tapes used to record routine interviews in the homes of people as to *(a)* where the tapes are to be stored and *(b)* for how long such tapes should be retained; and if he will make a statement;

(2) to what guidelines or regulations the police are subject in respect of first advising people, where discussions with the police are to be tape recorded, that such a recording is to be made; what specific provisions are applicable where the interview takes place in the interviewee's home; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: These are operational matters which are the responsibility of chief officers.

Prison Service

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list for each of Her Majesty's prison establishments the key objectives reported by the Prison Service for the year 1993-94; and what they were for the year 1992-93.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the prison service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter to Mr. Martin Redmond from Derek Lewis, dated 25 October 1993:

KEY TARGETS FOR THE PRISON SERVICE

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about key objectives for prison establishments in 1993-94, and 1992-93.

The Prison Service's key targets for 1993-94 are set out in its Business Plan, a copy of which is in the House of Commons Library. The Service's objectives, targets and performance indicators for 1992-93 were set out in its Statement of Objectives and Resources, which is also in the Library. Local targets and objectives are agreed by prison governors and Area Managers in the annual establishment "contracts". These are internal management documents which it is not our practice to publish; and to extract from each the individual objectives and targets could only be done at disproportionate cost.

Telephone Surveillance Warrants

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many telephone surveillance warrants have been signed in each of the past 24 months.

Mr. Howard: Statistics on the number of interception warrants issued by the Home Secretary and the Secretary of State for Scotland each year are published in the annual report of the Commissioner appointed under the Interception of Communications Act 1985. To give a more detailed breakdown would not be in the interests of national security or the prevention or detection of serious crime.

Juvenile Prisoners

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list by Her Majesty's prison establishment the number of juveniles held in adult prisons currently and *(a)* 12, *(b)* 24, *(c)* 36 and *(d)* 48 months ago.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the prison service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter to Mr. Martin Redmond from Derek Lewis, dated 25 October 1993:

JUVENILES HELD IN ADULT PRISONS

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question asking how many juveniles are held in adult prisons currently and *(a)* 12, *(b)* 24, *(c)* 36 and *(d)* 48 months ago.

I attach tables showing the population of untried, convicted unsentenced and sentenced juvenile inmates held in adult Prison Service establishments on 30 June in 1989, 1990, 1991, 1992 and on 31 August 1993.

Persons aged under 17 (remand) and under 18 (sentenced) held in adult prisons in England and Wales on 31 August 1993: by establishment

Establishment	*Number*[1]
Gloucester	1
Holloway	1
New Hall	1
Pucklechurch	1
All adult prisons	4

[1]Provisional figures.

Persons aged under 17 held in adult prisons in England and Wales on 30 June 1992: by establishment

Establishment	*Number*[1]
Lewes	1
Low Newton	1
New Hall	1
Askham Grange	2
All adult prisons	5

[1]Provisional figures.

Persons aged under 17 held in adult prisons in England and Wales on 30 June 1991: by establishment

Establishment	*Number*[1]
Birmingham	2
Holloway	1
Hull	7
Lincoln	1
Pentonville	1
All adult prisons	12

[1]Provisional figures

Persons aged under 17 held in adult prisons in England and Wales on 30 June 1990: by establishment

Establishment	*Number*[1]
Askham Grange	2
Durham	1
Hull	17
Lincoln	1
All adult prisons	21

[1]Provisional figures

Persons aged under 17 held in adult prisons in England and Wales on 30 June 1989: by establishment

Establishment	*Number*[1]
Askham Grange	2
Bedford	1
Birmingham	3
Chelmsford	4
Durham	1
Lincoln	1
Manchester	6
New Hall	1
All adult prisons	19

[1]Provisional figures

Isle of Man (Driving Disqualifications)

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 18 October, *Official Report*, c. *146*, concerning enforcement of Isle of Man driving disqualifications in the United Kingdom, what consideration he has given to introducing such a policy; and for what reason he has decided not to do so.

Mr. Charles Wardle: None, but we understand that the Isle of Man authorities are considering whether the Isle of Man should seek a system of reciprocal recognition of driving disqualifications with the United Kingdom. We are ready to consider any proposals which they put to us.

Overseas Staff and Premises

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the cost for the current financial year of his Department having *(a)* premises and *(b)* personnel overseas; and what were the comparable figures for *(a)* 12, *(b)* 24, *(c)* 36 and *(d)* 48 months ago.

Mr. Howard: The estimated cost in the current financial year of the Department having premises overseas is nil. The estimated cost of having personnel overseas is £3 million.

Detailed information for previous years is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Prison Assaults

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many assaults by staff on inmates were reported in 1991, 1992 and to date in 1993; and in which prisons they took place.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 19 October 1993]:* Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the prison service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter to Ms Joan Ruddock from Derek Lewis, dated 25 October 1993:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your recent Question about how many assaults by staff on inmates were reported in 1991, 1992 and to date in 1993.

The following allegations of assault were reported to the Incident Management Support Unit at Prison Service Headquarters.

1991
One allegation at HMP Belmarsh

1992
One allegation at HMP Shepton Mallet

1993 to date
One allegation at HMP Manchester
One allegation at HMYOI Onley
One allegation at HMYOI & RC Feltham
One allegation at HMP Belmarsh
One allegation at HMYOI Northallerton

Young Offenders

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many 15-year-olds sentenced to prison in 1993 to the latest date available received terms of *(a)* up to one week, *(b)* one to two weeks, *(c)* two to four weeks, *(d)* four to eight weeks, *(e)* eight weeks to three months, *(f)* three to six months, *(g)* six to 12 months and *(h)* over 12 months;

(2) how many 15-year-olds sentenced to prison in 1992 received terms of *(a)* up to one week, *(b)* one to two weeks, *(c)* two to four weeks, *(d)* four to eight weeks, *(e)* eight weeks to three months, *(f)* three to six months, *(g)* six to 12 months and *(h)* over 12 months.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 19 October 1993]:* The table shows for 1992 in England and Wales the number of 15-year-olds sentenced to immediate custody at all courts for all offences by sex, type of court and type of offence. 1993 data will not be available until the autumn of 1994.

Number of 15-year-olds sentenced to immediate custody at all courts for all offences England and Wales 1992[1]

	1 week or less	*Over 1 to 2 weeks*	*Over 2 to 4 weeks*	*Over 4 to 8 weeks*	*Over 8 weeks to 3 months*	*Over 3 to 6 months*	*Over 6 to 12 months*	*Over 12 months*	*Total*
Magistrates Court									
Indictable									
Males	1	—	19	37	136	171	—	—	364
Females	—	—	—	—	—	3	—	—	3
Summary Non-MOTG									
Males	—	—	1	7	42	31	—	—	81
Females	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Summary MOTG									
Males	—	—	1	—	1	3	—	—	5
Females	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
All Offences									
Males	1	—	21	44	179	205	—	—	450
Females	—	—	—	—	—	3	—	—	3
Crown Court									
Indictable									
Males	1	—	5	2	6	19	36	—	69
Females	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	1
Summary Non-MOTG									
Males	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Females	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Summary MOTG									
Males	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Females	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
All Offences									
Males	1	—	5	2	6	19	36	—	69
Females	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	1
All Courts									
Indictable									
Males	2	—	24	39	142	190	36	—	443
Females	—	—	—	—	—	3	1	—	4
Summary Non-MOTG									
Males	—	—	1	7	42	31	—	—	81
Females	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Summary MOTG									
Males	—	—	1	—	1	3	—	—	5
Females	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
All Offences									
Males	2	—	26	46	185	224	36	—	519
Females	—	—	—	—	—	3	1	—	4

[1]Provisional

NORTHERN IRELAND

Eastern Health and Social Services Board

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland which residential homes the Eastern health and social services board proposes to close down; what is the reason; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: The Eastern health and social services board's four community units of management are currently in the process of consulting publicly on proposals which involve the closure of nine residential homes for elderly people. The homes are Warren house and Drumlough house, Lisburn; Ardview house, Ardglass; The Banks, Bangor; and Cairns house, Old See house, Enler house, James Dixon house, and Marlborough house, all of which are in Belfast.

The Government's strategy is to build up domiciliary services so that a greater proportion of elderly people can remain in their own homes if they so wish. The Government also wish to achieve a new balance between services provided directly by the statutory sector and those offered by independent providers.

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland at what locations there are residential homes controlled by the Eastern health and social services board; and how many residents each of these homes accommodate.

Mr. Ancram: The information requested is as follows:

Statutory residential homes registered with the Eastern health and social services board

Name and address of home	*Category of care*	*Number of places*
South and East Belfast unit of management		
Brae Valley Residential Home, 23 Breda Terrace, Belfast	Elderly Mentally Infirm	30
Breda Park Hostel, 6-12 Breda Park, Belfast	Mental Handicap	30
Enler House, Craiglieth Drive, Dundonald	Old and Infirm	47
100 Holywood Road, Belfast	Mental Disorder	10
James Dixon House, Rugby Parade, Belfast	Old and Infirm Elderly Mentally Infirm Respite	30 10
Killynure House, Church Road, Carryduff, Belfast	Old and Infirm Elderly Mentally Infirm Respite	34 10
Laird House, 7 Glenluce Walk, Belfast	Elderly Mentally Infirm	33
80 Malone Road, Belfast	Mental Handicap	14
Marlborough House, 80 Marlborough Park South, Belfast	Elderly Mentally Infirm	27
Mertoun Park Hostel, 17 Mertoun Park, Knocknagoney, Holywood	Mental Handicap	14
Minnowburn House, 61 Old Milltown Road, Belfast	Old and Infirm	49

Trauma Counselling

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) how many trauma counselling specialists are currently employed by the Department of Health and Social Services;

(2) if he will make a statement on the availability of immediate and expert post-trauma counselling services for people affected by terrorism.

Mr. Ancram: No counselling specialists are currently employed by the Department of Health and Social Services. However, in each of the four health and social services boards, social work staff are available to provide immediate and post trauma counselling services for people affected by terrorism. These counselling services are mainly provided by volunteer social workers with special skills and training. The Voluntary Bereavement Counselling Agency—CRUSE—also offers help to people affected by terrorism.

Multiple Sclerosis

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans has he to introduce respite care for multiple sclerosis sufferers in the Down section of the Down and Lisburn unit of management; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: This is primarily a matter for the Eastern health and social services board. Respite care for multiple sclerosis sufferers in the Down area is provided at the multiple sclerosis centre in Dalriada hospital, Ballycastle, and at Thompson house in Lisburn. In addition, the Down and Lisburn unit of management intends to purchase a locally provided package of respite care for multiple sclerosis sufferers and I understand that negotiations to procure this are presently under way.

Armagh Health Centre

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many offers have been received for the purchase of Armagh health centre; and if he will now consider offering the public the opportunity to purchase it.

Mr. Ancram: The general medical practitioners working in Armagh health centre have expressed an interest in buying the premises, and their proposal is being considered by the Southern health and social services board.

A separate offer has been received from the private sector. This is not being pursued, nor is the property being advertised on the open market, because Armagh health centre is not surplus to the requirements of the health and personal social services.

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what capital expenditure has been allocated for the Armagh health centre for the present financial year by the Southern health and social services board.

Mr. Ancram None.

Community Care

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what assessment he has made of the implementation of the Government's community care policy in the constituency of South Down; and what further action he proposes to take to improve the provision of care in the community.

Mr. Ancram: The Department of Health and Social Services and health and social services boards have put in place comprehensive arrangements for the monitoring of the community care reforms, introduced on 1 April 1993, with the three local units of management of the Eastern and Southern boards, which together serve the constituency of South Down, monitoring their community care activity and expenditure on a monthly and quarterly basis. This information contributes to the Department's overall evaluation of the implementation of community care policy and will inform decisions on the provision of community services within the constituency. The Department is currently undertaking the first six month performance review of the new community care arrangements which will be completed later this year.

Housing Executive

Mr. A. Cecil Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the number of Housing Executive properties *(a)* demolished and *(b)* replaced in each of the Province's district electoral areas for each year since 1979.

Mr. Atkins: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 21 October 1992 at cols. 290-92. The chief executive of the Housing Executive has advised me that the information which is readily available for 1992-93 is as follows:

District Council Area	*Demolished*	*Replaced*
Antrim	17	—
Ards	—	16
Armagh	7	2
Ballymena	—	9
Ballymoney	—	—
Banbridge	1	—
Belfast	514	322
Carrickfergus	69	—
Castlereagh	—	—
Coleraine	—	—
Cookstown	—	—
Craigavon	54	20
Derry	3	63
Down	—	13
Dungannon	2	—
Fermanagh	—	—
Larne	59	3
Limavady	—	—
Lisburn	4	—
Magherafelt	—	—
Moyle	—	—
Newry and Mourne	—	15
Newtownabbey	152	—
North Down	—	—
Omagh	—	7
Strabane	1	—

Note:
This does not cover the Housing Executive's total new-build programme but relates mainly to the replacement of dwellings in redevelopment areas and of unfit dwellings in housing action areas. It also includes replacement dwellings for obsolete purpose-built stock such aas Orlit dwellings, aluminium bungalows and rural cottages.

Fishing Vessels

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the closing date for applications for decommissioning payments for fishing vessels; how many applications were received; when the applicants will receive a decision; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: The closing date for receipt of applications under the Fishing Vessel (Decommissioning) Scheme 1993 was 31 July. Sixty-eight applications were received from Northern Ireland, of which 28 were successful. All applicants were informed on 22 September of the outcome of their applications.

Undergraduates

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many undergraduates there were at each of the campuses of the Ulster university in the academic year 1992-93; and how many were from the Republic of Ireland at each location.

Mr. Ancram: The information is as follows:

Campus	*Total Number of Undergraduates*[1]	*Number of Undergraduates from Republic of Ireland*
Belfast	667	55
Coleraine	3,485	614
Jordanstown	7,028	508
Magee	1,576	329
TOTAL	12,756	1,506

[1]includes part-time undergraduates.

Thermal Oxide Reprocessing Plant

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what matters in regard to Sellafield and the new thermal oxide reprocessing plant were raised at the intergovernmental conference on Ireland held on 10 September.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: The areas of discussion at meetings of the intergovernmental conference are listed in the communiqués issued afterwards; copies of which are placed in the Library. Details of these discussions are confidential between the two Governments.

Prisons

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list for each of Her Majesty's prison establishments in the Province the key objectives reported for the year 1993-94; and what they were for the year 1992-93.

Sir John Wheeler: All prison establishments in Northern Ireland operate from year to year with the following key objectives:

(a) to keep in custody, with the degree of security and control considered appropriate by staff, each individual person committed to custody by the courts and to produce or release them as required;

(b) to provide for all prisoners the necessities of life; including accommodation, food, exercise, health care and freedom to practice religion, and to provide them with the opportunity to engage in constructive activities, such as work, education, training, hobbies and sport, to fill at least the working day;

(c) to enable all prisoners to retain links with their families and to assist sentenced prisoners in their preparation for release into the community;

(d) to treat prisoners as individuals regardless of their religious beliefs or political opinions and to offer them the opportunity to serve their sentences free from paramilitary influence, and

(e) to manage resources economically and efficiently and, in particular, to enhance the morale and abilities of staff by providing the appropriate conditions of service, management structures and training.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) if he will itemise the cost of establishing national health service trusts;

(2) how much has been spent in each health and social service board on *(a)* printing and publication costs, *(b)* publicity and public relations costs, *(c)* consultation and public meetings and *(d)* other costs connected with the proposed establishment of NHS trusts in 1991-92 and 1992-93; and what is the expected spending in 1993-94.

Mr. Ancram: Health and social services boards are not required to meet costs of this nature. The Department of Health and Social Services has set aside additional resources to meet the cost of mounting applications for trust status and, where they are successful, other neccesary transitional expenses. Approximately £185,000 is set aside for each successsful applicant to cover the cost of developing and publishing a formal application, remuneration of non-executives during the shadow period and a range of measures to prepare the trust for operational independence.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how the revenue grant to national health service trusts during their shadow running period is calculated.

Mr. Ancram: The financial assistance which the Department of Health and Social Services gives to trusts during their shadow period is a one-off payment calculated to meet expenditure on areas essential to the trust becoming operationally independent. The level of assistance is based on that available in other parts of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what will be his Department's total expenditure on the establishment of national health service trusts since their first introduction to the end of the current financial year.

Mr. Ancram: To date a total of around £1.9 million has been spent on the establishment of health and social services trusts in Northern Ireland. Decisions are awaited on two further applications for trust status. Were both of these applications to be successful, this figure would increase by £370,000 making the total expenditure to the end of the current financial year £2,270,000.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what has been the cost of employing management consultants and private agencies to assist in the preparation of national health service trust applications in the Province, and in each health and social services board.

Mr. Ancram: The Department of Health and Social Services has employed consultants from the Institute of Health Services Management to assist in its assessment of applications for trust status. The average cost of this consultancy for each application has been £2,000. Information on other consultancy is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much each national health service trust has spent on *(a)* shadow board costs, *(b)* legal expenses, *(c)* employment of staff and *(d)* miscellaneous expenses; and if he will define what costs are included under miscellaneous expenses.

Mr. Ancram: During the shadow period between establishment and operational independence trusts do not have funds of their own to meet these expenses and therefore costs are covered directly by the non-recurring assistance made available by the Department of Health and Social Services. Shadow board costs will vary from trust to trust depending on turnover but the average figure is around £20,000 per trust. Legal services for conveyancing etc. are provided by the Department at no cost to the trust. Details of individual costs for the employment of staff are not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. Miscellaneous expenses might include such items as new signs for buildings and vehicles, new stationery, organisational and management development, induction of chairmen and non-executive directors and consultants fees. Details of spending under individual headings are not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Arable Area Payments Scheme

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the number of applications in each county in Northern Ireland under the *(a)* main arable areas payments scheme and *(b)* the simplified scheme in 1993; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: The number of applications by county under the arable area payments scheme are as follows:

County	*Main scheme*	*Simplified scheme*
Antrim	12	678
Armagh	8	251
Down	66	1,050
Fermanagh	—	2
Londonderry	33	671
Tyrone	7	335
Total	126	2,987

Advance payments for oilseed applications have already been made and payments for cereals, proteins and set-aside will be made during the months of November and December.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

National Lottery

1. **Mr. William O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make a statement on how local communities can help provide recreational facilities for their communities under the national lotteries provisions.

Mr. Brooke: It is our hope that the national lottery will provide new recreational facilities right across the country. Local communities with projects or schemes in the fields of charities, sports, arts and the heritage will be able to apply to the appropriate distributors of lottery funds.

Built Heritage

10. **Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what role is played by English Heritage in the conservation of the built heritage.

Mr. Brooke: English Heritage is the Government's principal expert adviser on the historic environment. In addition to maintaining an historic estate of some 400 properties, it gives advice to the general public on conservation issues and gives grants for the repair of buildings of outstanding architectural and historic interest.

Anti-doping Controls

11. **Mr. Hall:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what plans he has to intensify the anti-doping controls for all sports in the United Kingdom and introduce common penalties for all offenders following the recent recommendations of the International Olympic Committee.

Mr. Sproat: I welcome the decision taken in June by the IOC and the Association of Summer Olympic International Federations to accelerate the unification of their anti-doping rules and procedures. The Sports Council requires all governing bodies in receipt of grants and services to implement acceptable anti-doping regulations and the council will continue to work with the governing bodies to achieve greater harmonisation.

Arts Council

17. **Mr. Callaghan:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he has any plans to meet the chairman of the Arts Council to discuss the funding of the council.

Mr. Brooke: I meet the chairman of the Arts Council from time to time to discuss a range of issues.

Tourism

19. **Dr. Twinn:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what representations he has received regarding the signposting of tourism sights.

Mr. Sproat: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave earlier today to my hon. Friend the Member for Mid Kent (Mr. Rowe).

20. **Mr. Duncan Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what discussions he has had regarding the Coopers and Lybrand report on the English tourist board.

Mr. Sproat: I have had meetings with the chairman, some board members and senior staff of the English tourist board to discuss this report. I have also sought the views of the regional tourist boards and other industry representatives.

Television

21. **Mr. Madden:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what representations he has had from the chairman of the Independent Television Commission over the workings of the Broadcasting Act 1990.

Mr. Brooke: Since January 1993, when the provisions of the Broadcasting Act 1990 came fully into effect, I have had four exchanges with the chairman of the Independent Television Commission, mainly to explain how the commission intended to carry out its responsibilities under the Act.

23. **Mr. Bryan Davies:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage when he next intends to meet the chairman of the Independent Television Commission to discuss regulation of the industry.

Mr. Brooke: I have no present plans for a further meeting with the chairman of the Independent Television Commission whom I last met on 19 October.

26. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what plans he has to meet the chairman of the Independent Television Commission to discuss programme quality.

Mr. Brooke: I last met the chairman of the ITC on 19 October, but I would not plan to meet him to discuss programme quality, since this is a matter for the ITC, not for me.

Arts Spending

22. **Sir John Hannam:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage by how much Government spending on the arts has changed since 1979.

Mr. Brooke: Government funding for the arts has increased by over 45 per cent. in real terms since 1979. The Arts Council's grant-in-aid this year is £225·6 million.

Sports Grounds

24. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what plans he has for visiting the new Den to discuss safety of sports grounds.

Mr. Brooke: I have no plans at present to visit the new Den. But I congratulate Millwall football club on being among the first clubs to meet the Government's deadline of August 1994 for all-seating stadia in the top two divisions.

Heritage Buildings (Insurance)

25. **Mr. Peter Bottomley:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make a statement on representations about costs of insurance for heritage buildings, including churches, in the City of London.

Mr. Sproat: My right hon. Friend has received various representations about the cost of insuring listed churches against terrorist damage. Officials are investigating whether there is any practical way of easing the position.

BBC

27. **Mr. Fabricant:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage when his Department expects to make a statement regarding the future funding of the BBC.

Mr. Brooke: I announced on 21 June at column 27 the appointment of Touche Ross to assess the BBC's progress in achieving efficiency and revenue gains; to advise on the scope for further gains; and to advise whether RPI linkage was appropriate for the licence fee increases due in the next three years. I have received and am considering the Touche Ross report, and I plan to announce the Government's conclusions later this autumn. The longer-term funding of the BBC will be considered as part of the review of the BBC's royal charter.

South East Arts

28. **Mr. Rathbone:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage when he last discussed with South East Arts encouragement of local performing arts, including music; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brook: I met the chairman of South East Arts along with the chairmen of the other regional arts boards on 27 September, when a number of matters were discussed.

Old Monuments

29. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what steps he is taking to preserve old monuments.

Mr. Sproat: My right hon. Friend has a duty to compile and maintain a schedule of monuments the purpose of which is to provide them with statutory protection. English Heritage's monuments protection programme is identifying monuments of national importance and it is expected that within the next 10 years 70 to 80 per cent. of the monuments identified by the programme will have been scheduled. English Heritage also intends over the next two to three years to carry out work to identify those monuments most at risk, so that they can be given priority for scheduling during the remainder of the programme.

Hospitals

30. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what progress his task force has made on the future of hospitals which are listed buildings.

Mr. Sproat: The task force was established by the Department of Health and English Heritage in autumn 1992 to provide a forum to identify and assist in resolving problems concerning historic buildings and conservation matters in the NHS. It has reviewed a number of specific cases, commissioned the preparation of good practice guidance for NHS managers in respect of both listed hospitals that will continue in use, and those that will close, and is embarking on a review of the listing of redundant NHS institutions.

Regional Theatres

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what representations he has received from regional theatres fearing closure following the Arts Council decisions on the distribution of funding for the next financial year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: I have received a large number of representations from the staff and supporters of regional theatres. Decisions on the allocation of funding are a matter for the Arts Council.

Brodsworth Hall

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage (1) what will be the location of the marble statues, greyhounds and urns to be temporarily removed from Brodsworth hall, Brodsworth, South Yorkshire, by English Heritage; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what was the original estimate given by English Heritage of the restoration of Brodsworth hall, near Doncaster, South Yorkshire; what is the current estimate; when it will be fully open to the public; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he will list the items that have been stolen or lost to date during the restoration by English Heritage of Brodsworth hall, near Doncaster, South Yorkshire; how many have been recovered; and if he will make a statement;

(4) if he has visited Brodsworth hall, near Doncaster, South Yorkshire, or intends to visit during the next 12 months in connection with its restoration by English Heritage.

Mr. Brooke: The original estimate by English Heritage of the cost of the restoration of Brodsworth hall was £3 million, at 1991 prices. The current estimate is £3·5 million at 1993 prices. The house is expected to be fully open to the public during the summer of 1995.

One of the notable features of the house and gardens is the Italian marble statuary which was placed in the main areas of the house, and also in the garden. Two of the garden statues, valued at £2,000 each, were stolen around the time of English Heritage's acquisition of the house and

since then the garden statuary, which includes large numbers of greyhounds, has been stored at a secret location for security reasons. The stolen statues have never been recovered. The garden statuary will be replaced in situ, with suitable security precautions, when the hall is opened to the public.

I have not yet visited Brodsworth hall, although I should like to do so at some stage in the future to see the restoration work carried out by English Heritage.

Royal Parks Constabulary

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage (1) what joint consultation procedure exists between the police committee of the Royal Parks constabulary and that force's Police Federation, and the representative bodies of other ranks, at which matters relating to police pay and conditions of service are discussed; what is the membership of the joint body; and on how many occasions it has met in the past five years;

(2) who serves on the police committee of the Royal Parks constabulary; and how often it has met over the past five years;

(3) to what extent Home Office police regulations are applied to members of the Royal Parks constabulary;

(4) if a Minister from his Department will meet representative organisations of constables, sergeants, and inspectors of the Royal Parks constabulary to discuss the ramifications of *(a)* the Sheehy report, *(b)* the White Paper on police and *(c)* matters of general concern to Police Federation members which are not operational matters reserved for the chief constable.

Mr. Sproat: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Royal Parks Agency under its chief executive, Mr. David Welch. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter to Mr. Andrew Mackinlay from David Welch, dated 18 October 1993

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary, Mr. Iain Sproat, has asked me to reply to your Written Parliamentary Questions asking:

"To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what joint consultation procedure exists between the Police Committee of the Royal Parks Constabulary and that force's Police Federation, and the representative bodies of other ranks at which matters relating to police pay and conditions of service are discussed; what is the membership of the joint body; and on how many occasions has it met in the last five years."

"To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage who serves on the police committee of the Royal Parks Constabulary; and how often has it met over the past five years."

"To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage to what extent Home Office Police Regulations are applied to members of the Royal Parks Constabulary."

"To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if a Minister from his Department will meet representative organisations of constables, sergeants and inspectors of the Royal Parks Constabulary to discuss the ramifications of *(a)* the Sheehey Report *(b)* the White Paper on Police and *(c)* matters of general concern to federation members which are not operational matters reserved for the chief constable."

Prior to the inauguration of the Royal Parks Agency, the Department of the Environment and subsequently the Department of National Heritage, ensured the management of an efficient and effective Royal Parks Constabulary by a Police Committee. No arrangements existed for consultation between that Committee and the Staff Association.

Following the formation of the Royal Parks Agency and the appointment of a Chief Executive, an Advisory committee was formed to generally oversee the running of the Agency. One of its members is Sir Peter Imbert, Q.P.M., ex Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police. The Chief Executive has, nonetheless, retained the services of the former Deputy Assistant Commissioner as professional consultant on policing matters.

In Home Department Forces the Staff Association ie Police Federation and Superintendents Association, meet with their Chief Constables to discuss welfare and other issues. To the best of my knowledge these Associations do not meet directly with their Police Committees. In the Royal Parks Constabulary identical arrangements prevail.

The membership of the Royal Parks Constabulary Police Committee comprised the Director of Heritage and Royal Estate (Grade 3) as Chairman, with the Head of Division (Grade 5) as his Deputy, a representative from the Parks Management, a Councillor from Westminster and Richmond, together with a professional police consultant. The Home Office were also represented.

The Committee met three times each year over the past five years. The Chief Officer and his Deputy also served as members and reported at each meeting.

The Royal Parks Constabulary is a non-Home Department Police Force and is therefore not subject to the Police Act 1964. Nonetheless, it has an agreement under Section 96 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, with the Home Office and Police Complaints Authority, for the handling and supervision of the police complaints and discipline procedures. In a similar manner, although the Police Regulations do not apply, the spirit of the Regulations—with particular reference to overtime etc., entitlements—are applied in a like manner to Home Department Forces.

The Chief Officer and his Deputy have met with the Assistant Secretary of the National Union of Civil and Public Servants to provisionally discuss the recommendations of the Sheehy Report, and they will meet again once the Government announces its plan of implementation. No discussion has yet taken place or been asked for on the White Paper on Police. The Chief Officer and his Deputy are always available to the Staff Association to discuss matters of general concern to its members. The Chief Executive is likewise available to discuss similar issues with the Chief Officer or the membership as desired.

Licence Fees

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if it is his policy that the retail prices index formula for adjusting the BBC licence fee will continue in the years immediately ahead; and if he will make a statment.

Mr. Brooke: I announced on 21 June that I had commissioned Touche Ross to review the BBC's progress in achieving the efficiency and revenue gains identified by Price Waterhouse in 1990, and to advise whether the licence fee should remain linked to the retail prices index until the renewal of the BBC's royal charter. I have now received Touche Ross's report, and will announce the Government's conclusions shortly.

EMPLOYMENT

Smoking

Mrs. Peacock: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his answer of 5 July, *Official Report*, column *56*, if he will publish the independent legal advice that his Department has received on which he based his statement that section 2 of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 provides legal protection for employees at risk from passive smoking; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Department is advised on matters relating to health and safety at work by the Health and Safety Executive. The HSE's advice on the application

of health and safety law to passive smoking in the workplace is set out in its guidance booklet, "Passive Smoking at Work", a copy of which has been placed in the Library.

Mrs. Peacock: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his answer of 5 July, *Official Report*, column *56*, if he will publish the results of the recent surveys which indicate progress towards realising the aim of having the large majority of employees covered by a no smoking policy by 1995; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Summaries of surveys carried out in 1992 for the Health Education Authority and for the Health and Safety Executive have already been published. Further analysis of data from the HEA survey indicated that 52 per cent. of employees worked for organisations which took some action on smoking, and that 49 per cent. of the work force are in workplaces with a formal written smoking policy.

EC Social Fund

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when plans for the operation of European social fund objectives 3 and 4 will be submitted to the EC.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Following a round of consultation we expect to submit the final version of the European social fund objective 3 plan by the end of this month. A copy will be placed in the Library. The use of objective 4 is still being considered.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to implement objective 4 of the European social fund for January 1994 in respect of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: A final decision on the use of objective 4 has yet to be taken. Meanwhile, we are waiting to hear from the European Commission how much money will be allocated to each member state, including the United Kingdom, under objectives 3 and 4. It remains our view that the European social fund should continue to focus first and foremost on helping unemployed people.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how much European social fund resourcing the United Kingdom is expected to receive from *(a)* objective 3 and *(b)* objective 4 under the new European structural funds.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: We are waiting to hear from the European Commission how much money will be allocated to each member state, including the United Kingdom, for the European social fund under objectives 3 and 4.

Civil Servants

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many civil servants are working in the Employment Department offices in Caxton house, Tothill street, London.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: There are currently 736 civil servants working in Employment Department offices in Caxton house.

Age Discrimination

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make it his policy to develop a code of practice for public sector employers concerning age discrimination in employment.

Miss Widdecombe: Age discrimination is wasteful and short sighted. Our policy is to persuade employers in both the public and private sector to recruit and develop staff on merit regardless of age.

The civil service abolished age limits on recruitment to service-wide grades in 1990.

Recently I launched "Getting On"—a drive to combat ageism which offers employers a five point plan to do just this. It urges all employers to follow the lead of the best and drop age bars from job adverts; welcome applications from older people; select on ability; offer flexible arrangements; develop and train all staff, regardless of age.

Wages

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the average *(a)* public sector and *(b)* private sector weekly wage for each year since 1979.

Miss Widdecombe: Over this period, there have been changes in the composition of the public and private sectors due to privatisations and the contracting out of some jobs. The information available from the new earnings survey given in the table is for the sectors as constituted in April of each year.

Average gross weekly earnings of full time employees on adult rates—pay unaffected by absence: at April

	Public Sector £	*Private Sector* £
1979	90·9	87·9
1980	114·2	106·8
1981	131·7	118·7
1982	142·6	131·5
1983	154·3	143·1
1984	163·2	157·0
1985	172·1	170·3
1986	186·1	183·9
1987	197·3	199·7
1988	216·0	219·5
1989	235·6	241·4
1990	256·4	265·8
1991	283·0	285·4
1992	307·8	303·3
1993	321·0	315·3

Source: New Earnings Survey.

Training

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make it his policy to require training and enterprise councils to set targets for training those aged over 50 years and monitor their implementation.

Miss Widdecombe: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has no plans to do so. The Government remain committed, through their contract with training and enterprise councils, to equality of opportunity for all eligible people on training and enterprise programmes.

Pay Rates

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make it his policy to require the Employment Service to retain information on rates of pay for job vacancies.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M.E.G. Fogden to Dr. Lynne Jones, dated 25 October 1993:

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, the Secretary of State has asked me to write to you direct to respond to your Parliamentary Question to him about the Employment Service retaining information on rates of pay for job vacancies. This is something which falls within the responsibilities he has delegated to me as Chief Executive of the Agency.

Jobcentres do have information on rates of pay in their area. This is taken from details given by employers when they notify vacancies and from vacancies advertised in local newspapers. The information, which is rather generalised in nature, is used to advise employers and jobseekers who seek guidance on prevailing pay rates in a locality.

I hope this is helpful.

As decided by the Administration Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to written Parliamentary Questions will now be published in the Official Report. I will also place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

Wages Underpayments

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many prosecutions for underpayment of wages were made in each year since 1979; and what number of employees were involved.

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 22 October 1993]:* The information requested is provided in the table. The policy of the wages inspectorate under all Governments has been to seek compliance with wages council orders by advice and persuasion. Prosecution is usually considered only where an offence is deliberate or repeated and the evidence is considered sufficient.

Year	*Number of prosecutions for underpayment*	*Number of workers involved*
1979	9	26
1980	8	43
1981	8	40
1982	4	4
1983	2	8
1984	2	5
1985	2	2
1986	2	6
1987	4	10
1988	10	23
1989	9	21
1990	7	15
1991	15	31
1992	12	41

SCOTLAND

Parliamentary Television

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the locations of the television sets in his Department which can receive the live television feed from the Chamber of the House; and what is the total cost to his Department of this service.

Mr. Lang: Dover house, Whitehall is the only Scottish Office building which can receive the live television feed from the Chamber of the House. The total cost of the service is £17,600 per annum, including VAT and maintenance.

Toll Roads

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will issue guidelines for the development of toll road proposals.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Privately financed toll roads can be provided only in accordance with the New Roads and Street Works Act 1991, or by individual legislation. Guidelines on the Act were contained in a circular that was issued to Scottish local authorities by the Scottish Office in March 1992. Evaluation of a prospective concessionaire's proposals is a matter for the roads authority, but a statement is published with a draft toll order, under the 1991 Act, setting out the key points of an assignation agreement.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proposals he has to ensure adequate consultations on and evaluation of toll road proposals at all key stages.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Under the New Roads and Street Works Act 1991 the procedures for authorisation of a toll road are similar to those of the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984 that apply to publicly financed roads; there is therefore a similar approach to public consultation and public inquiry. Any scheme which is taken forward by means of individual legislation is subject to detailed scrutiny by Parliament.

Justices of the Peace

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what consideration he has given to arrangements for the appointment, operation and co-ordination of justices of the peace in his plans for reorganisation of local government in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. Friend intends to maintain the present arrangements for justices of the peace in the context of any amendments to the District Courts (Scotland) Act 1975 required to transfer responsibility for the district courts to the new local authorities proposed in paragraph 3.38 of "Shaping the New Future—The new Councils" (Cm 2267, July 1993).

Transport, Stranraer

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans there are to improve transport links from Stranraer to the main road and railway routes in the vicinity of Scotland's border with England.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The recent review of Scotland's key roads confirmed that the upgrading of the

A75, linking Stranraer to the A74, has substantially eliminated the operating difficulties on the route. However, there are minor schemes within the trunk roads programme for further improvements which emphasise safety and overtaking opportunities. The financing of these schemes will begin once projects of greater priority have been completed. With regard to rail links I understand that ScotRail and Dumfries and Galloway regional council are investigating the possibility of restoring a short section of track at Ayr to allow the Stranraer-Carlisle service to run via Mauchline. This could reduce the present journey time between Stranraer and Carlisle by around 25 minutes.

Local Government Reorganisation

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what consideration he has given to the setting up of a staff commission and a property commission to make recommendations in relation to the transfer of staff and property to the new authorities in his local government reorganisation.

Mr. Stewart: I have already announced that an independent staff commission will be set up to oversee the transfer of staff to the new councils. The Scottish Office will shortly be consulting the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and staff representatives on the remit and membership of such a body. My right hon. Friend also proposes to take powers to enable him to establish a property commission to oversee the transfer of property to the new councils. It is intended that the need for such a body should be the subject of discussions with local government in due course.

Scottish Cancer Trials Office

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has for the future of the Scottish Cancer Trials Office.

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what functions are performed by the Scottish cancer trials office; what funding has been available since 1980; what funding will be available in 1994-95; and if he will make a statement regarding the future of the Scottish trials office.

Mr. Stewart: None. The Scottish Cancer Trials Office is an independent organisation which, faced with withdrawal of funding by the Medical Research Council, is closing in August next year. The chief scientist office of the Scottish Office is, through its Scottish cancer therapy network, in close contact with the trials office about its closure arrangements. In addition the chief scientist office itself is always prepared to consider applications for the funding of soundly based research projects in this as in other health-related subjects.

Tourism

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total value of *(a)* local authority and *(b)* other public contributions made in 1993 to (i) the East Lothian tourist board and (ii) the Scottish Borders tourist board.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The total value of contributions to be made by *(a)* local authorities and *(b)* the Scottish tourist board to East Lothian tourist board and Scottish Borders tourist board during 1993-94 is set out in the table.

	SBTB	*East Lothian*
	£	£
Local Authorities	204,500	271,200
Scottish Tourist Board	85,000	54,000

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many tourists visited *(a)* East Lothian and *(b)* Berwickshire, and how many visitor bed-nights were recorded, in the most recent year for which figures are available.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Estimates of tourism volume are available only at the Scottish regional level and relate only to overnight stays of one or more nights. The information in respect of Lothian region and Borders region is as follows:

	United Kingdom residents	*Overseas residents*
Bednights in Lothian (1992)	4,200,000	5,500,000
Bednights in Borders (1992)	1,000,000	300,000

Sources: The United Kingdom Tourism Survey (UKTS) 1992.
International Passenger Survey (IPS) 1992.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people in *(a)* the Haddington travel-to-work area and *(b)* Berwickshire are employed in the tourism and leisure industries; and what proportion of the total work forces those figures represent.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Figures indicating employment in the tourism and leisure industries alone are not available. The information set out in the table incorporates the categories of tourism, leisure, distribution, hotels and catering and repairs.

TTWA	*Year*	*Number Employed*	*Percentage of TTWA Workforce*
Haddington	1991	2,540	22·5
Berwickshire	1991	1,194	23·0

Source: Census of Employment.

Travellers

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he proposes to take to review the current policy on travelling people in respect of Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The advisory committee on Scotland's travelling people will be consulted in reviewing current policy on travelling people during the course of 1994.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the target number of caravan pitches set by central Government for each local authority in

Scotland for use by travelling people together with the number of pitches provided in each local authority area to date.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The pitch targets set for each district and the pitches provided are listed in the table.

Region and District	Pitch Targets: Target	No. of pitches provided: Local Authority	No. of pitches provided: Private
Borders			
Berwickshire	15	—	—
Ettrick and Lauderdale	6	—	6
Roxburgh	10	—	—
Tweeddale	10	10	—
Central			
Clackmannan	20	16	—
Falkirk	28	15	—
Stirling	42	*13 (temp)	—
Dumfries and Galloway			
Annandale and Eskdale	12	—	12
Nithsdale	18	18	—
Stewartry	3	—	3
Wigtown	17	—	3
Fife			
Dunfermline	8	—	—
Kirkcaldy	18	—	—
North East Fife	20	20	—
Grampian			
City of Aberdeen	36	20	—
Banff and Buchan	20	[illegible]0	—
Gordon	—	—	—
Kincardine and Deeside	—	—	—
Moray	20	20	—
Highland			
Badenoch and Strathspey	7	—	—
Inverness	24	24	—
Lochaber	27	27	—
Nairn; Caithness Ross and Cromarty, Skye and Lochalsh, Sutherland	20	—	20
Lothian			
City of Edinburgh	40	20	—
East Lothian; Midlothian	20	—	—
West Lothian	43	23	20
Strathclyde			
Argyll and Bute	38	32	6
Cunninghame	24	24	—
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	12	—	—
Kyle and Carrick	8	8	—
Cumnock and Doon Valley	6	6	—
Dumbarton	20	20	—
Clydebank	—	—	—
Bearsden and Milngavie	12	—	—
Strathkelvin; Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	20	—	—
Glasgow	50	30	—
Monklands	32	16	—
Motherwell	56	14	36
Hamilton	42	22	20
East Kilbride	6	6	—
Clydesdale	15	—	—
Eastwood	—	—	—
Renfrew	16	16	16
Inverclyde	—	—	—
Tayside			
Angus	37	15	7
City of Dundee	20	20	—
Perth and Kinross	85	20	45
Total—Scotland	983	495	194

There is no identifed demand for travellers' sites in the areas of the Islands Councils.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proportion of all pitches available to travelling people are now provided by local authorities in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Seventy-two per cent.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the current membership of the advisory committee on travelling people setting out the qualifications of each existing member; when each member's term of service ends; and what is the level of remuneration paid to each member who receives any remuneration.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The committee's membership and qualifications are listed in the table. Their current term of office expires on 31 December 1994. The chairman and members are unpaid but they are eligible for travel and subsistence expenses.

Mr. H. M. Garland MBE—Chairman—Retired. Former Director of Social Work, Central Regional Council.

Mr. J. E. D. Cormie OBE—Deputy Chairman—Recently retired Chief Executive, Perth and Kinross District Council.

Mrs. J. Cameron JP MBE—Councillor, Bearsden and Milngavie District Council. Former Provost.

Mr. P. Collier MBE—Retired. Former Environmental Health Adviser in the Communicable Diseases Unit at Ruchill Hospital, Glasgow.

Mr. C. Douglas MBE—A founder member of the Committee in 1971 and a leader of Scotland's travelling people.

Mr. A. Harper BEM—Former manager of local authority travelling people's site at Double Dykes, Perth.

Miss M. Hendry—Project Manager of the Signpost project at Woodlands Teachers Centre, Glasgow which is involved in traveller education. Settled traveller.

Mr. R. A. J. Moodie—Recently retired Depute Director of Planning, Lothian Regional Council.

Mr. J. Pollock—Part-time Housing Consultant and former Director of Housing Services, Dumbarton District Council.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will set out the statutory authority for the setting up of the advisory committee on travelling people; and what plans he has to review its remit.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The advisory committee on Scotland's travelling people is a non-statutory body. Its remit will be reviewed before the current three-year term of office expires at the end of 1994.

Sheep

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the situation facing sheep producers who have been denied quota following the recent changes in the EC sheepmeat regime.

Sir Hector Monro: Until all the allocations of sheep annual premium quota have been completed, including those from the national reserve, I will not be in a position to say whether any producers will be left without quota. Quota is, however, transferable and it is open to sheep producers, including newcomers, to buy or lease quota within the prescribed transfer periods.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the size of the national sheep reserve available for distribution under the new EC sheepmeat regime.

Sir Hector Monro: The legislation provides for separate national reserves in the less-favoured and non less-favoured areas of the country. In both cases the size of the reserve depends in part on the amount of quota siphoned from sales of quota in the 1993 marketing year, since that quota is added to the respective reserve. As transfers of quota are still being processed, a final figure for the size of the reserves is not yet available.

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how much was spent on official hospitality in his Department in the financial year 1992-93.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 20 October 1993]:* My Department spent £94,385 on official hospitality during 1992-93. This figure includes expenditure on official hospitality in connection with events in Scotland arising from the United Kingdom presidency of the European Community.

Ambulance Service

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what was the percentage of ambulances in each service in Scotland that responded within *(a)* eight minutes and *(b)* 14 to 20 minutes to emergency calls in (i) 1992-93 and (ii) the first half of 1993-94;

(2) what was the number of ambulance staff in Scotland employed by the NHS in each year since 1990, using whole-time equivalents.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 21 October 1993]:* There is only one ambulance service for the whole of Scotland. The information is as follows:

Performance

	Responses	
	0-8 minutes *Per cent*	*14-20 minutes* *Per cent*
1992-93	51	95
April to August 1993[1]	53	96

Number of staff[2]

Year	*Ambulance-men/Women*	*Ambulance Officers and Control Assistants*	*Total*
1990	1,802·7	220·0	2,022·7
1991	1,963·9	223·0	2,186·9
1992	2,093·6	221·0	2,314·6

Notes:
[1] The latest dates for which information is available.
[2] The figures exclude administrative and clerical staff and other support staff employed by the Scottish Ambulance Service.

Plastic Cigarettes

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what policy his office has regarding the sale of simulated plastic cigarettes to children; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 21 October 1993]:* It is understood that simulated plastic cigarettes are occasionally sold as novelties. Their intrinsic safety is a matter for trading standards officers to assess. The Government deplore any activity which encourages children to think that smoking is a safe or desirable habit.

DEFENCE

Menwith Hill Monitoring Station

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the current arrangements with the United States National Security Agency for the operation of the Menwith Hill monitoring station in Yorkshire.

Mr. Hanley: Menwith Hill station near Harrogate is a Ministry of Defence site which has been made available to the US Department of Defence for use as a defence communications facility. It operates with the full knowledge and agreement of Her Majesty's Government.

Bergen-Hohne Firing Ranges

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the types of *(a)* weapon and *(b)* ammunition which are authorised for firing by British Army units on each of the firing ranges of the Bergen-Hohne ranges.

Mr. Hanley: The following types of weapon and ammunition are authorised for firing on each of the Bergen-Hohne ranges:

Range	*Equipment*	*Ammunition*	*Remarks*
M1A	Mortars	Illumination	Up to 120mm
1A	Guided Weapons	Swingfire TOW	Limited
	30mm Aircraft Helicopter	30mm APDS	Up to 120mm
	Milan		
150C	Mortars		Up to 120mm
1C	30mm	All types	
3	30mm	All types	Arc restrictions
5A	120mm, 30mm	Practice only	No HESH
5B	120mm	Practice only	
5C	120mm		No HESH
6	120mm		No HESH
7A	120mm	All types	
7B	120mm	All types	No HESH
7C	120mm	All types	Limited use
8A	120mm	All types	Limits Range 9
8B	120mm	All types	

Range	Equipment	Ammunition	Remarks
8C	30mm	APDS	Stops Range 9
9	120mm	All types	No HESH
10	30mm	APDS	Stops Range 9
10A			
10B	Anti Tank	Practice only	Limited use
10C	Anti Tank	Live	Limited use
11	120mm		Reduced use
11A	Hand Grenade		Limited use
11B	Rifle Range	7·62mm 5·56mm	
11C			
12	120mm		No HESH No night fire
13	Demolitions	PE4 ANFO Anti tank mine	Max 30 Kgs
19	120mm	APFSDS	Limited use
20	120mm MLRS		No HESH
21	120mm		Not used
22	7·62mm		ETR

HESH —High Explosive Squish Head.
APDS —Armour Piercing Discarded Sabot.
APFSDS —Armour Piercing Fin Stabilised Discarded Sabot.
PE4 —Plastic Explosive 4.
ANFO —Ammonium Nitrate and Fuel Oil (plastic explosive).

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the arrangements for clearance of expended and unexploded ordnance on the Bergen-Hohne ranges.

Mr. Hanley: Clearance of expended and unexploded ordnance is the responsibility of the Bundeswehr who administer the ranges.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the types and amounts of ammunition expended by British Army units on each firing range on the Bergen-Hohne ranges in 1992.

Mr. Hanley: The types of ammunition fired by the British Army on the Bergen-Hohne training ranges are as follows:

120mm MBT ammunition
a. High Explosive Squish Head
b. Squish Head Practice
c. Armour Piercing Fin Stabilised Discarded Sabot
d. Discarded Sabot Trace

30mm Scimitar Warrior Fox
a. Armour Piercing Fin Stabilised Discarded Sabot
b. Practice
c. High Explosive

Miscellaneous Ammunition
a. Inert Giant Viper
b. Swingfire Anti-Tank Missile Practice
c. 7·62mm Ball and Trace
d. 81mm illuminating mortar
e. MILAN
f. 3kg Aircraft bombs
g. MLRS
h. TOW

Details of the actual quantities expended could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will provide figures showing the extent of use made by British Army units of the Bergen-Hohne ranges in each year since 1985.

Mr. Hanley: British Army units have made use of the Bergen-Hohne ranges as follows since 1985:

Year	Weeks
1985	8
1986	8
1987	4
1988	12
1989	9
1990	9
1991	10
1992	5
1993	[1]10

[1] Planned.

Low-Flying

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy on informing *(a)* hon. Members and *(b)* local media when changes are made in the directional flow control measures in the United Kingdom low flying system.

Mr. Hanley: When significant changes are made to the United Kingdom low flying systems, hon. Members whose constituencies are affected are given appropriate notification as are the local media. The United Kingdom low flying system is, however, under continuous review and changes to arrangements such as directional flow control measures are made when necessary. It is not our practice to notify hon. Members and the local media of all such changes.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will place in the Library a copy of the map showing the general structure of the night low flying system.

Mr. Hanley: A copy of a map of the United Kingdom night low flying system is being placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which aircraft types in British military service are classified as light propellor-driven aircraft for the purposes of the low flying regulations.

Mr. Hanley: The aircraft types in British military service which are classified as light propellor-driven aircraft for the purposes of the low flying regulations are the Bulldog, the Chipmunk and the Islander aircraft.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if light propellor-driven aircraft and helicopters flying at altitudes between 500 and 2,000 ft above ground level are obliged to comply with the directional flow regulations in the United Kingdom low flying system.

Mr. Hanley: All military aircraft, including helicopters and light propellor-driven types, flying at altitudes between 500 and 2,000 ft above ground level are required to comply with the directional flow arrows in the United Kingdom low flying system, whether they are booked into the system or not.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the minimum authorised altitude for Nimrod aircraft flying over the sea.

Mr. Hanley: The minimum authorised altitude for Nimrod aircraft flying over the sea within three nautical miles of the United Kingdom coastline is 250 ft. Beyond three nautical miles from the coastline, the Nimrod is authorised to fly down to 200 ft during the day.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if low flying military jet aircraft seeking permission to enter class D airspace during the course of a low flying sortie are required to meet the regulations for such airspace in respect of *(a)* not exceeding an indicated airspeed of 250 knots and *(b)* maintaining a vertical separation from cloud of 1,000 ft.

Mr. Hanley: Low flying military jet aircraft seeking permission to enter class D airspace are not required to comply with the airspeed limit of 250 knots, which applies only to civil aircraft. They do, however, have to maintain a vertical separation from cloud of 1,000 ft if flying under visual flight rules.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which commanders in the Royal Air Force currently hold the authority to approve or decline unit requests to fly at less than 250 ft over the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement on the procedures in force for requests for and authorisations of such flying.

Mr. Hanley: Commanders-in-chief or officers of equivalent status may authorise flying at less than 250 ft, but not less than 100 ft in the tactical training areas in the United Kingdom. In practice, this authority is delegated to the air officer commanding of the group concerned. Units wishing to carry out operational low flying submit requests to group headquarters where they are scrutinised to ensure the activity represents the minimum necessary before authorisation is given.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what criteria are used in determining whether an environmentally sensitive location is granted Provost Marshal Prohibited or Provost Marshal Restricted area status, as opposed to low flying avoidance area status; and what are the differences between Provost Marshal areas and other types of low flying avoidance area, in terms of available sanctions on aircrew breaching these areas.

Mr. Hanley: In the majority of cases where it is agreed to grant avoidance status, a permanent, seasonal, or temporary low flying avoidance area will be declared, thus providing protection from military aircraft conducting low flying training. Exceptionally, if it is necessary to exclude all military aircraft including, wherever possible, those on operational tasks, a provost marshal prohibited or restricted area will be created. There is no difference between a provost marshal area and a low flying avoidance in terms of the available sanctions on aircrew breaching these areas.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the radius of provost marshal prohibited area PMP 103.

Mr. Hanley: Provost marshal prohibited area PMP 103, which applied to the Slimbridge Wildfowl Trust, is no longer in force. It was replaced in April 1987 by a seasonal avoidance which is in effect between 1 September and 15 April each year. It is not our practice to release detailed information on the dimesions of such avoidances.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if individual Royal Air Force flying units maintain their own lists of features for use as simulated targets; and what is the procedure for pre-surveying the areas surrounding these locations in order to ensure their suitability on environmental and safety grounds.

Mr. Hanley: Royal Air Force units maintain locally produced simulated target lists and these are reviewed regularly. Targets are carefully selected and account is taken of the location of nearby habitation and the environmental and safety factors involved.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what facilities for overland low flying at less than 250 ft were made available to (1) Royal Navy Sea Harrier pilots and (2) Royal Air Force Harrier pilots prior to deploying to the south Atlantic for combat operations during the Falklands war.

Mr. Hanley: Since 1979 fixed-wing flying below 250 ft in the United Kingdom low flying system has been restricted to three sparsely populated areas in northern Scotland, central Wales and the Borders which are designated as tactical training area. There is no record of any aircraft having been authorised to fly training sorties below 250 ft outside these areas in preparation for deployment to the Falklands.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to authorise fixed-wing low flying at night at less than 250 ft.

Mr. Hanley: There are no such plans.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if the towns specified for avoidance in the United Kingdom Military Low Flying Handbook are also marked as locations requiring avoidance on the pre-printed low flying charts used by aircrew.

Mr. Hanley: Military pilots are instructed to avoid flying low over major conurbations and towns and to avoid all other populated areas wherever possible whether they are listed for avoidance in the United Kingdom Low Flying Handbook or not. The boundaries of the avoidance areas around major conurbations are shown on the low flying charts used by aircrew. In addition, towns sufficiently large to qualify for formal avoidance status are shown as built up areas on the charts, together with some smaller towns, and aircrew will therefore be reminded of their location when planning sorties. The only towns specifically marked as

sites to be avoided are a number of small communities within tactical training areas, which are too small to show as built up areas but are to be avoided by aircraft carrying out operational low flying.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the low flying areas in which there is an upper limit on the number of aircraft which can operate within the area at one time; what is the numerical limit in each case; and what was the date of introduction of the limit in each case.

Mr. Hanley: The information requested is as follows:

Low Flying Area	*Number of aircraft*	*Date of Introduction*
LFA 7	30	October 1987
LFA 12	15	November 1990
LFA 17	20	October 1987

These limits apply to military fixed-wing aircraft, and do not include helicopters.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many formed Royal Air Force Vulcan flight crews held qualifications to fly at 100 ft above ground level in each year from 1977 to 1982.

Mr. Hanley: The information requested is not available.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to carry out a radar surveillance of low flying by military jet aircraft in the Barnsley/Doncaster/Rotherham/Sheffield low flying transit area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: There are no plans at present to carry out a radar surveillance of the transit area.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the total number of low-flying sorties conducted by each type of Royal Air Force aircraft from Canadian forces base Goose Bay during the 1993 flying season.

Mr. Hanley: The number of low flying sorties carried out by Royal Air Force aircraft at Canadian forces base Goose Bay during the 1993 season was as follows:

	Sorties
Tornado GR1	574
Harrier GR7	5
Tornado F3	2

Aircraft Noise

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the highest speed achieved by the USAF F-16 aircraft during noise measurement runs at RAE West Freugh in June 1990; and what plans he has for further measurements of the noise levels generated by this type of aircraft.

Mr. Hanley: The highest speed the F-16 achieved during the noise measurement trials at RAE West Freugh in June 1990 was 453 knots. There are no plans at present for further noise trials of the F-16 aircraft, which is not based in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 13 July, *Official Report*, column *466*, what was the result of the rearranged tests analysing the noise generated by the F-15E aircraft at low level; at what location the tests were held; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The trial to measure the noise generated by the F-15E rearranged for July did not take place, again due to the poor weather conditions. The trial was however conducted successfully at RAE West Freugh during September. The results are at present being analysed.

Missiles

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the current status of the conventionally armed stand-off missile programme.

Mr. Aitken: We are currently revising and updating our requirement paper. We expect to issue a formal request for proposals against a cardinal points specification to interested United Kingdom and overseas companies early in the new year.

Tornado

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many Tornado aircraft will be converted to GR1b for the maritime role; and how many of that number will be on the front-line strength of operational squadrons.

Mr. Hanley: We plan to modify a total of 26 Tornado aircraft to GR1b standard for the maritime role. Of these, 24 will be on the front-line strength of operational squadrons.

Ministry Police

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what arrangements will be made for providing substantive answers to parliamentary questions relating to the Ministry of Defence police after it becomes an agency.

Mr. Hanley: All chief executives of defence agencies are encouraged to reply to Members of Parliament direct, where the parliamentary question covers matters falling within their area of responsibility. The same will be true for the chief constable, Ministry of Defence police. In such cases, the MP will receive a standard reply from the Minister which states that the chief executive will be replying. The Minister's reply, together with the chief executive's letter, will be published in *Hansard*.

Goose Bay

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the amounts paid to the Canadian Government each year since 1987 for Royal Air Force use of Canadian forces base, Goose Bay.

Mr. Hanley: The amounts paid to the Canadian Government for the Royal Air Force use of the Canadian forces base, Goose Bay are as follows:

Year	*£*
1987-88	4,269,000
1988-89	5,262,000
1989-90	5,482,000

Year	£
1990-91	9,468,000
1991-92	12,309,000
1992-93	15,492,000

Jobs

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many jobs are dependent on defence exports *(a)* as reported in this year's statement on the defence estimates and *(b)* according to the United Kingdom defence statistics in 1993; how the two sets of figures are calculated; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: The "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1993" gives a figure of in excess of 100,000 jobs directly or indirectly dependent on defence exports. The 1993 edition of "UK Defence Statistics" gives in table 2·24 for the 1991-92 financial year figures of 75,000 for direct employment, and 70,000 for indirect employment dependent on defence exports. There is only one set of figures, which are those given in "UK Defence Statistics". These are calculated by comparing estimates of the value of defence exports based on data provided by HM Customs and Excise and the Society of British Aerospace Companies, with estimates of sales per employee for the main industries concerned based on data provided by the Central Statistical Office. More details of the methods used to obtain these employment estimates are given in an article in the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1988", volume 2.

RAF Sea Kings

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when RAF Sea Kings dedicated to search and rescue will begin to use a satellite-based navigation system; and when he expects all search and replace aircraft to be using the system.

Mr. Hanley: It is planned to equip Mk3 RAF Sea Kings with a global positioning system—GPS—a satellite-based navigation system. The Sea King Mk3a helicopter scheduled to be delivered to the RAF in 1996 will be fitted with GPS, and it is expected the whole RAF fleet will be equipped with GPS by late 1997. Royal Navy search and rescue helicopters are expected to be fitted with GPS within the next two years.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what navigation system is currently used by RAF Sea Kings dedicated to search and rescue.

Mr. Hanley: The main navigation systems used by the RAF search and rescue Sea Kings comprise a Decca Mk19 hyperbolic navigation system, a doppler radar, an air data system and a tactical navigation system. These are supported by VHF omni-range, instrument landing system equipment, a VHF and UHF homing system and automatic direction finding equipment. In addition, a horizontal situation indicator at each pilot station displays navigational steering information.

Defence Export Services Organisation

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many staff are employed within the Defence Export Services Organisation; and what is the breakdown of those posts.

Mr. Aitken: The following is a breakdown of the staff employed within the Defence Export Services Organisation:

Office	Staff numbers
London Based	263
Overseas	25
Directorate General Saudi Armed Forces Projects (1)	221
Malaysian Project Office (1)	33
Kuwait Programme Office (1)	21
Directorate of Sales (Disposals) British Forces Germany	43
Army Sales Team	60
Total	666

(1) Self funding.

Personnel Statistics

Mr. John Townend: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the number of *(a)* uniformed personnel and *(b)* MoD civil servants on 1 Janaury 1988; and what are the latest figures.

Mr. Hanley: The information is as follows:

	1 January 1988	1 September 1993
United Kingdom Regular Forces	317,300	267,200
MOD Civil Servants (Full-time equivalents)	144,800	(1) 128,000

Note:
(1) Of these some 33,000 are in the administration group, some 54,000 are specialist non-industrial staff and some 41,000 are industrial staff.

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many civil servants are working at his Department's offices in Whitehall.

Mr. Aitken: On 1 September 1993, there were some 3,400 full-time and part-time MOD civil servants working in the Whitehall area.

Pregnancy (Dismissals)

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence to what extent the negotiations on subsidiarity with the EC will enable him to adopt a policy of not paying compensation to women dismissed from the services on account of pregnancy.

Mr. Hanley: Liability of the Government to pay compensation to women dismissed from the armed forces on account of pregnancy between August 1978 and August 1990 was established following an agreed order of the High Court applying EC directive 76/207—the equal treatment directive. The Government believe that this directive is consistent with the principle of subsidiarity.

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many women were dismissed from the services as a result of pregnancy between 1978 and 1990; and on what authority the policy of dismissing such women was based up to 1990.

Mr. Hanley: Some 5,600 women were dismissed from the services on pregnancy between August 1978, when the EC equal treatment directive came into force, and August 1990, when the services discontinued the practice of dismissing women on pregnancy and introduced maternity leave.

The basis for the policy of dismissing service women on pregnancy prior to August 1990 was the exemption granted to the armed forces in the Sex Discrimination Act 1975.

Departmental Costs

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the estimated amount to be spent in 1993-94 in rent and other associated costs with the offices of his Department in Whitehall.

Mr. Hanley: The estimated amount to be spent in 1993-94 in rent and other associated costs on MoD headquarters offices in Whitehall will be about £58 million. This includes £30 million in rental charges payable to the Department of the Environment under the property repayment services scheme.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Freemasons

35. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what representations he has received regarding disclosure by freemasons in public life; and what action he has taken.

Mr. David Davis: Apart from representations by the hon. Member, my office has received six letters on this subject. The civil service management code has been amended to identify freemasonry as a possible conflict of interest. A copy is in the Library of the House.

"Realising Our Potential"

42. **Mr. Rathbone:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement about action so far implemented following publication of his White Paper on science technology and engineering "Realising Our Potential".

Mr. David Davis: Progress in implementing the White Paper has been excellent. We have established a new Council for Science and Technology to provide high-level advice. We have embarked on a technology foresight programme, aimed at achieving new working partnerships between industry, academia and Government. We have made preparations for the new research council structure, including appointing the first of the new part-time chairmen. We have announced a number of initiatives to promote public understanding of science, engineering and technology.

Market Testing

39. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the effect of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 on market testing in the civil service.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Government issued guidance in March this year which set out a framework for considering questions raised by the regulations. I am happy to say that Departments have made good progress in their market-testing programmes.

44. **Mr. Fabricant:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what analysis his Department has made regarding the likely outcome of a subsequent review of market testing within a given department.

Mr. Waldegrave: Departments have made good progress in their market-testing programmes. My officials in the efficiency unit are currently undertaking an analysis of the outcome of the market-testing programme for 1992-93, ending on 30 September. They will be reviewing their findings with Departments. I shall report on the results of their analysis when it has been completed.

Wildlife

Mrs. Gorman: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what research he has commissioned into development of natural wildlife in pocket parks.

Mr. Waldegrave: This is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. For my part, I have not commissioned any research on this topic. I understand, however, that the Ground Work Foundation and English Nature, bodies funded by his Department, are active in the development of such schemes.

Science White Paper

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what further plans he has to implement plans outlined in his White Paper on science published earlier this year.

Mr. Waldegrave: Since the White Paper was published, I have established the new Council for Science and Technology which meets for the first time on 9 November, launched the technology foresight programme and appointed the first of the new part-time chairmen of research councils. I will shortly be appointing the director general of research councils and the remaining chairmen and chief executives. We have launched a new grants scheme to aid small-scale initiatives in the public understanding of science. Finally, the first Forward Look on publicly funded science and technology will be published next April.

Citizens Charters

43. **Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list those charters and the specific targets where financial compensation is a remedy for failure to meet the charter's standards.

Mr. David Davis: There are seven charters containing provision for financial compensation. They are the British Rail passengers charter; London Underground customers

charter; Northern Ireland railways passengers charter; Contributions Agency contributors charter; Contributions Agency employers charter; and the Benefits Agency customer charter.

Mr. Amess: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what representations he has received on the effectiveness of the citizens charter.

Mr. David Davis: My right hon. Friend has received numerous representations about the effectiveness of the citizens charter, most recently at a series of regional forums where local public service managers have been discussing how they are putting charter principles into practice.

Nuclear Test Programme

Ms Mowlam: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what plans he has, following his recent statement on open government in relation to documents which continue to be withheld from public scrutiny beyond 30 years, to release documents having a bearing upon the health and safety of participants in Britain's nuclear test programme.

Mr. Waldegrave: The White Paper on open government (Cm 2290) published on 15 July 1993 states, in paragraph 9.28, that all Departments will, as resources can be made available:

"re-review all material currently withheld for longer than 30 years to see whether its sensitivity has passed and to release it if possible".

Records relating to Britain's nuclear test programme are the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence who will be arranging for these records to be reviewed as part of this undertaking.

HEALTH

NHS Trusts

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many applications for trust status have been made to the South East Thames regional health authority; how many have been approved; how many rejected; and what evaluation has been made of the performance of the trusts which have been approved against the prospectuses issued at the time of their applications.

Mr. Sackville: The information requested is shown in the table. The business planning process and financial performance of national health service trusts are monitored by the NHS management executive outposts. The main accountability tools for this purpose are a business plan, a strategic direction, annual accounts and an annual report.

Trust applications in the South East Thames region

	Applications	*Approved*	*Rejected*	*Deferred*	*Withdrawn*
1st wave	5	1	3	0	1
2nd wave	13	10	3	0	0
3rd wave	13	11	2	0	0
4th wave	12	7	0	[1]5	0

[1] Secretary of State will announce her decisions on these five applications at the turn of the year.

Medical Complaints Appeals

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will take steps to ensure equality of access to appropriate legal advice for patients and practitioners at medical complaints appeals; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: Professor Alan Wilson of Leeds university is chairing a full review of national health service complaints systems. He is due to report at the turn of the year.

Non-urgent Surgery

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish the names of hospitals and health authorities who had ceased non-urgent surgery on 30 September.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not available centrally. Early evidence indicates that most hospitals are managing their workload effectively. Guidance was issued by the national health service management executive to ensure that effective monitoring systems are in place so that local managers can identify problems early and take action to maintain a balanced activity throughout the year. A copy of the guidance EL(93)10 is available in the Library.

Fund Holding

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health in what circumstances fund-holding general practitioner practices are permitted to pool budgets for extra-contractual referrals with their local district health authority so as to ensure equity of treatment for patients of fund-holding and non-fund-holding general practitioners.

Dr. Mawhinney: General practitioner fund holders do not have a separate budget for extra-contractual referrals. All purchases made by general practitioner fund holders are subject to contracts. In their budgets, fund holders receive only their patients' fair share of national health service resources.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health on what criteria funds are awarded to fund-holding general practitioner practices *(a)* in their initial year of operation and *(b)* in subsequent years.

Dr. Mawhinney: The criteria for awarding funds to general practitioner fund holders are set out in "General Practice Fundholding: Guidance on Setting Budgets for 1993-94", a copy of which is available in the Library.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list, geographically by district health authority area, the name and address of each fund-holding general practitioner practice, the date upon which the practice achieved fund-holding status, the amount of money awarded to the practice in 1993-94 for the purchase of

services covered by the fund-holding regulations, the number of patients on the practice's list on the day that its funding was allocated, and the amount of funding per capita awarded to each practice for services covered by the fund-holding regulations.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not available centrally.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what average level of funding per capita was allocated in 1993-94 to fund-holding general practitioner practices in *(a)* England, *(b)* each regional health authority area and *(c)* each district health authority area to enable fund-holding practices to purchase those services covered by the fund-holding regulations.

Dr. Mawhinney: The average level of funding allocated to general practitioner fund holders per capita in England in 1993-94 was £152.

The average level of funding allocated to GP fund holders per capita by regional health authority in 1993-94 is shown in the table.

	£
Northern	166
Yorkshire	163
Trent	141
East Anglia	156
North West Thames	156
North East Thames	128
South East Thames	154
South West Thames	139
Wessex	153
Oxford	134
South Western	169
West Midlands	156
Mersey	163
North Western	143

The average level of funding allocated to GP fund holders per capita by district health authority is not available centrally.

Private Nursing Homes

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will consider holding centrally information of bed numbers in newly registered private nursing homes and residential care homes; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: We have no plans to do so.

Community Health Councils

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proposals she is currently considering for changing the name of community health councils; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: None.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action she is currently considering in respect of the future status and influence of community health councils in respect of NHS trusts; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: The role of community health councils is to represent the interests of the public. Many CHCs have developed effective working relationships with trusts which they use to carry out this role. We are interested in the spread of this good practice.

Extra-contractual Referrals

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list by *(a)* regional health authority and *(b)* district health authority the number of extra-contractual referrals that were refused for (i) the last 12 months and (ii) 24 months; on what grounds each was refused; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not available centrally. The grounds on which an extra-contractual referral can be refused are clearly laid out in "Guidance on Extra-Contractual Referrals" (EL(92)60), copies of which are available in the Library.

Overseas Staff and Premises

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the cost for the current financial year of her Department having *(a)* premises and *(b)* personnel overseas; and what were the comparable figures for *(a)* 12, *(b)* 24, *(c)* 36 and *(d)* 48 months ago.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Department does not hold data relating to the cost of staff based overseas for the financial years 1989-90, 1990-91 and 1991-92. However, during 1992-93 the Department spent a total of £215,362 on overseas personnel. During the current financial year the Department has spent a total of £118,386 to date. These figures relate to the salary and travel and subsistence costs of staff to overseas postings. The Department does not have seconded premises overseas.

Homelessness

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make it her policy to monitor the provision of community care services for homeless people.

Mr. Bowis: The social services inspectorate is currently carrying out a study in a sample of local authority areas on the way in which community care and housing policies are being co-ordinated. This will specifically address the provision of services for homeless people.

Patients (Spending)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the revenue spending on in and out-patients by each authority in England in 1991-92.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally on a purchaser basis.

Assessment Process

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if he will make it his policy to provide new guidelines to local authorities on their duties under the assessment process outlined in section 47 of the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990.

Mr. Bowis: Guidance setting out the legal framework within which authorities work has already been issued. Copies of the guidance, CI(92)34, are available in the Library.

Deaths (Inquiry)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will now set up a public inquiry into the mismanagement of patients at Birmingham orthopaedic, Stafford and Doncaster maternity hospitals and the resultant deaths.

Mr. Sackville: We have no plans to do so.

Drug and Alcohol Rehabilitation Services

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish monitoring information collected during her Department's review of drug and alcohol rehabilitation services.

Mr. Bowis: The report carried out for the Department by Goldsmith's college was published on 28 July and a copy was placed in the Library.

Caesarean Operations

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will consider having the numbers of caesarean operations to deliver babies collated centrally; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The numbers of caesarean operations have been collected centrally since 1973. I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Connarty) on 1 March at columns *29-30* for the latest available figures.

Charitable Trust Funds

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action she intends to take to ensure that the charitable trust funds held by regional health authorities by reason of the distribution of the national fund in 1974 are passed over to hospitals for the benefit of patients.

Mr. Sackville: None. This is a matter for the trustees of the charitable funds concerned.

Family Planning Services

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will provide details of the costs of family planning services in England in each year since 1990-91.

Mr. Sackville: Estimated total expenditure on national health service family planning services in England was £109·2 million in 1990-91 and £136·2 million in 1991-92, the latest year for which figures are available. The two figures are not directly comparable because of new reporting arrangements following the national health service reforms.

Rampton Hospital

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement in respect of the conditions and environment of patients at Rampton special hospital after her visit to the hospital on 3 August.

Mr. Bowis: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State did not visit Rampton hospital on 3 August but I did so on 30 September. I was impressed with the advances which have been made in the care and treatment of patients and with the commitment and dedication of the members of the staff and management whom I met. The refurbished ward which I opened, providing accommodation for 20 mentally ill men in individual rooms with their own washing and toilet facilities, represents a significant improvement in the living conditions of these patients.

With the Special Hospitals Service Authority we are committed to achieving and maintaining the highest standards of care at Rampton and the other two special hospitals, and to strengthening their professional links with local and regional national health service psychiatric services. Staff education has a key part to play in this and I was glad to have the opportunity following my visit of speaking at the signing of the agreement between Ashworth and Rampton hospitals and Sheffield Hallam university to designate the hospitals as joint colleges of the university.

Hospital Treatment (Bosnia)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what central Government funds were used for the cost of hospital treatment of Bosnian war victims; what is the total cost to date; what other uses the funds have been put to during the current financial year; what is the total amount of the reserves left; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: These costs have been met from moneys voted by Parliament for the national health service, out of the Department of Health budget for paying provider units the costs of treatments to all overseas visitors exempt from NHS charges. The total budget, the use of which is restricted to this specific purpose, is £12 million for this financial year of which about £6·1 million has been spent. To date, costs of treating Bosnians amount to £517,000 in 1992-93 and 1993-94.

Top Ten Hospitals

Mr. Milligan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the top 10 hospitals in Britain measured by their success rate in *(a)* general surgery and *(b)* heart surgery.

Mr. Sackville: Information on surgical success rates in hospitals is not available centrally. A system of medical audit is in place in every hospital, which provides confidential peer review by doctors of clinical standards and practices.

Hospital Closures

Mr. Waller: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if it is her policy to receive delegations from community health councils which have formally objected to hospital closures.

Dr. Mawhinney: Formal objections to hospital closures should be made to the district health authority.

Where the regional health authority supports the district health authority, it will refer the matter to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for a final decision.

Whether we receive a delegation from the community health council will depend on the view we take of the particular closure, taking account of all the relevant facts.

Capital Allocation

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to change the system of capital allocation.

Mr. Sackville: A steering group has been developing a new system for allocating captial to respond to changes in the new national health service. The group's proposals will need further development in the light of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's statement on 21 October. Allocations for 1994-95 will be based on existing arrangements.

Anencephaly

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the number of preventable cases of anencephaly and spina bifida caused by insufficient folic acid in the diet.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available. An expert advisory group report on folic acid and the prevention of neural tube defects, published in December 1992, confirmed evidence that women who increase their intake of folic acid when planning a pregnancy can significantly reduce the risk of having a baby with neural tube defect. A copy of the report is available in the Library.

Hearing Loss

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which units in this country provide psychiatric services for people with hearing loss; and what plans she has to continue supraregional funding for these units.

Mr. Bowis: Mental health services for deaf people are provided at Springfield hospital, London, Prestwich hospital, Manchester and Queen Elizabeth psychiatric hospital, Birmingham. The units at Springfield and Prestwich hospitals have received supraregional funding for seven years through to 1994 to give the units time to establish referral patterns for subsequent years.

"Patients Charter News"

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the estimated cost of production and circulation of the "Patients Charter News"; and if she will list its print total and number of editions each year; what is its purpose; to whom it is circulated; and who is responsible for its content.

Dr. Mawhinney: The patients charter has stimulated many innovative ideas and much good practice throughout the national health service. The patients charter news, published every other month, aims to share ideas with NHS staff to stimulate improved performance on the charter.

Forty-four thousand copies are printed of each edition. Copies are distributed to all parts of the NHS, including health authorities and hospitals.

The estimated annual cost of patients charter news for this financial year is £30,000. The patients charter unit of the NHS management executive has responsibility for the content of the newsletter.

NHS Premises (Tobacco Sales)

Mrs. Peacock: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 1 July, *Official Report*, column *618*, if she will publish the data on which she based the statement that the ending of sales of tobacco products on NHS premises has now largely been achieved.

Mr. Sackville: The reply was based on advice from regional health authorities. As the information provided varied in format, publication is unlikely to prove useful but the results showed that, on all but a handful of sites, sales of tobacco products had ceased. Action continues to ensure the remaining outlets comply with the policy as soon as possible.

South and East Cheshire Health Authority

Mrs. Ann Winterton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement setting out the conditions of service and remuneration of the appointment as executive directors of the South and East Cheshire health authority of Mr. Simon Cussons, Christine Hannah, Hilary Blumer, Neil Campbell, Paul Harvey, Dr. Leslie Klein and Mr. Gary Lucking.

Dr. Mawhinney: Mr. Simon Cussons is the non-executive part-time chairman of South and East Cheshire health authority, and was appointed by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for a term of office commencing 1 October 1993 until 31 March 1997. Chairmen of health authorities are remunerated within the range £15,125 to £19,285 per year, according to the district revenue budget. The appointment of non-executive members to district health authorities is a matter for regional health authorities. The annual remuneration of non-executive members of district health authorities is £5,000. The chief executive of a district health authority is appointed by the chairman and non-executive members, and the other executive members are appointed by the chairman, non-executive members and the chief executive of that authority. The remuneration and conditions of service of the chief executive and other executive members are a matter for the authority, within guidelines laid down centrally, copies of which are available in the Library.

Queen Victoria Hospital, East Grinstead

Mr. Renton: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if the burns and plastic surgery units will remain at Queen Victoria hospital, East Grinstead; and whether she will be able to attend the opening ceremony for the new burns unit at that hospital early in 1994.

Mr. Sackville: The burns and plastics services provided by Queen Victoria hospital were included in the specialty reviews which were carried out following the Tomlinson report and "Making London Better". The recommendations of the specialty review are available to inform the South East Thames regional health authority together with the Kent and Sussex purchasing agencies when deciding upon the provision of burns and plastic services for their residents. The Queen Victoria Hospital will become an independent national health service trust in April 1994, a decision which reflects the hospital's justified reputation as a centre of excellence.

Alzheimer's Disease

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what provision her Department is making over the next five years for the younger sufferers from Alzheimer's disease; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: The arrangements for assessing and meeting the needs of younger sufferers from Alzheimer's disease are decided by local health and social services authorities.

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the aims and methods of assessing Alzheimer's disease sufferers' needs; and if she will make it her policy to allow more weight in assessment to be given to the views of family carers.

Mr. Bowis: The introduction of the health checks on patients aged 75 and over in general practitioners' contracts provides an opportunity for the cognitive impairment caused by Alzheimer's disease to be detected. Under the new community care arrangements care managers are responsible for assessing the needs of sufferers from Alzheimer's disease and for arranging for their needs to be met. Guidance emphasises that carers views' should be taken into account and, where appropriate, carers should be offered a separate assessment.

Child Migrants

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what discussions she had during her recent visit to Australasia on her policy towards British child migrants; and if she will make a statement;

(2) pursuant to the announcement of the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Suffolk, Central (Mr. Yeo) of 19 May regarding the Child Migrants Trust, what progress has been made in discussions with the Australian Government regarding the child migrant scheme.

Mr. Bowis: Correspondence between myself and the Australian Minister for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs was already in train before my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's visit to Australia in September. It was not therefore a matter for my right hon. Friend to raise during her visit.

Officials in Australia have, through the British high commission in Canberra and the consular department of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, written to officials in my Department providing details of the activities, to date, of the Child Migrants Trust in Australia. Both Governments are funding the Child Migrants Trust in support of their record tracing and advisory activities.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will take steps to arrange financial assistance and retrospective payments to former child migrants who have incurred expenditure in returning to Britain to locate and be reunited with their natural families.

Mr. Bowis: The migration schemes for children from the United Kingdom in the care of voluntary and statutory agencies, were run mainly by voluntary bodies. The Government are funding the Child Migrants Trust to assist it in record tracing and in providing an advisory service, and continue to support constructive contacts between the trust and the voluntary bodies which ran the schemes. The Government did not deal with individual cases. We do not consider that it would be appropriate to provide financial assistance directly to former child migrants.

Dentistry

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list for each family health services authority since July 1992 *(a)* the number of patients seeking emergency dental treatment from their general practitioners, *(b)* the number of courses of dental treatment given by general practitioners and *(c)* the number of patient referrals of dental emergency cases referred to accident and emergency departments.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 21 October 1993]:* Information about the number of patients seeking emergency dental treatment from their dentists and the number of patients referred to accident and emergency departments for emergency dental treatment is not available centrally.

The number of courses of dental treatment for England for the period July 1992 to September 1993 is shown in the table. Since October 1990, the majority of treatment for children has been carried out under capitation arrangements where courses of treatment are not identified separately. Figures for adults and children, therefore, are not comparable.

General Dental Service—England
Number of courses of dental treatments
July 1992—September 1993

FHSA	*Adults*	*Children*	*Total*
Cleveland	369,555	73,630	443,185
Cumbria	338,625	36,281	374,906
Durham	337,890	51,994	389,884
Northumberland	184,219	23,283	207,502
Gateshead	120,675	12,995	133,670
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	166,550	24,226	190,776
North Tyneside	131,660	13,003	144,663
South Tyneside	82,757	10,490	93,247
Sunderland	160,977	19,461	180,438
Humberside	542,782	72,620	615,402
North Yorkshire	541,998	51,774	593,772
Bradford	324,423	34,536	358,959
Calderdale	143,770	13,557	157,327
Kirklees	252,634	27,671	280,305
Leeds	537,280	66,272	603,552
Wakefield	216,434	27,187	243,621
Derbyshire	575,467	66,015	641,482
Leicestershire	609,115	65,521	674,636
Lincolnshire	413,594	34,405	447,999
Nottinghamshire	719,506	90,378	809,884
Barnsley	124,232	15,911	140,143
Doncaster	186,843	29,499	216,342
Rotherham	137,179	22,534	159,713
Sheffield	378,459	42,302	420,761
Cambridgeshire	465,092	43,629	508,721
Norfolk	568,956	49,615	618,571
Suffolk	539,891	44,508	584,399
Bedfordshire	275,019	30,472	305,491
Hertfordshire	671,651	80,738	752,389
Barnet	123,839	27,158	150,997
Brent and Harrow	244,065	38,931	282,996
Ealing, Hammersmith and Hounslow	321,604	36,907	358,511
Hillingdon	149,341	16,970	166,311
Kensington Chelsea and Westminster	150,662	9,032	159,694
Essex	872,921	112,339	985,260
Barking and Havering	197,066	26,323	223,389
Camden and Islington	204,662	13,547	218,209

FHSA	Adults	Children	Total
City and East London	244,619	39,207	283,826
Enfield and Haringey	221,331	29,543	250,874
Redbridge and Waltham Forest	228,490	36,775	265,265
East Sussex	541,721	40,802	582,523
Kent	846,171	96,875	943,046
Greenwich and Bexley	237,794	38,914	276,708
Bromley	107,670	25,650	133,320
Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham	384,435	29,593	414,028
Surrey	676,006	71,844	747,850
West Sussex	555,669	51,331	607,000
Croydon	201,671	28,365	230,036
Kingston and Richmond	137,557	24,103	161,660
Merton, Sutton and Wandsworth	305,412	37,063	342,475
Dorset	577,023	41,248	618,271
Hampshire	1,200,796	93,460	1,294,256
Wiltshire	401,007	33,612	434,619
Isle of Wight	104,149	5,867	110,016
Berkshire	434,168	51,775	485,943
Buckinghamshire	364,331	39,991	404,322
Northamptonshire	374,080	35,003	409,083
Oxfordshire	332,881	31,362	364,243
Avon	779,511	70,834	850,345
Cornwall and Isles of Scilly	324,227	25,192	349,419
Devon	788,370	67,626	855,996
Gloucestershire	385,755	32,351	418,106
Somerset	406,295	34,695	440,990
Hereford and Worcester	509,949	52,321	562,270
Shropshire	303,768	31,680	335,448
Staffordshire	634,179	74,833	709,012
Warwickshire	337,708	30,487	368,195
Birmingham	630,222	77,623	707,845
Coventry	173,549	19,402	192,951
Dudley	201,674	18,780	220,454
Sandwell	177,813	13,620	191,433
Solihull	120,997	13,558	134,555
Walsall	137,287	19,251	156,538
Wolverhampton	162,244	10,732	172,976
Cheshire	696,882	79,348	776,230
Liverpool	277,480	47,775	325,255
St. Helens and Knowsley	187,891	26,659	214,550
Sefton	208,859	21,530	230,389
Wirral	230,016	26,954	256,970
Lancashire	879,956	112,147	992,103
Bolton	179,255	20,511	199,766
Bury	118,302	15,275	133,577
Manchester	291,239	33,669	324,908
Oldham	139,932	21,931	161,863
Rochdale	123,937	14,882	138,819
Salford	138,175	20,060	158,235
Stockport	249,835	25,285	275,120
Tameside	130,644	21,181	151,825
Trafford	179,255	22,745	202,000
Wigan	196,855	28,142	224,997
ENGLAND	31,160,435	3,469,176	34,629,611

British Nuclear Fuels plc

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of the health detriment to the United Kingdom population of the BNFL proposal of retaining intermediate and low-level wastes and return of high-level wastes.

Mr. Yeo: I have been asked to reply.

Since 1976, all BNFL's contracts for reprocessing overseas spent fuel included provision for the return of wastes. Under its proposals for waste substitution, BNFL would offer to return to customers, with whom it has such contracts, an equivalent amount in radiological terms of high-level radioactive waste in place of intermediate and low-level waste arising from reprocessing.

We have asked the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee for further advice on the integrated radiological toxic potential system, which BNFL proposes as the basis for determining radiological equivalence.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Lone Parents

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many of the lone parents claiming one-parent benefit are aged *(a)* under 16 years, *(b)* 16 to 19 years, *(c)* 20 to 24 years, *(d)* 25 to 29 years, *(e)* 30 to 34 years, *(f)* 35 to 39 years or *(g)* 40 years and over; and what percentage of mothers in each of those age groups are married or have previously been married.

Mr. Burt: Information about the age of one-parent benefit recipients is not held in all cases and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. Information on recipients' marital status is not available.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many of the lone parents claiming family credit benefit are aged *(a)* under 16 years, *(b)* 16 to 19 years, *(c)* 20 to 24 years, *(d)* 25 to 29 years, *(e)* 30 to 34 years, *(f)* 35 to 39 years or *(g)* 40 years and over; and what percentage of mothers in each of those age groups are married or have previously been married.

Mr. Burt: The numbers of lone parents in receipt of family credit analysed by age are in the table.

Age band	Number of lone parents in receipt of family credit
Under 16 years	n/a
16 to 19 years	1,240
20 to 24 years	17,820
25 to 29 years	37,040
30 to 34 years	48,360
35 to 39 years	46,840
40 years and over	54,520
Total	205,820

Notes:
1. These figures include both lone mothers and lone fathers.
2. Information is not available on the marital status of lone parents receiving family credit.

Source: 5 per cent. of sample of family credit recipients at 30 April 1993.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many of the lone parents claiming income support benefit are aged *(a)* under 16 years, *(b)* 16 to 19 years, *(c)* 20 to 24 years, *(d)* 25 to 29 years, *(e)* 30 to 34 years, *(f)* 35 to 39 years or *(g)* 40 years and over; and what percentage of mothers in each of those age groups are married or have previously been married.

Mr. Burt: The figures requested are in the tables. The figures in both tables include both female and male lone parents.

Table 1[1]
Income Support Recipients: Lone Parents by age group[2]

Age of Recipient	Number of Cases[3]
Under 16[4]	Nil
16 to 19	42,000
20 to 24	201,000
25 to 29	248,000
30 to 34	201,000
35 to 39	136,000
40 and over	158,000
Total	985,000

[1] *Source:* Income support statistics annual inquiry, May 1992.
[2] Includes both male and female lone parents.
[3] All numbers have been rounded to the nearest thousand.
[4] Young persons aged less than 16 cannot claim income support.

Table 2[1]: *Lone Parents*[2] *receiving Income Support by Age and Marital Status*

Age of Lone Parent	Marital Status: Never Married Cases	Never Married Per cent.	Previously Married[4] Cases	Previously Married[4] Per cent.	Currently Married[5] Cases	Currently Married[5] Per cent.	Total Cases[3]
Under 16	Nil	0·0	Nil	0·0	Nil	0·0	Nil
16-19	38,000	91·0	Less than 500	0·5	4,000	8·6	42,000
20-24	162,000	80·9	7,000	3·2	32,000	15·9	201,000
25-29	139,000	56·2	32,000	13·0	76,000	30·8	248,000
30-34	67,000	33·1	57,000	28·1	78,000	38·8	201,000
35-39	31,000	22·5	53,000	38·7	53,000	38·8	136,000
40 and over	21,000	13·1	81,000	51·0	57,000	35·9	158,000
Total	458,000	46·5	229,000	23·2	299,000	30·4	985,000

[1] *Source:* Income support statistical annual enquiry, May 1992.
[2] Includes both male and female lone parents.
[3] Numbers may not sum due to rounding. All numbers have been rounded to the nearest thousand. Percentages are correct to one decimal place.
[4] "Previously Married" refers to lone parents who are widowed or divorced.
[5] "Currently Married" refers to lone parents who are separated from their partners, or prisoners' partners.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many lone parents claiming housing benefit are aged *(a)* under 16 years, *(b)* 16 to 19 years, *(c)* 20 to 24 years, *(d)* 25 to 29 years, *(e)* 30 to 34 years, *(f)* 35 to 39 years or *(g)* 40 years and over; and what percentage of mothers in the above age groups are married or have previously been married.

Mr. Burt: Information is not available in the form requested. Such information as is available is in the tables.

Lone parents in receipt of Housing Benefit by age and marital status: With Income Support

Age	Never Married Cases	Never Married Percentage	Previously Married Cases	Previously Married Percentage	Currently Married Cases	Currently Married Percentage	Total 000s
Under 16	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
16-19	16	89	*	1	2	10	18
20-24	122	81	5	4	23	16	151
25-29	115	57	27	14	58	29	200
30-34	54	34	47	30	54	35	155
35-39	24	24	39	39	37	37	100
40 and over	15	14	54	51	37	35	105
Total	345	47	173	24	211	29	729

Lone parents in receipt of housing benefit without income support—details of marital status not available

Age	Total (000s)
Under 16	—
16 to 19	*
20 to 24	7
25 to 29	18
30 to 34	21
35 to 39	18
40 and over	22
Total	87

Source: Housing benefit management information system, annual 1 per cent. sample, May 1992.
Notes:
1. Total number of lone parents includes men, but 95 per cent. are female.
2. * indicates more than zero but fewer than 500.
3. "Married": indicates that the recipient has a partner.
4. "Previously Married": refers to recipients who are widowed or divorced.
5. "Currently Married": refers to recipients who are permanently separated from their partners because their partner is in prison.

Maxwell Pensioners

Mr. Page: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what discussions he has had with the Maxwell pensioners trust on arbitration on disputes between pension funds and financial bodies, as a means of reducing legal and accountancy fees; and if he will make a statement on developments to date.

Mr. Hague: The trustees of the Maxwell pensioners trust have taken an initiative to promote an overall settlement to the many disputes relating to missing Maxwell pension scheme assets. The Government welcome this initiative, which is being taken forward on behalf of the trust by Sir Peter Webster, a retired High Court judge.

Although the details of Sir Peter's work must necessarily remain confidential to him and those directly involved, I and my right hon. Friend stay in touch with overall progress through Sir John Cuckney, chairman of the trust.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the number of beneficiaries, and the total amounts paid, for housing benefit among *(a)* income support claimants, *(b)* family credit claimants and *(c)* others.

Mr. Burt: Information is not available in the form requested. Such information as is available is in the tables.

Table 1

Housing benefit recipients	*Number of cases (thousands)*
With Income Support	2,593
With Family Credit	[1]97
Others	1,645
Total	4,334

Notes:
1. [1]Due to the 26 week entitlement of family credit, approximately 12,000 customers are in receipt of both family credit and income support.
2. Figures show housing benefit recipients in Great Britain in May 1992.
Source: Housing benefit management information system, annual 1 per cent. sample.

Housing Benefit Expenditure

	£ million
Estimated outturn 1992-93	7,348

Notes:
It is not possible to apportion expenditure between income support, family credit and other recipients.
Source: Departmental report.

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the estimated cost to the Exchequer of reducing the taper for withdrawal of housing benefit from 65p in the pound to 50p in the pound.

Mr. Burt: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mrs. Golding) on 13 July 1993 at column *478*.

Disability Allowances

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many successful claims have been made for disability working allowance; what is the total number of applications made; and if he plans to amend the current regulations governing this benefit.

Mr. Hague: By 30 September 1993, 34,958 applications had been received and 7,917 claims had been successful. We have commissioned the Policy Studies Institute to carry out research to help us evaluate disability working allowance. Until we have completed the evaluation, we do not envisage making any major structural changes to the benefit.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the most recent figures for waiting times from application for appeal to appeal hearing for *(a)* attendance allowance, *(b)* mobility component disability living allowance, *(c)* care component disability living allowance and *(d)* disability working allowance.

Mr. Burt: In the year ending December 1992, the last period for which figures are available, the average time taken from application to clearance was:
(a) attendance allowance—33·2 weeks
(b) disability living allowance—17·9 weeks
Figures for disability living allowance are not broken down into the components.
No appeals on disability working allowance were received.
Source: Annual Social Security Appeal Tribunal Statistics 1992, published by the Government Statistical Service.

Benefits and Allowances

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what proportion of gross domestic product, annually, was spent on *(a)* income support, *(b)* invalidity benefit, *(c)* mortgage interest tax relief, *(d)* attendance allowance and *(e)* disability living allowance, for each year since 1988.

Mr. Burt: The information requested on items, *a, b, d* and *e* is given in the table.

	1988-89 Per cent.	*1989-90 Per cent.*	*1990-91 Per cent.*	*1991-92 Per cent.*	*1992-93 Per cent.*
Income Support	1·6	1·5	1·6	2·0	2·4
Invalidity Benefit	0·7	0·7	0·8	0·9	1·0
Attendance Allowance	0·2	0·2	0·2	0·3	0·2
Disability Living Allowance	—	—	—	—	0·3

Notes:
1. The information requested on item *c* is not a matter that is dealt with by this department.
2. Disability living allowance commenced in April 1992.

Adjudication Cases

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many cases are considered by adjudicating officers in an average month; and what number of cases is considered by each officer during an average working day.

Mr. Burt: The information is not available.

Civil Servants

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many civil servants are working at the Adelphi, 1-11 John Adam street, London.

Mr. Burt: There were 758 staff working for the Department at the Adelphi on 1 October 1993, the latest date for which figures are available.

Industrial Injuries

Mr. Clelland: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many claims for industrial disablement benefit for a prescribed industrial disease were received by the Benefits Agency in the period since January 1991; how many of those claims resulted in medical examinations; what were the outcomes of the medical examinations; how many appeals were received from claimants against the examinations; and what were the results of any subsequent medical appeal tribunal hearings.

Mr. Scott: The administration of industrial injuries disablement benefit is the responsibility of Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Mr. Michael Bichard to Mr. David Clelland, dated 26 July 1993:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking how many claims for industrial disease were received by the Benefits Agency in the period since January 1991; how many of those claims resulted in medical examinations; what were the outcomes of the medical examinations; and what were the results of any subsequent medical appeal tribunal hearings.

Information on the number of prescribed claims and the outcomes of such claims since January 1991 is not available in the format requested and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost. However, it may be helpful if I set out such information as is available below.

Information on Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit—Prescribed Disease new awards is only available from October 1992, prior to this date new awards were not identified separately. In the period October 1992 to June 1993 there were 3,354 new awards. The information is based on a 100 per cent. count of the number of new awards of Disablement Benefit in benefit offices and is subject to amendment.

Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit—Prescribed Disease new claims for the same period were 35,324. However some claims made during this period will not have been assessed yet and therefore the figures are not directly comparable. The information is again based on a 100 per cent. count of claims received in benefit offices and is subject to amendment.

I hope you find this information helpful. A copy will appear in the Official Report and a copy will also be placed in the Library.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Sweeteners

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will publish the annual review of the markets for intense and bulk sweeteners as considered by the Food Advisory Committee in November 1992.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: This would not be appropriate since the commercially sensitive data for this review were obtained on assurances of confidentiality. However, some information on the development of the United Kingdom market in recent years has been made available by my Department in food surveillance paper No. 37 "Dietary Intake of Food Additives in the UK" and in papers presented by my officials in the course of scientific proceedings.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proposals her Majesty's Government intend to put forward at the convention of contracting parties on the sea disposal of wastes, to be held in London on 8 to 12 November, in regard to the permanent ban on disposal of radioactive wastes at sea.

Mr. Jack: Any proposals the United Kingdom may make to the 16th consultative meeting of the London convention 1972 on the sea disposal of radioactive wastes will be made in the light of discussions at that meeting on the final report of the convention's intergovernmental panel of experts on radioactive waste disposal at sea (IGPRAD).

Lobster Creels

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will make a statement on damage done to lobster creels by seals.

Mr. Jack: I am not aware of any proven instances of damage to lobster creels by seals. If the hon. Member has any such evidence I would be glad to receive it.

Animal Transport

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will support the German proposal in the Council of Agricultural Ministers working group that an overall limit be placed on the journey time of animals being transported for slaughter.

Mr. Soames: In submitting proposals for further rules to protect animals in transport, the Commission drew attention to the difficulties of enforcing overall journey limits for particular categories of animals. In the negotiations we are seeking strong and enforceable welfare safeguards for all types of animals, including appropriate feeding and watering intervals, based on the high standards which we are applying in this country.

Coppice Schemes

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans she has for supporting short-term coppice schemes for alternative fuels; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: Short-rotation coppice has the potential to become an important alternative crop as a source of renewable energy. The Government are supporting it already. Short-rotation coppice is eligible for establishment grants of between £975 and £1,575 per hectare under the woodland grant scheme and for the better land supplement of £600 per hectare except when grown on land under the arable area payments scheme.

We have, however, secured agreement in Brussels that short-rotation coppice can be grown on non-rotational set-aside land, where it will be eligible for annual set-aside payments of around £320 per hectare in England from 1994. We are pressing for changes to facilitate its establishment on set-aside land. Electricity generated from short-rotation coppice will be able to benefit from the provisions of the third Non-Fossil Fuel Obligation Renewables Order, announced by my hon. Friend the

Minister for Energy on 21 July 1993, and the Government are funding work on the growing of short-rotation coppice and its conversion to energy.

Set Aside

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will make it her policy to include trees in set-aside schemes; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: We have been pressing for the EC rules of the arable area payments scheme to be amended to enable land which is taken out of production under forestry schemes to count against set-aside. My right hon. Friend the Minister raised this most recently at the Council of Agriculture Ministers this week, and we will continue to argue in favour of establishing this important link between set-aside and forestry.

Seed and Plant Breeders

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will make a statement on the future of farm-sowed seeds, royalties, older United Kingdom seed varieties and plant breeders' rights for the next five years.

Mr. Jack: I touched on most of these issues in my scrutiny debate speech on EC plant variety rights on June 23 this year—*Official Report* of European Standing Committee A of 23 June 1993. In particular, we are anxious to promote a healthy and competitive United Kingdom plant breeding industry which will provide farmers with a flow of new, improved plant varieties. We are therefore anxious to see a Community solution to the farm-sowed question which balances the breeders' and the farmers' interests and will provide breeders with the necessary funding to develop new varieties. We fully support the introduction of Community plant variety rights which will not only simplify the process of obtaining protection for new plant varieties across the whole EC, but will also propose some controls on farm-sowed seed. This aspect is under debate at the moment. We intend to ratify the revised UPOV convention at the earliest opportunity to provide breeders with the increased protection this affords. We are also pressing the Community to reduce the regulation of traditional vegetable varieties used by the amateur gardener.

Brucellosis

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how long it took to discover the link between the Cheshire and Anglesey brucellosis infected herds; what was the reason for the time taken; and if she will make a statement on difficulties which may have arisen in the training exercise to obtain comprehensive information as early as possible on livestock movements affecting the herd where the outbreak was first discovered.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Brucellosis was officially confirmed on a farm in Anglesey on 1 October on the basis of preliminary laboratory tests completed on 30 September. Also on 30 September the herd in Cheshire was restricted and testing set in hand. This is normal procedure and there was no delay nor particular difficulty in tracing the animals concerned.

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information she has on the original source of the recent outbreak of brucellosis; and what assessment has been made of whether it is likely to have been imported from overseas.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Some of the cattle now affected with brucellosis were imported. Investigations are under way to determine the source of infection and it would be premature to speculate at this stage. The last confirmed case of brucellosis in Great Britain was in 1990.

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will make a statement on the recent outbreaks of brucellosis in herds in Anglesey and Cheshire.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: On 1 October brucellosis was confirmed in a dairy herd on a farm in Anglesey. All animals in that herd were slaughtered by 5 October with compensation. All the cattle which had left that herd since 26 June are being traced and slaughtered.

All the animals which came on to the premises since 26 June have been traced back to the place of origin and testing undertaken there. This has shown a further three positive reactors to brucellosis in a herd in Cheshire. These three animals have been slaughtered. All other animals on these premises have been tested and are negative at this time but the herd remains under restriction and will be retested in due course. We are currently tracing all the animals, over 500 on 130 premises, which have left these premises since 17 June and the animals which were in contact with the three reactors before they came on to the premises. Further action may be necessary as the investigations continue.

Levies and Refunds

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will list the amounts in pounds sterling paid in the EC for *(a)* import levies and *(b)* export refunds since 1987 by product up to the latest available date; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: The following table provides details of EC expenditure on export refunds by product, and the total amount of agricultural import levies, from 1987 to 1992. No breakdown by product is available for the agricultural import levies.

Export refunds expenditure

£ million

	1987	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*
Cereals	2,271	2,091	1,742	1,774	2,612	2,323
Rice	71	52	39	27	63	72
Sugar	1,090	1,062	950	657	878	929
Olive oil	17	43	61	97	78	34
Oilseeds	46	17	4	0	0	0

	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992
Fruit and vegetables	48	43	51	58	66	83
Wine	14	30	29	39	39	54
Tobacco	31	29	41	44	45	40
Milk	1,746	2,091	1,913	1,382	1,622	1,499
Beef	632	522	879	788	897	943
Sheepmeat	0	0	0	0	0	0
Pigmeat	81	117	130	123	139	92
Eggs and poultry	109	132	153	126	118	137
Fisheries	0	0	0	0	0	0
Non-Annex II products	424	408	361	363	493	495
TOTAL	6,580	6,637	6,353	5,478	7,050	6,701
Import levies collected	1,170	1,021	840	833	1,134	969

Sources:

Export refunds; 1987-1991: Financial reports on the European agricultural guidance and guarantee fund.
1992: Draft financial report.

Import levies; 1987-1991: 1991 European court of auditors report.
1992: 1993 Budget.

Beef Premium Scheme

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations she has had regarding the administration of the beef special premium scheme.

Mr. Jack: I have received correspondence from hon. Members and others: representations have declined as the new arrangements have become more familiar to the livestock industry.

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what plans she has to review the beef special premium scheme to make it simpler to operate, fairer to rearers and finishers without distorting the market and capable of securing the existing compensation for reduced intervention support;

(2) what discussion she has had regarding the National Farmers Union proposals to simplify and improve the beef special premium scheme; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: My officials have had two meetings with representatives of the livestock industry, including the National Farmers Union, to review the beef special premium scheme. We are continuing to examine ways of simplifying the scheme in consultation with the industry within the constraints of the European Community legislation.

Arable Area Payments

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will list the number of applications in each country in England under *(a)* the main arable area payments scheme and *(b)* the simplified scheme in 1993; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: A total of 27,705 applications were made under the main arable area payments scheme and 18,789 applications under the simplified scheme in England. Because applicants had to submit a single area aid application in respect of all their land, some applications will cover a number of holdings which may be situated in more than one county. In such cases the application will be linked to the county in which the applicant's main holding is situated. I will publish information on this basis as soon as it is available.

Export Refunds

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will list the amounts in pounds sterling paid out in the United Kingdom on export refunds in each of the last six years by product; what were the amounts exported in each case; and if she will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Responsibility for this matter is delegated to the Intervention Board Executive Agency and I have asked the chief executive to reply to the hon. Gentleman direct.

Letter to Mr. Eric Martlew from Guy Stapleton, dated 25 October 1993:

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has asked me to reply to your priority written Parliamentary Question tabled for answer on 25 October 1993:

> To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, if she will list the amounts in pounds sterling paid out in the United Kingdom on export refunds in each of the last six years by product, and what were the amounts; and if she will make a statement.

The export refunds paid out in the United Kingdom and quantities exported in respect of those refunds paid are detailed in the attached schedule. The figures have been obtained from the EAGGF Accounts, for the last six available years, which are submitted to the EC Commission on an annual basis to support the funding claim.

I am sending a copy of this letter to the House of Commons Library and the Public Information Office.

Third country export refund expenditure 1987 to 1992

	1987[1]		1988[2]		1989[3]		1990[3]		1991[3]		1992[4]	
	£	Tonnes	£	Tonnes	£	Tonnes	£	Tonnes	£	Tonnes	£	Tonnes
Cereals	296,299,293	3,919,160	201,966,824	3,129,304	202,628,790	4,861,005	199,980,565	5,470,636	134,543,908	1,589,879	206,383,276	3,080,216
Sugar	26,519,571	97,533	48,018,765	153,770	28,986,981	117,264	26,290,260	145,837	37,656,947	122,953	46,610,553	146,895
Processed fruit and vegetables	960,933	16,372	1,848,406	23,587	1,309,927	20,935	821,434	24,381	2,706,192	33,198	2,694,951	31,453
Milk and milk products	106,444,089	171,020	88,876,550	123,610	97,080,697	163,824	83,637,776	179,361	97,906,686	159,290	108,987,872	164,433

	1987[1]		1988[2]		1989[3]		1990[4]		1991[4]		1992[4]	
	£	Tonnes	£	Tonnes	£	Tonnes	£	Tonnes	£	Tonnes	£	Tonnes
Beef and veal	21,508,927	33,400	22,456,333	29,045	21,455,967	23,459	23,743,843	22,921	13,913,038	13,655	29,797,349	22,801
Pigmeat	962,125	4,708	809,419	3,555	1,475,978	5,683	2,646,176	10,330	2,201,868	8,399	1,725,045	6,767
Eggs[5]	406,652	1,593	554,021	2,126	529,491	1,923	651,964	3,455	387,740	2,513	412,416	2,462
Poultry[5]	1,977,596	8,613	2,702,788	12,182	2,874,545	18,398	2,441,917	18,071	2,571,468	20,900	2,220,936	16,522
Whisky	34,621,910	678,347	30,386,772	378,255	19,702,438	982,522	29,626,579	1,105,847	50,622,074	1,133,763	39,484,203	1,013,320
Processed goods	45,374,159	288,216	32,153,843	210,146	51,815,158	404,370	38,976,367	429,889	49,664,432	377,141	54,186,929	457,642
Other commodities[6]	53,504	367	35,342	276	70,046	433	113,478	1,773	103,987	1,292	88,404	1,138
Total	535,028,659	5,219,329	429,809,063	4,065,856	427,930,018	6,599,816	408,830,359	7,412,501	392,278,340	3,462,983	492,591,934	4,943,649

[1] The EAGGF year for 1987 ran from 1 January to 13 November 1987.
[2] The EAGGF year for 1988 ran from 14 November 1987 to 15 October 1988.
[3] The EAGGF year for 1989 ran from 16 October 1988 to 16 October 1989.
[4] The EAGGF years 1990, 1991 and 1992 ran for the same duration as 1989.
[5] The quantity figures for eggs and poultry do not include eggs for hatching or live chicks, which are recorded as numbers rather than tonnage.
[6] Includes rice, olive oil, oil seeds, fresh fruit and vegetables, wine and fish.

Forestry

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what contribution the United Kingdom has made to the steering committee of the joint Food and Agriculture Organisation/Economic Commission for Europe/International Labour Organisation committee on forest technology, training and management in 1993.

Sir Hector Monro: I have been asked to reply.

The Forestry Commission has been an active participant in the work of the joint committee on forest technology, management and training, although the United Kingdom is not currently represented on the steering committee. The objectives and operation of the joint committee are being reviewed at present by the parent bodies, including the European Forestry Commission of the Food and Agriculture Organisation, one of whose vice-chairmen is an official of the British Forestry Commission.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 26 October 1993

DEFENCE

Gibraltar

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information Her Majesty's Government have been given since 1963 by the French authorities on the degree of radioactive contamination suffered by British citizens resident in Gibraltar.

Mr. Aitken: None. I am not aware of any such contamination that would warrant investigation.

French Nuclear Tests

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will ask his French counterpart for information provided by the French nuclear authorities under article 34 of the Euratom treaty since 1963 in connection with French atmospheric nuclear tests in Reganne, Algeria.

Mr. Aitken: No. Article 34 of the Euratom treaty does not apply to military activities.

Inhumane Weapons

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to ratify the 1981 inhumane weapons convention.

Mr. Hanley: I refer the hon. Member to the answer my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office gave to the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) on 22 October, *Official Report*, column *371*.

Tornado Collision

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the Tornado aircraft involved in the mid-air collision over Cumbria on 23 June was the same aircraft that overflew the village of Clayton, near Doncaster, South Yorkshire during its sortie.

Mr. Hanley: The Tornado involved in the mid-air collision was part of a two-aircraft formation; neither aircraft passed near the village of Clayton. Their route took them some 40 nautical miles north of Clayton, on their westbound heading towards Cumbria.

Low Flying

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many operational low-flying sorties were authorised in *(a)* the northern Scotland tactical training area, and *(b)* the central Wales tactical training area in each month from (i) January 1979 to December 1987, (ii) November and December 1990 and (iii) from May 1992 to the latest date available.

Mr. Hanley: Figures for operational low-flying sorties are not available. The numbers of operational low-flying movements authorised into the northern Scotland and central Wales tactical training areas in each month during the periods requested are set out in the table. A breakdown by month is not available for 1979.

	Northern Scotland	*Central Wales*
1979		
Total	664	123
1980		
January	262	31
February	0	0
March	6	41
April	67	67
May	0	0
June	0	0
July	0	0
August	0	0
September	0	0
October	0	0
November	130	9
December	161	23
TOTAL	626	171
1981		
January	175	46
February	0	0
March	15	0
April	89	0
May	0	6
June	6	7
July	0	0
August	0	0
September	251	0
October	24	0
November	0	0
December	41	0
TOTAL	601	59
1982		
January	0	0
February	37	0
March	136	0
April	59	0
May	2	0
June	0	0
July	0	0
August	0	0
September	0	0
October	0	4
November	0	0
December	2	0
TOTAL	236	4
1983		
January	48	2
February	30	0
March	41	0
April	309	0
May	90	0
June	144	0
July	79	0
August	91	50
September	98	0
October	69	0
November	349	6
December	289	13
TOTAL	1,637	71
1984		
January	3	0

	Northern Scotland	Central Wales
February	0	11
March	67	26
April	78	10
May	30	5
June	0	4
July	23	0
August	0	0
September	0	0
October	26	8
November	163	0
December	158	0
TOTAL	548	64
1985		
January	194	18
February	39	11
March	26	15
April	0	0
May	0	0
June	0	0
July	0	0
August	0	0
September	0	0
October	0	0
November	0	0
December	0	0
TOTAL	259	44
1986		
January	250	9
February	154	6
March	16	0
April	34	0
May	0	0
June	0	0
July	16	11
August	0	0
September	28	26
October	41	11
November	0	0
December	0	0
TOTAL	539	63
1987		
January	0	1
February	69	20
March	99	33
April	93	175
May	0	0
June	14	2
July	8	5
August	0	0
September	21	0
October	207	4
November	7	0
December	0	2
TOTAL	518	242
1990		
November	210	26
December	9	9
1992		
May	0	33
June	248	0
July	198	0
August	6	9
September	2	0
October	0	68
November	2	26
December	26	0
1993		
January	64	76
February	125	12
March	103	13
April	57	51
May	12	2
June	8	0
July	0	1
August	27	3

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what sources of weather data for individual low flying areas are available to the tactical booking cell, RAF West Drayton, for onward transmission to aircrews; and what changes have been made to the meteorological data collection facilities in low flying areas since 1979.

Mr. Hanley: The tactical booking cell, RAF West Drayton has no involvement in the transmission of weather data to aircrews. Before flying, aircrew receive a full and comprehensive meteorological briefing from the professional meteorological staff at their station. These staff have direct access to the facilities of the Meteorological Office at Bracknell.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many low-level training sorties were carried out by Royal Air Force V-bomber aircraft from Goose Bay, Labrador, in each year from 1963 to 1982.

Mr. Hanley: The information requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost and effort.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the changes made to the weather minima for visual flight rules operations in the United Kingdom low flying system since 1979.

Mr. Hanley: My noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Defence will write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many low flying sorties were booked in the United Kingdom low flying system by aircraft from RAF Germany in each month from January 1992 to the latest available date, broken down by aircraft type.

Mr. Hanley: The numbers of sorties booked in the United Kingdom low flying system by aircraft from RAF Germany, which on 1 April 1993 was redesignated No. 2 Group RAF Strike Command, during the period from January 1992 to August 1993, the latest date for which data are available, are set out in the table.

	Harrier	Tornado	Jaguar	Chinook	Other helicopters	Total
1992						
January	58	343	0	0	0	401
February	188	349	0	0	0	537
March	87	479	0	0	1	567

	Harrier	Tornado	Jaguar	Chinook	Other helicopters	Total
April	85	343	0	0	0	428
May	192	241	0	2	1	436
June	230	239	0	1	0	470
July	309	243	0	0	0	552
August	61	186	0	0	0	247
September	88	170	0	0	0	258
October	180	447	0	0	0	627
November	84	186	0	1	0	271
December	110	157	26	0	10	303
TOTAL	1,672	3,383	26	4	12	5,097
1993						
January	104	300	0	0	0	404
February	247	359	0	0	0	606
March	288	483	0	0	3	774
April	29	225	0	0	0	254
May	112	255	0	2	3	372
June	181	408	0	4	0	593
July	48	251	0	1	1	301
August	52	293	0	0	1	346
TOTAL	1,061	2,574	0	7	8	3,650

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the minimum authorised altitude at which aircrew are trained to fly in *(a)* the tri-national Tornado training establishment and *(b)* each of the fast jet operational conversion units; and what changes have taken place in these authorised minima since 1985.

Mr. Hanley: The minimum authorised heights at which aircrew are permitted to fly are as follows:

(a) Tri-national Tornado Training Establishment—500 ft.
(b) Fast Jet Operational Conversion Units—250 ft.

The only change to have taken place in the authorised minima since 1985 occurred in 1991 when the authorised minimum height for all tri-national Tornado training establishment crews was raised from 250 ft to 500 ft.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on what date the crew of the three Tornado F.3 aircraft of No. 29 squadron Royal Air Force which were involved in an unauthorised overflight of the community of Rigolet, Labrador, on 12 April, arrived at Canadian forces base Goose Bay.

Mr. Hanley: The aircrews of the aircraft concerned, which were staging through Canadian forces base Goose Bay en route to Alaska, arrived at Goose Bay on 12 April 1993. The incident occurred as they were approaching Goose Bay on their inward flight.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what warnings were given laterally and vertically to the low-flying military jet aircraft operating between approximately 2100 hours and 2130 hours on 10 August overflying the village of Clayton-with-Frickley, South Yorkshire, that there was a helicopter operating in the vicinity; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: A number of Tornado aircraft from RAF Cottesmore conducted routine low-level training in the areas at about the times stated on 10 August. No military helicopters were booked to low fly in the area at the time, and no notification was received under the civil aircraft notification procedure or by other means of any civil aircraft activity.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the dates, nationality, number and type of aircraft, host air base, and host unit for all exchange visits by foreign air force units to the United Kingdom over the last five years; and what was the minimum authorised altitude for low flying by foreign aircrew involved in each of the exchange visits.

Mr. Hanley: The information requested is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost and effort.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what communications took place between Royal Air Force officers and the Canadian authorities between February and June 1990 concerning changes in the radii by which RAF aircrew deployed to Goose Bay for low-level training were required to avoid hunting and fishing camps.

Mr. Hanley: The local files containing details of this exchange have since been destroyed and the information requested is therefore not available. Any changes in flying regulations resulting from the exchange would have been reflected in the appropriate operations directives issued by the Canadian authorities at Goose Bay at the time.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what disciplinary action was taken against the leader of the formation of Tornado F3 aircraft from No. 29 squadron Royal Air Force which was involved in an unauthorised overflight of the community of Rigolet, Labrador, on 12 April.

Mr. Hanley: Local action was taken against the individual concerned, but it is not our practice to give details of such action. Letters of apology were sent to the mayor of Rigolet by the leader of the formation and by the Officer Commanding No. 29 Squadron.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what numerical limits on US Air Force aircraft low flying in the United Kingdom have been agreed with the United States authorities since 1990 in order to accommodate increased low flying by aircraft from RAF Germany.

Mr. Hanley: A limit of 18,800 low flying sorties by Third United States Air Force aircraft in the United Kingdom low flying system was agreed for 1991 in order to provide leeway for increased low flying in the United Kingdom by aircraft from RAF Germany. Since then, Third United States Air Force low flying has reduced as a consequence of the withdrawal of aircraft from the United Kingdom and it has not been necessary to impose any specific ceiling on activity.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the numbers of low flying sorties, by each specified foreign air arm, in the United Kingdom low flying system for each month from January 1992 to the latest date available; and how many of the sorties for each air arm were authorised to minimum heights of *(a)* 250 ft, *(b)* 500 ft and *(c)* 1,000 ft or above.

Mr. Hanley: The numbers of sorties flown by aircraft of foreign air forces in the United Kingdom low flying system in each month from January 1992 to September 1993, the latest date for which information is available, are shown in the table. This flying is carried out under reciprocal arrangements which permit RAF aircraft to fly at low level in the countries concerned. The figures exclude low flying by foreign aircraft based in the United Kingdom.

Information on authorised minimum heights could be provided only at disproportionate cost and effort. In general, sorties will not have been authorised below 500 ft or, in the case of German and Belgian aircraft, 1,000 ft.

	Jan.	*Feb.*	*March*	*April*	*May*	*June*	*July*	*Aug.*	*Sep.*	*Oct.*	*Nov.*	*Dec.*	*Total*
1992													
Netherlands	—	12	115	18	139	62	74	—	106	32	2	2	562
France	—	—	106	2	9	30	26	—	194	—	2	22	391
Italy	—	6	4	6	86	32	54	45	6	—	—	—	239
Denmark	10	—	48	32	—	19	25	—	38	—	—	24	196
USA	—	4	76	1	16	1	10	—	52	3	8	—	171
Germany	—	—	72	26	42	26	—	—	58	4	—	2	230
Belgium	—	—	62	—	23	16	62	—	14	2	—	4	183
Canada	—	—	—	2	36	2	—	—	2	3	—	—	45
Spain	—	—	—	—	—	20	—	—	—	—	—	—	20
Portugal	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	4	2	—	—	6
Turkey	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0
TOTAL	10	22	483	87	351	208	251	45	474	46	12	54	2,043
1993													
Netherlands	—	137	—	8	5	—	21	15	12	—	—	—	198
France	2	88	4	2	13	—	—	12	71	—	—	—	192
Italy	—	4	13	—	—	24	138	43	24	—	—	—	246
Denmark	—	44	6	14	4	30	8	—	82	—	—	—	188
USA	—	24	—	21	—	51	—	35	80	—	—	—	211
Germany	—	—	6	—	2	—	16	6	82	—	—	—	112
Belgium	—	—	4	16	—	—	—	5	34	—	—	—	59
Canada	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0
Spain	—	—	—	—	—	14	—	—	—	—	—	—	14
Portugal	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	27	—	—	—	27
Turkey	—	—	—	—	4	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0
TOTAL	2	297	33	61	28	119	183	116	412	0	0	0	1,251

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if the crew of the three Tornado F3 aircraft of No. 29 squadron Royal Air Force which were involved in an unauthorised overflight of the community of Rigolet, Labrador, on 12 April, had confirmed in writing prior to their flight that they had read and understood the Canadian forces base Goose Bay flying orders.

Mr. Hanley: The aircrew concerned had not read the Canadian Forces Goose Bay flying orders as they were not planning to operate out of Goose Bay other than for transit in and out of the air base, en route for Alaska.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the *(a)* recorded height and *(b)* aircraft type of the military fast jet aircraft that overflew the village of Clayton-with-Frickley in South Yorkshire at approximately 1359 hours on 22 September; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: A Tornado aircraft from RAF Cottesmore was conducting a routine low-level training sortie in the area at about the time stated on 22 September. We have no reason to believe the aircraft flew below the permitted height of 1000 ft.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the minimum authorised altitude for the flight by three Tornado F3 aircraft of No. 29 squadron Royal Air Force from Canadian forces base Goose Bay which overflew the community of Rigolet, Labrador, at approximately 2 pm on 12 April.

Mr. Hanley: 2000 ft.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many sorties by Royal Navy Sea Harrier aircraft in the United Kingdom low flying system at less than 250 ft were authorised in each year since 1979.

Mr. Hanley: The available statistics on operational low flying in the United Kingdom low-flying system do not distinguish between sorties flown by Royal Navy Sea Harrier aircraft and those flown by Royal Air Force Harrier aircraft. The Sea Harrier, however, carries out very little flying below 250 ft over land.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if the crew of the three Tornado F3 aircraft of No. 29 squadron Royal Air Force which were involved in an unauthorised overflight of the community of Rigolet, Labrador, on 12 April received a briefing from Canadian forces personnel on the environmental restrictions in force for military flying from Goose Bay prior to their flight.

Mr. Hanley: The aircrews concerned did not receive a briefing from Canadian forces personnel before their flight, as the flight originated in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proportion of the required continuation training flying hours of Royal Air Force Tornado aircrew consisted of low altitude flying *(a)* before and *(b)* since 1991.

Mr. Hanley: Until very recently the Tornado continuation training syllabus has not specified any minimum requirement for low-flying training. The general principle which has applied and continues to do so is that aircrew should carry out the minimum necessary low flying consistent with acquiring and maintaining the necessary skills. This position did not change in 1991.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the bird strike incidents involving Royal Air Force fast jet aircraft operating from Canadian forces base Goose Bay since 1990, providing for each incident *(a)* the date, *(b)* the location, *(c)* the height and speed of the aircraft, *(d)* the species or type of bird involved and *(e)* the category of damage to the aircraft.

Mr. Hanley: There has been only one recorded bird strike since 1 January 1990. On 31 August 1993, a Tornado GR1 hit an unidentified bird species 130 nautical miles north west of the Goose Bay airfield. There was no damage to the aircraft, which was operating at 120 ft and 420 knots.

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many low-level sorties have been conducted from Canadian forces base, Goose Bay during 1993 by Royal Air Force Tornado F3 aircraft; and if he will indicate the dates during which Tornado F3 aircraft were deployed at Goose Bay.

Mr. Hanley: Royal Air Force Tornado F3 aircraft carried out two low-level sorties at Goose Bay during 1993. These aircraft were deploying to Alaska, but staged through Goose Bay, and were there from 12 to 15 April.

Exercise Red Flag

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which RAF Tornado GR1 squadrons sent crews to participate in *(a)* the second two-week period and *(b)* the third two-week period of Exercise Red Flag 93-1; and where their pre-exercise work-up training was conducted in each case.

Mr. Hanley: No. 2 (Army Cooperation) Squadron sent crews to participate in the second two-week period of Exercise Red Flag 93-1, and carried out work-up training in the United Kingdom. No. 9 Squadron sent crews to participate in the third two-week period, and their work-up training was carried out at Goose Bay, Canada.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if the Tornado GR1 crews responsible for ferrying aircraft from Canadian forces base Goose Bay to Nellis air force base for Exercise Red Flag 93-1 in October 1992 also participated in the exercise; and where their pre-exercise work-up training was conducted.

Mr. Hanley: Yes. Pre-exercise work-up training was carried out at Goose Bay.

B52 Bombers (Near Miss)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he has yet received a report from the US Air Force on the incident in which two of its B52 bombers on a NATO exercise narrowly avoided a civilian helicopter near Aberdeen on 7 September; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: An initial report has been received from the United States air force and the joint air miss section is currently investigating this incident. The joint air miss working group's final report will be published in due course.

Overseas Staff and Premises

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the cost for the current financial year of his Department having *(a)* premises and *(b)* personnel overseas; and what were the comparable figures for *(a)* 12, *(b)* 24, *(c)* 36 and *(d)* 48 months ago.

Mr. Hanley: The information is not held in the form requested. We are, however, currently forecasting a sum of £2·27 billion for 1993-94 for the operating costs incurred in countries where there are significant numbers of permanently garrisoned United Kingdom military personnel. The comparable figure for 1992-93 is £2·34 billion and for 1991-92 £2·50 billion. Figures for earlier years are not available.

Conservative Party Conference

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the total cost to his Department for arrangements arising from the 1993 Conservative party conference in Blackpool.

Mr. Hanley: In response to a routine request from the Lancashire police, a small number of specialist military personnel were deployed to assist the police in searching the conference area for explosive devices and on standby for potential bomb disposal tasks. No readily identifiable additional costs to the defence budget arose from this operation.

In addition, staff from Ministers' private offices visited Blackpool in order to deal with departmental work. Travel, subsistence and communications costs were incurred on defence votes.

Officers and Other Ranks Ratio

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the ratio of officers to other ranks in each of the three armed services in 1980 and 1992.

Mr. Hanley: The ratio of officers to other ranks in each of the three armed services in 1980 and 1992 were as follows:

	1 April 1980	1 April 1992
Royal Navy (including Royal Marines)	1:6·1	1:5·2
Army	1:8·3	1:7·4
Royal Air Force	1:5·1	1:4·7
All Services	1:6·6	1:5·9

Hercules Accident

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the progress being made in the investigation of the accident to Hercules XV193; what is the expected date of completion of the accident investigation; and what is the expected date of publication of the military aircraft accident summary.

Mr. Hanley: The board of inquiry has completed its investigation and the findings are now being considered. This process should be completed by late December. Publication of the military aircraft accident summary will follow shortly thereafter.

Shackleton Aircraft

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the Shackleton aircraft was first clear for carriage of nuclear weapons.

Mr. Hanley: The Shackleton maritime aircraft was first certified for carriage of American nuclear depth charges in the mid-1960s.

"Bridging for the 90s"

Mr. Couchman: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the production order for the "Bridging for the 90s" equipment.

Mr. Aitken: I am pleased to announce that the "Bridging for the 90s" (BR90) production contract negotiations have concluded very satisfactorily. The production order was issued and accepted on 22 October 1993. The value of the order is approximately £140 million.

The BR90 family of bridges is planned to enter service between January 1996 and June 1997 as follows:

January 1996
General Support Bridge
November 1996
Close Support Bridge
May 1997
Two Span Bridge
June 1997
Long Span Bridge

BR90 will be deployed with Royal Engineer units in both Germany and the United Kingdom.

This order will secure up to 250 jobs at the prime contractor, Thompson Defence Projects in Wolverhampton, as well as 50 jobs at Unipower in Watford and Tipton and many more at the other sub-contractors.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Sour Gas

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what research his Department has carried out into the *(a)* toxicity and *(b)* inflammability of sour gas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: None.

Farm Incomes

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is his estimate of the *(a)* gross and *(b)* net farm income in Northern Ireland in each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Ancram: The two measures of agricultural income published by the Department of Agriculture are net of all material and service input costs. The broader measure is total income from farming which gives the sum available to reward farmers, their spouses and family workers for their labour and enterprise and to provide a return on their own capital invested. The second, narrower, measure is farming income which is the sum available to reward only farmers and their spouses for their labour and enterprise and to provide a return on their own capital invested. Figures for the period 1983-92 are as follows:

£ million (current prices)

	Total income from farming	Farming income
1983	130·3	90·2
1984	163·5	122
1985	125·4	81
1986	106·9	61·1
1987	161	113·7
1988	184·1	136·3
1989	212·8	160·6
1990	155·3	103·3
1991	180·3	125
[1]1992	224·2	168·1

[1] Provisional.

Land Ownership

Rev. William McCrea: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the Government's estimate of the acreage of land in Northern Ireland owned by foreign companies and trusts based *(a)* in the Republic of Ireland and *(b)* elsewhere outside the United Kingdom.

Mr. Ancram: The information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Chief Electoral Officer

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish the report of the Chief Electoral Officer for Northern Ireland for 1992-93.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: The Chief Electoral Officer's report has been laid before Parliament today. Copies are available in the Library of the House.

ENVIRONMENT

Environmental Action Fund

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the launch of the 1994 environmental action fund announced on 16 August.

Mr. Yeo: Since the launch of the environmental action fund for 1994, applications have now been received and are

being assessed. I have asked the Civic Trust, which manages the local projects fund on behalf of the Department, to extend its remit to include the management of all new projects commissioned in 1994. The Department will continue to manage existing projects and strategic funding.

Warehouse Racking Systems

Sir David Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if the Government will take steps to implement the Wood committee's recommendation that warehouse racking systems in England be removed from the list of rateable appliances in the Plant and Machinery Order.

Mr. Curry: We are currently considering all the Wood committee's recommendations as part of the preparation for the 1995 rating revaluation.

Special Waste

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 15 July, *Official Report*, columns *587-88* in respect of special waste, when he will have the information available; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: Waste regulation authorities hold some of the information asked for, but we do not at present collect it centrally. We are, however, looking at ways of improving the coverage of our special waste statistics and are aiming to complete our studies and our consultations in the first half of 1994.

Drinking Water Provision

Mr. Allen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what provisions exist for the provision of drinking water in public places; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: Under section 14 of the Public Health Act 1925, local authorities may provide drinking fountains for public use in any convenient public place. With the consent of the local authority, any person may make similar provision. It is for each local authority to decide whether to provide such facilities, having regard to their own priorities and the availability of resources.

Water Disconnections

Ms Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps the Government are taking to ensure compliance with section 63(1) of the Water Industry Act 1991; and if he will list the number of disconnections notified to local authorities under this section, broken down by local authority district.

Mr. Yeo: Breaches of compliance should come to the attention of the local authority on which the water company has failed to serve, within the required period, notice of its failure to reconnect, in the time specified, the service pipe to a house which it has earlier disconnected. Numbers of disconnections notified to local authorities under section 63(1) of the Act, broken down by local authority district, are not available centrally.

The latest figures for domestic disconnections in the financial year 1992-93 in the area of each OFWAT customer service committee region is set out in the following table. Each entry covers one of the privatised water and sewerage undertakers, together with figures for the water supply companies operating within that area.

Region.	*Number*
Central	3,100
Eastern	926
North West	495
Northumbria	754
South West	300
Southern	4,800
Thames	3,665
Wales	2,448
Wessex	315
Yorkshire	1,833

EC Funds

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what discussions he has had with the London Boroughs Association on the campaign to win European Community structure funds for London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry: I have had no discussions with the London Boroughs Association on this matter.

Lead Pollution

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to prescribe pollution control standards for lead.

Mr. Yeo: The Government's long-standing policy is to reduce exposure to lead wherever it is practical to do so. This policy is currently implemented in a number of ways, including setting pollution control standards for lead in air, water, food and drinking water.

Minerals

Mr. William O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what plans he has to present safeguards for the environment through the revision of Mineral Planning Guidance 3; and if he will make a statement;

(2) when he intends to publish the results of the consultation on the revision of MPG3; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he will publish the names of organisations and individuals who have made representations regarding changes to MPG3.

Mr. Baldry: A list of those organisations that responded to my Department's initial consultation exercise on the effectiveness of MPG3 was placed in the Library of the House in June 1992. My right hon. and learned Friend the then Secretary of State announced on 25 March that we intended to proceed to consultation on revised planning guidelines which would reflect the Government's commitment to the protection of the environment. We will do this as soon as possible. The results of this consultation exercise will be published in due course.

Countryside Stewardship Scheme

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, further to his answer of 20 July, *Official Report*, column 99, on the countryside stewardship scheme, what is the cost of the additional payments for open access.

Mr. Yeo: For agreements entered into in 1991 and 1992, expenditure in respect of open access sites under the countryside stewardship scheme is expected to be £565,700 in 1993-94.

Local Government

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the cost, to date, of the Local Government Commission's review of local government in England and the expected full cost of the completed review.

Mr. Baldry: The Local Government Commission incurred expenditure of £2·056 million in 1992-93. We are making available some £3·259 million to fund the Commission's activities in 1993-94 and have made provision of £3·300 million and £3·439 million for the two following years. These figures are being reviewed in the usual way as part of the public expenditure round.

Disabled Facilities Grant

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will exclude works pensions from income calculations for disabled facilities grant;

(2) if he will revise disabled facilities grant regulations to take account of average mortgage payments;

(3) if he will encourage the use of disabled facilities grant in cases where rehousing effectively and economically meets the needs of disabled people;

(4) what plans he has to amend disabled facilities grant regulations.

Sir George Young: The Department is currently reviewing options for change to the house renovation grant system in the light of responses to the consultation paper issued on 21 June. This review covers disabled facilities grants and will include the points raised by the hon. Member.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many applications for disabled facilities grant have been *(a)* successful and *(b)* unsuccessful, in each year since 1990.

Sir George Young: The number of successful applications for disabled facilities grants for England and for Wales is shown in table 2·19 of the publication "Housing and Construction Statistics—Part 2". Figures for the number of disabled facilities grants paid out for individual local authorities is shown in the publication "Local Housing Statistics". Copies of these publications are available in the Library.

The Department does not have any information about unsuccessful applications for the disabled facilities grant.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what studies have been undertaken to identify the number of disabled facilities grant claimants who have received financial assistance from local authority social services departments; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: The Department is not aware of any such studies undertaken or of any planned for the future.

Private Tenants (Home Purchase)

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will introduce measures to enable private sector tenants to buy their homes; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: No.

Extending the right to buy to the private rented sector would discourage landlords from letting their property. The sale of privately owned property to sitting tenants is a matter for negotiation between landlord and tenant.

Council House Sales

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the total value of receipts from council house sales, to date, resulting from tenants exercising their right to buy.

Sir George Young: Figures for receipts resulting from council tenants exercising their right to buy from local authorities are not separately collected by the Department. However, between the introduction of right to buy in 1980 and the end of June 1993, the total value of council dwelling sales to sitting tenants, net of discounts, is estimated to be £17·7 billion.

The number of sales to sitting tenants during this period was almost 1,240,000, and 92 per cent. of such sales resulted from tenants exercising their right to buy.

Water Meters

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many and which water companies have installed pre-payment meters in the last six months.

Mr. Yeo: I understand that four water companies have installed pre-payment meters in the last six months. The companies are as follows:

Bristol Water plc
Mid-Kent plc
North West water Ltd.
Severn Trent Water Ltd.

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many reported instances of self-disconnections there have been in the pre-payment metering trial being undertaken by Severn Trent water authority.

Mr. Yeo: I understand that to date there have been 113 instances of self-disconnection in the pre-payment metering trial undertaken by Severn Trent Water Ltd. The majority were reconnected within 48 hours.

Lappel Bank

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what advice he has received from English Nature on whether the intertidal mud flats of Lappel bank on the Isle of Sheppey, Kent, qualify on scientific grounds for inclusion within the proposed Medway Estuary and Marshes special protection area and Ramsar site.

Mr. Yeo: English Nature has advised that Lappel bank is a good quality productive feeding and sheltering ground

for a range of bird species and is an integral part of the Medway estuary and marshes potential special protection area. I understand that the area of Lappel bank is less than 1 per cent. of the proposed Medway SPA.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will reconsider his provisional intention to exclude Lappel bank from the Medway estuary and marshes special protection area following the judgment of the European Court of Justice in case C-355/90 relating to the Santona marshes in Spain.

Mr. Yeo: The Secretary of State is currently considering whether the Medway estuary and marshes should be designated as an SPA and whether Lappel bank should be included. The Santona marshes judgment is one of many factors which he will take into account before reaching his decision.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what account he has taken of the research into the hydrodynamic effects of port expansion in the rest of the estuary, carried out by the university of Hull and commissioned by English Nature; and if he will now consider the revocation of the extant planning permission on Lappel bank.

Mr. Yeo: The Secretary of State is currently considering whether the extant planning permission for the reclamation of 22 ha at Lappel bank should be revoked. The report on the "Medway Estuary Coastal Process and Conservation", produced by the Institute of Estuarine and Coastal Studies, is one of many factors which he will take into account before reaching his decision.

EC Habitats Directive

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment on what date the EC habitats directive will come into force.

Mr. Yeo: Member states are required by 5 June to bring into force the laws, regulations and administrative provisions necessary to comply with the EC habitats directive.

Lower Severn Estuary

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects the completion of his consultations with English Nature, the Countryside Council for Wales and private landowners and others on the preparation of the lower Severn estuary proposed special protection area under the wild birds directive, 1979.

Mr. Yeo: The Government consider that co-operation with owners and occupiers is vital if wildlife habitats are to be protected. Detailed consultations are therefore conducted to ensure that any conflicts of interest are closely examined, together with the scientific evidence. The Severn estuary is included in the accelerated designation programme on which the Government are currently working. I am unable to say when consultations on this particular site will be completed.

Integrated Pollution Control

Sir Rhodes Boyson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what changes are to be made to the scheme of fees and charges for integrated pollution control operated by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution.

Mr. Yeo: Minor technical changes to the HMIP integrated pollution control fees and charges scheme 1993-94 take effect on 26 October 1993. They are necessary to ensure that the scheme fully reflects changes in the governing legislation made by the Environmental Protection (Prescribed Processes and Substances) (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 1993, SI 1993/2405, which come into operation on that date. Copies of the amendment to the scheme are being placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Heald: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to abolish the client contribution payable under the Government's home energy efficiency scheme.

Mr. Yeo: I have received many representations on the client contribution payable under the home energy efficiency scheme. To meet concerns that this contribution may deter some people from applying for a grant to have their homes insulated, I will shortly be laying before Parliament proposals to amend the regulations governing HEES which would remove the requirement for a client contribution.

Housing, Lancashire

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage of the housing investment programme bids his Department has authorised in respect of each local authority in Lancashire over the last three years in relation to their bid; and what is the cash figure.

Sir George Young *[holding answer 22 October 1993]:* The information requested is given in the table.

The levels of local authorities' bids for housing investment programme resources reflect, in part, the competition for these resources and therefore often exceed the amount of resources likely to be available.

Housing Investment Programme (HIP) bids, allocations and gross housing capital expenditure in Lancashire

£ thousand/percentage

	HIP bids	*HIP allocations*[1]	*Allocation as percentage of bid*	*Housing capital expenditure*
Blackburn				
1991-92	23,193	7,558	32·6	11,937
1992-93	25,174	6,684	26·6	[2]11,467
1993-94	30,589	8,093	26·5	[3]14,915
Blackpool				
1991-92	4,326	2,832	65·5	3,727

	HIP bids	HIP allocations[1]	Allocaion as percentage of bid	Housing capital expenditure
1992-93	6,127	3,550	57·9	[2]4,036
1993-94	4,915	3,301	67·2	[3]2,660
Burnley				
1991-92	11,701	4,508	38·5	6,337
1992-93	12,915	4,922	38·1	[2]7,692
1993-94	12,213	4,725	38·7	[3]6,765
Chorley				
1991-92	4,055	1,509	37·2	1,755
1992-93	4,233	2,244	53·0	[2]2,465
1993-94	4,762	2,068	43·4	[3]2,407
Fylde				
1991-92	2,282	979	42·9	1,894
1992-93	2,341	1,115	47·6	[2]1,945
1993-94	2,225	1,144	51·4	[3]2,009
Hyndburn				
1991-92	9,717	3,525	36·3	4,717
1992-93	13,572	4,156	30·6	[2]6,195
1993-94	12,528	4,176	33·3	[3]5,998
Lancaster				
1991-92	8,289	2,853	34·4	4,152
1992-93	5,895	3,673	62·3	[2]5,568
1993-94	7,337	3,220	43·9	[3]5,566
Pendle				
1991-92	5,610	2,468	44·0	3,381
1992-93	6,005	3,420	57·0	[2]4,429
1993-94	6,020	2,954	49·1	[3]3,447
Preston				
1991-92	29,567	5,775	19·5	10,785
1992-93	15,478	3,958	25·6	[2]5,617
1993-94	9,847	5,975	60·7	[3]11,453
Ribble Valley				
1991-92	1,715	545	31·8	1,292
1992-93	1,600	1,156	72·3	[2]1,974
1993-94	1,750	1,150	65·7	[3]1,209
Rossendale				
1991-92	8,245	2,731	33·1	4,698
1992-93	7,890	3,242	41·1	[2]4,682
1993-94	7,916	2,310	29·2	[3]5,830
South Ribble				
1991-92	4,178	1,494	35·8	3,083
1992-93	4,060	2,301	56·7	[2]3,657
1993-94	2,950	1,597	54·1	[3]3,006
West Lancashire				
1991-92	6,063	2,908	48·0	5,042
1992-93	6,775	2,510	37·0	[2]4,744
1993-94	3,507	1,650	47·0	[3]5,220
Wyre				
1991-92	4,520	1,266	28·0	1,763
1992-93	6,575	1,738	26·4	[2]4,227
1993-94	6,878	2,350	34·2	[3]3,919

Notes:

[1] Under the new capital finance system, the HIP allocation is an assessment of relative need for housing capital expenditure. Borrowing approval is conveyed by the single, all service, basic credit approval. The allocation figures are the housing annual capital guidelines plus specified capital grants, issued prior to the start of the financial year. These figures do not include any supplementary credit approvals issued during the year.

[2] Provisional.

[3] Estimated.

Hedgerows

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give *(a)* the number of agreements, *(b)* the amount of money spent and *(c)* the length of

hedgerow affected in each county under the hedgerow incentive scheme in (i) 1992-93 and (ii) to date in 1993-94; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo *[holding answer 25 October 1993]:* Under the 411 agreements made in the first year of the scheme some 600km of hedgerow will be restored over a period of five years. The Countryside Commission is currently considering new bids for the 1993-94 round of agreements.

The information is not available in the form requested. Total spend in the financial years requested as at 25 October 1993 is set out on a regional basis. These figures do not include additional resources available under the scheme from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, which account for an approximate addition of 15 to 20 per cent.

Region	*Agreements*	*1992-93 Spend (£)*	*1993-94 Spend to date (£)*
Northern	83	58,104	46,300
Midlands	70	30,894	29,382
South West	95	28,054	23,335
Yorkshire and Humberside	56	36,279	18,405
North West	31	32,990	2,757
South East	50	17,592	19,403
Eastern	26	7,522	13,816
Total	411	211,435	153,398

Opencast Coal

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will announce the outcome of the review of guidance to planning authorities on opencast coal; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 25 October 1993]:* I intend to publish draft revised planning guidelines for opencast coal for public consultation as soon as possible.

Nuclear Power

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what assessment has been made by his Department in respect of new nuclear power stations of the risks of *(a)* turning out to be a poor performer, *(b)* major construction cost increases, *(c)* (i) retrofitting, (ii) power downrating and (iii) closure arising from the tightening of (1) safety standards, or (2) environmental standards resulting from a major accident or otherwise and *(d)* major increases in (i) spent fuel management, (ii) decommissioning and (iii) radioactive waste management costs;

(2) if he will make a statement on the strategic benefits of nuclear power which have been identified in his Department's nuclear review;

(3) what consideration his Department's nuclear review has given to assessing viability of new nuclear power stations to the delays and uncertainties in the development of a national radioactive waste repository; and if he will make a statement;

(4) what discount rate will be used in his Department's nuclear review in investment appraisal for new nuclear power stations;

(5) what are the results of his Department's nuclear review in respect of tests to determine whether new nuclear power stations are commercially viable;

(6) what consideration his Department's nuclear review has given in assessing the future security of nuclear power to the economic, social and political impacts of a major nuclear accident; and if he will make a statement;

(7) if he will list the *(a)* risks and *(b)* uncertainties associated with nuclear investment which have been identified as a result of the nuclear review; and what plans he has for determining who will be responsible for covering them;

(8) if he will list the options being considered in his Department's nuclear review for financing new nuclear power stations.

Mr. Eggar: I have been asked to reply.

It remains Government policy that Nuclear Electric plc will not be granted capital expenditure approval for any new nuclear stations pending the outcome of a review of the future prospects for nuclear power in the United Kingdom. Options for the scope and format of the review are currently under consideration within Government.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Second Church Estate Commissioner

Mr. Wallace: To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners, what estimate has has made of the cost to the Church Commissioners in the last financial year in respect of his discharging his responsibilities in Parliament as Second Church Estate Commissioner.

Mr. Alison: There is no direct cost to the Church Commissioners in relation to my duties in Parliament as Second Church Estate Commissioner.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners, what was the cost to the Church Commissioners of answering written and oral questions to the Second Church Estate Commissioner in the last two parliamentary Sessions and in the present Session, up to and including 27 July.

Mr. Alison: A total of 79 questions were answered between 1 October 1991 and 27 July this year, but it has not been the Commissioners' practice to keep a record of the cost.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Ecclesiastical Matters

Mr. Wallace: To ask the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, what estimate he has made of the staffing costs incurred by House of Commons staff and officials in connections with work associated with the Ecclesiastical Committee or other parliamentary matters relating to the Church of England.

Mr. Beith: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to the hon. Member for Thurrock (Mr. Mackinlay) on 25 March, column *663*. The total cost is of the order of £2,000 per annum.

TRANSPORT

British Rail Privatisation

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals he has to involve non-metropolitan local authorities in the franchising of rail services following the privatisation of British Rail.

Mr. Freeman: We propose to incorporate in the Secretary of State's statutory guidance to the Franchising Director the following:

Outside PTE areas you should consult such representatives of local government as appear to you to be appropriate about the pattern of services and the quality of services to be provided through franchising. In your consultations you should seek to agree practical arrangements which will provide for effective mutual communication between local authorities and franchisees. You should also include within franchise agreements a requirement for franchisees to take reasonable steps to keep the local authorities for the areas served by their franchised services informed of significant intended changes to the pattern of franchised services. These arrangements must be implemented in such a way as to place the minimum burden on franchisees. I would expect local authorities to consult you before formally adopting plans and policies dealing with the role of passenger rail services in their areas.

Motor Rescue Services

Mr. Bates: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he has yet concluded whether rights of access to motorway service areas similar to those currently enjoyed by the RAC and AA should be extended to other motor rescue services.

Mr. Key: My predecessor decided that the requirement on motorway service area operators to permit access at all times to the employees or agents of the AA or the RAC to carry out emergency repairs to members' vehicles should continue under the new regime announced on 6 August last year. I have now decided that similar rights should be extended to any repairer requested to carry out an emergency repair by the driver of a broken down or damaged vehicle.

Goods Vehicles

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will make a statement on the differences in safety regimes between operator licence exempted vehicles and licensed vehicles;

(2) if he will list by type the numbers of vehicles which are exempt from holding a goods vehicle operator's licence;

(3) what studies have been carried out to determine whether operator licence exempted vehicles are more or less likely to be involved in accidents than licensed vehicles;

(4) how many vehicles are exempted from goods operator licensing regulations.

Mr. Key: Applicants for operator licences must satisfy financial requirements and requirements of good repute and professional competence or fitness to operate. They must show that they have adequate maintenance arrangements, and operators of goods vehicles must also satisfy the licensing authorities that they have an environmentally acceptable operating centre.

Whether or not they are covered by operator licensing, all goods vehicles, with some minor exceptions, are subject to the same roadworthiness requirements, including annual roadworthiness tests and possible roadside enforcement checks. All goods vehicles, apart from certain specialised types, are also subject to drivers' hours and tachograph regulations, although drivers of vehicles which do not require an operator's licence are exempt from the need to keep records under domestic drivers' hours legislation.

The classes of vehicles exempt from goods operator licensing comprise vehicles not exceeding 3·5 tonnes; Crown vehicles; and those listed in schedule 5 of the Goods Vehicles (Operators' Licences, Qualifications and Fees) Regulation 1984, as amended. The main categories are:

- tractors when hauling agricultureal and certain other equipment;
- dual-purpose vehicles and their trailers;
- vehicles used between private premises and not exceeding 6 miles by road in any one week;
- funeral vehicles;
- police and fire brigade vehicles and ambulances;
- vehicles used for fire-fighting or rescue operations at mines;
- vehicles used for test or trial;
- vehicles used under a trade licence;
- United Kingdom and visiting forces vehicles;
- trailers used for road maintenance or construction;
- road rollers;
- Coastguard and Royal National Lifeboat Institution vehicles;
- vehicles with certain fixed equipment;
- local authority weights and measures vehicles;
- local authority civil defence vehicles;
- steam-propelled vehicles;
- tower wagons or trailers;
- vehicles used within aerodromes;
- electrically propelled vehicles;
- showman's goods vehicles and trailers;
- certain vehicles first used before 1 January 1977 with a gross weight exceeding 3·5 tonnes but not 3½ tons;
- vehicles used by a highway authority for weighbridge purposes;
- water, gas, electricity and telephone emergency vehicles;
- recovery vehicles;
- vehicles used for snow clearing or the distribution of grit, salt or other materials on icy roads;
- vehicles going to or from a test station.

We have no information on the number of vehicles exempted from operator licensing, nor am I aware of any studies on whether operator licence exempt vehicles are more or less likely to be involved in accidents than those within the operator licensing system.

Vocational Drivers

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what information he has on procedures available to vocational drivers in other member states of the European Community to appeal against the refusal of a licence on medical grounds.

Mr. Key: Our information on appeal arrangements elsewhere in the European Community is currently incomplete. I will write to the hon. Member in due course.

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of whether appeals against refusal of LGV/LPV licences which are medically resolved at the DVLA are receiving an adequate level of consideration, of numbers of vocational drivers proceeding to the final level of appeal at magistrates courts and of the costs to the individual vocational driver of pursuing an appeal to the magistrates courts.

Mr. Key: Notifications of appeals which are resolved at DVLA are considered by the agency's medical adviser and,

if necessary, the legal adviser, who take account of any fresh medical evidence provided by the appellants or their doctors. Appellants are required to pay a small lodging fee plus the cost of their counsel or expert witnesses if used.

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of whether representative numbers of appeals against DVLA medical decisions on LGV/LPV vocational drivers' licences are going to the magistrates courts; and whether sufficient advice is available to the courts on the medical issues involved.

Mr. Key: The number of appeals against medical decisions on LGV/PCV licences has remained fairly constant over recent years. From April 1992 to September 1993 DVLA's medical section handled 54,786 LGV/PCV applications/notifications. Of these 7,036 applicants/drivers were refused licences or had licences revoked. An intention to appeal against the decision was lodged by 257 individuals of which 15 proceeded to court.

The court is provided with a report from the DVLA medical adviser, who also attends the hearing and will provide clarification on the medical issues involved if required. Appellants are also free to provide their own medical experts.

Vehicle Operator Licensing

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list, for each traffic area, the number of goods vehicle operator licences revoked in 1990, 1991 and 1992; and what were the reasons in each case why the licences were revoked.

Mr. Key: The numbers of licences revoked are given in the "Annual Reports of the Licensing Authorities", copies of which are available in the House of Commons Library. The reasons for revocation in each case could be collated only at disproportionate cost.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list for each traffic area the number and nature of objections and representations received against the issue of goods vehicle operator licences in 1991 and 1992.

Mr. Key: Information on objections and representations is published each year for the period 1 April to 31 March in the "Annual Reports of the Licensing Authorities", copies of which are available in the Library of the House.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many heavy goods vehicles exempt from goods vehicle operator licensing were involved in road traffic accidents in 1991 and 1992.

Mr. Key: The numbers of exempt vehicles involved in road traffic accidents is not available.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether emergency vehicles operated by public utility companies are exempt from goods vehicle operator licensing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: A vehicle being held ready for use in an emergency by an undertaking for the supply of water, electricity, gas or telephone service is listed as exempt from goods vehicle operator licensing in schedule 5 to the Goods Vehicles (Operators' Licences, Qualifications and Fees) Regulation 1984, as amended. We keep all exemptions under review.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the organisations and individuals who have responded to his consultation paper on the deregulation of goods vehicle-operator licensing.

Mr. Key: Comments were received from the following associations representing the interests of those in the transport industries:

Freight Transport Association
Road Haulage Association
Bus and Coach Council
Vehicle Builders and Repairs Association
British Association of Removers
National Farmers Union
United Kingdom Agricultural Supplies Trade Association Ltd.
Federation of Small Business
National Association of Waste Disposal Contractors
British Vehicle Rental and Leasing Association

Comments were received also from the:

Council on Tribunals
Transport Tribunal
Traffic Commissioners

There were in addition over 100 responses from individual operators, local authorities and others having an interest in the operator licensing provisions.

Rail Franchising Director

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to appoint the franchising director; and how rapidly he would expect him to enter into discussions with the potential lessors of rail rolling stock.

Mr. Freeman: The Franchising Director will be appointed shortly after Royal Assent to the Railways Bill. The Franchising Director-designate is already involved in discussions about the establishment of rolling stock leasing companies and will be able to enter into substantive discussions with potential lessors of rail rolling stock once he is formally appointed.

Buses

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will publish the names and addresses of all bus companies which have been found guilty of operating vehicles which failed to meet the minimum requirements of maintenance standards; what assessment he has made of the operations of the vehicle inspectorate and traffic commissioners in this respect; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: The names and addresses of the relevant bus companies are not readily available. The vehicle inspectorate and the traffic commissioners publish annual reports on their activities including the enforcement of maintenance standards. The Department maintains regular liaison with both the inspectorate and the traffic commissioners. An annual review is undertaken of the targets set for roadside checks and maintenance inspections of vehicles by the vehicle inspectorate.

Tobacco and Alcohol Imports

Mr. Mills: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what action he is taking to check for overloading of private vehicles returning from France importing tobacco and alcohol products for personal use.

Mr. Key: Privately operated light goods vehicles and minibuses are subject to weight checks by examiners from the vehicle inspectorate and local authorities and can be prohibited where they are found to be overloaded. Vehicles are checked at ports and other locations in the same way as are heavy commercial vehicles. Drivers can also be prosecuted for using a vehicle which is dangerously overloaded.

Accident, Sowerby Bridge

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what investigations have been carried out into the Sowerby bridge road traffic accident on 6 September.

Mr. Key: The lorry involved in the accident has been examined both by the police and by the vehicle inspectorate. I understand the operator of the vehicle is helping with further inquiries.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if the heavy goods vehicle involved in the road traffic accident on 6 September at Sowerby bridge was *(a)* a motorway maintenance vehicle or *(b)* exempt from goods vehicle operator licensing.

Mr. Key: Neither. The vehicle was specified on a goods vehicle operator's licence.

"A Guide to Making Representations"

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list where, other than traffic area offices, the publication "A Guide to Making Representations" can be obtained.

Mr. Key: The guide is also available from the traffic area co-ordination division of the Department of Transport, Room P2/029B, 2 Marsham street, SW1P 3EB.

Traffic Area Network

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to make a decision on the possibility of agency status for the traffic area network.

Mr. Key: We are currently examining the scope for applying next steps principles to the traffic area network. I hope to announce a decision soon.

Nuclear Safety

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether the containers used to transport plutonium-contaminated materials from the Drigg nuclear disposal site to Sellafield meet current International Atomic Energy Agency regulations.

Mr. Freeman: No plutonium-contaminated materials have been moved from Drigg to Sellafield.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Police Officers

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has on the number of serving police officers in England and Wales who are ethnically Romanic and gipsy by origin.

Mr. Charles Wardle: This information is not collected.

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the establishment number of police officers for each county in England and Wales; and what is the ratio of police officers to population for each county.

Mr. Charles Wardle: With one exception, the information requested can be found in the appendix to the annual report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary 1992, a copy of which is in the Library.

Since December 1992 the formal establishment of Kent county constabulary has been increased by 40 posts, all for policing the channel tunnel. These posts are subject to reimbursement of full costs, by the tunnel operator. The establishment of the force is now 3,136 and the ratio of police to population 1:491.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish life expectancy tables for retired police officers; and whether such information was provided to and examined by the Sheehy inquiry.

Mr. Charles Wardle: No. Aggregate data from which such tables would be derived are not available centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Cautions

Mr. John Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will set out the current guidelines on cautioning, with particular reference to the categories of offences and persons who receive cautions.

Mr. Maclean: The current guidance to the police on the use of cautioning is set out in Home Office Circular 59/1990, a copy of which is in the Library of the House. I am about to consult interested parties on the content of some supplementary guidance which I have decided that it is now necessary to issue.

Mr. John Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the latest available figures on cautioning; and what the figures were *(a)* 12 months ago and *(b)* two years ago.

Mr. Maclean: Information for the years 1990 to 1992, which is provisional, is given in the table. 1993 data will not be available until autumn 1994.

Number of offenders cautioned and as a percentage of offenders found guilty or cautioned 1990 to 92[1]
England and Wales

Offence/Year	*Cautioned*	*Cautioning rate*
Indictable offences[2]		
1990	166,300	33
1991	179,900	35
1992[1]	216,200	41
Summary offences (excluding motoring offences)		
1990	102,800	18
1991	98,900	18
1992[1]	105,100	18
Total (excluding summary motoring offences)		
1990	269,100	25
1991	278,800	26
1992[1]	321,300	29

[1] Provisional.
[2] Includes triable either way.

Criminal Injuries Compensation

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the highest award given in *(a)* Merseyside and *(b)* Liverpool by the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board at the latest date.

Mr. Maclean: The board does not keep information on the payment of awards by locality.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of state for the Home Department what are his plans for putting the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board on a statutory basis; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: There are no plans to make the present criminal injuries compensation scheme statutory since, as previously announced by my right hon. and learned Friend the then Home Secretary, the Member for Rushcliffe (Mr. Clarke), on 23 November 1992, column *457*, it is to be replaced next year by a new scheme based on a tariff of awards. Details of the new scheme will be set out in a White Paper later in the year.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how long is the average waiting time for the settling of a case with the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: The board does not maintain statistics on the average time taken to deal with a case. However, paragraph 6 of the 28th annual report of the board (Cm 2122), a copy of which is held in the Library of the House, does provide some information about the time taken to resolve cases.

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the total amount awarded by the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board at the latest date.

Mr. Maclean: Appendix A to the 28th annual report of the Board (Cm 2122), a copy of which is held in the Library of the House, shows that in the period 1 August 1964 to 31 March 1992 a total of £757,244,992 had been paid out in compensation. Since then provisional figures indicate that a further £224·78 million has been paid out in the 18 months ending 30 September 1993. That latter figure is, of course, subject to audit.

Young People (Custody)

Ms Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* 15 and 16-year-olds and *(b)* 17 to 21-year-olds were sentenced to custody in England and Wales in each of the last 12 months.

Mr. Maclean: Information for 1992, which is provisional, is given in the table. 1993 data will not be available until autumn 1994.

Number of 15, 16 and 17 to under 21-year-olds sentenced to immediate custody by type of court, type of sentence and month England and Wales 1992[1]

Type of court/ type of offence	*January*	*February*	*March*	*April*	*May*	*June*	*July*	*August*	*September*	*October*	*November*	*December*	*Total*
15-year-olds													
Magistrates courts													
Indictable	37	39	37	31	27	44	27	27	34	20	24	20	367
Summary non-motoring	7	15	4	12	10	6	6	5	4	3	9	—	81
All offences[2]	44	54	41	43	37	50	33	32	38	23	33	20	448
The Crown court													
Indictable	5	5	4	6	14	5	6	3	3	9	5	5	70
All offences[2]	5	5	4	6	14	5	6	3	3	9	5	5	70
All courts													
Indictable	42	44	41	37	41	49	33	30	37	29	29	25	437
Summary non-motoring	7	15	4	12	10	6	6	5	4	3	9	—	81
All offences[2]	49	59	45	49	51	55	39	35	41	32	38	25	518
16-year-olds													
Magistrates courts													
Indictable	57	54	71	56	47	53	63	49	56	48	39	60	653
Summary non-motoring	12	14	16	17	15	20	11	10	8	9	7	3	142
All offences[2]	69	68	87	73	62	73	74	59	64	57	46	63	795
The Crown court													
Indictable	14	14	17	20	21	13	23	15	22	8	9	7	183
Summary non-motoring	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	1
All offences[2]	14	14	17	20	21	13	24	15	22	8	9	7	184
All courts													
Indictable	71	68	88	76	68	66	86	64	78	56	48	67	836
Summary non-motoring	12	14	16	17	15	20	12	10	8	9	7	3	143
All offences[2]	83	82	104	93	83	86	98	74	86	65	55	70	979
17—20-year-olds													
Magistrates courts													
Indictable	313	305	317	299	262	245	280	260	213	142	201	200	3,037
Summary non-motoring	140	115	139	88	77	101	98	91	88	50	58	67	1,112
All offences[2]	453	420	456	387	339	346	378	351	341	192	259	267	4,149
The Crown court													
Indictable	828	752	832	708	686	680	886	553	645	586	565	469	8,190
Summary non-motoring	21	13	24	17	10	19	36	20	17	14	12	10	213
All offences[2]	849	765	856	725	696	699	922	573	662	600	577	479	8,403

Type of court/ type of offence	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	Total
All courts													
Indictable	1,141	1,057	1,149	1,007	948	925	1,166	810	858	728	766	669	11,227
Summary non-motoring	161	128	163	105	87	120	134	111	105	64	70	77	1,325
All offences[2]	1,302	1,185	1,312	1,112	1,035	1,045	1,300	924	963	792	836	746	12,552
All ages													
Magistrates courts													
Indictable	1,341	1,172	1,255	1,157	975	1,040	1,067	1,017	1,035	483	609	645	11,796
Summary non-motoring	438	359	380	314	266	336	322	300	277	143	187	164	3,486
All offences[2]	1,779	1,531	1,635	1,471	1,241	1,376	1,389	1,317	1,312	626	796	809	15,282
The Crown court													
Indictable	3,622	3,412	3,742	3,000	2,960	3,202	3,637	2,468	2,889	2,273	2,538	2,210	35,953
Summary non-motoring	79	54	68	52	41	52	68	43	50	36	30	34	607
All offences[2]	3,701	3,466	3,810	3,052	3,001	3,254	3,705	2,511	2,939	2,309	2,568	2,244	36,560
All courts													
Indictable	4,963	4,584	4,997	4,157	3,935	4,242	4,704	3,485	3,924	2,756	3,147	2,855	47,749
Summary non-motoring	517	413	448	366	307	388	390	343	327	179	217	198	4,093
All offences[2]	5,480	4,997	5,445	4,523	4,242	4,630	5,094	3,828	4,251	2,935	3,364	3,053	51,842

[1] Provisional.
[2] Excluding summary motoring.

Note: For summary motoring offences five 15-year-olds were sentenced to immediate custody in 1992, 23 16-year-olds, 769 17-20 year-olds and a total of 5,698 for all ages.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many 15-year-olds have been *(a)* remanded in custody and *(b)* sentenced to custodial terms, in 1993 to the latest date available; and, of these, how many were male and how many were female;

(2) how many 15-year-olds were *(a)* remanded in custody and *(b)* sentenced to custodial terms in 1992; and of these, how many were male and how many were female.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answers 19 October 1993]:* Information for 1992, which is provisional, is given in the table. 1993 data will not be available until autumn 1994.

Remand and custodial data for 15-year-olds by gender 1992[1]
England and Wales

	Males	Females
Receptions on remand into prison service establishments	376	—
Sentenced to immediate custody	519	4

[1]Provisional

Ms Ruddock To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) of those 15-year-olds *(a)* remanded into custody and *(b)* sentenced to custody in 1992, how many faced charges of committing or attempting to commit the offences of (i) theft, (ii) handling, (iii) deception and fraud, (iv) burglary, (v) taking without consent, (vi) allowing to be carried, (vii) aggravated vehicle taking, (viii) motor vehicle interference, (ix) criminal damage, (x) common assault and actual bodily harm, (xi) sexual offences, (xii) other offences of violence against the person, (xiii) possession of drugs, (xiv) possession with intent to supply drugs or (xv) other offences; and how many of the 15-year-olds in each case were (1) male and (2) female;

(2) how many 15-year-olds *(a)* remanded into custody and *(b)* sentenced to custody in 1993 to the latest date available faced charges of committing or attempting to commit the offences of (i) theft, (ii) handling, (iii) deception and fraud, (iv) burglary, (v) taking without consent, (vi) allowing to be carried, (vii) aggravated vehicle taking, (viii) motor vehicle interference, (ix) criminal damage, (x) common assault and actual bodily harm, (xi) sexual offences, (xii) other offences of violence against the person, (xiii) possession of drugs, (xiv) possession with intent to supply drugs or (xv) other offences; and how many of the 15-year-olds in each case were (1) male and (2) female.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 19 October 1993]:* The analysis requested of persons remanded is not available centrally because although some information on the use of remands during proceedings is collected, the amount of detail recorded is limited and does not identify separately every individual offence. Moreover the data which are collected are particularly subject to data quality problems.

Information for England and Wales in 1992, which is provisional showing the number of 15-year-olds sentenced to immediate custody by offence and sex is given in the table. 1993 data will not be available until the autumn of 1994.

Persons aged 15 years sentenced to immediate custody by offence and sex—1992[1]
England and Wales

Offence description	Magistrates courts			Crown courts			All courts		
	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females	Persons
Aggravated vehicle taking									
Causing death by	—	—	—	1	—	1	1	—	1
Other (indictable)	23	—	23	1	—	1	24	—	24
Criminal damage of £2,00 or under	1	—	1	—	—	—	1	—	1
Theft of a motor vehicle	7	—	7	1	—	1	8	—	8
Unauthorised taking of motor vehicle	65	—	65	—	—	—	65	—	65
Other Theft	22	—	22	2	—	2	24	—	24
Handling stolen goods	11	—	11	1	—	1	12	—	12
Fraud and Forgery	1	—	1	—	—	—	1	—	1
Burglary	174	1	175	18	—	18	192	1	193
Causing danger	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

Offence description	Magistrates courts			Crown courts			All courts		
	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females	Persons
Criminal damage									
Indictable	16	—	16	5	—	5	21	—	21
Summary	8	—	8	—	—	—	8	—	8
Common assault	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Actual bodily harm (ABH)	23	—23	4	—	4		27	—	27
Grievous bodily harm (GBH)									
Wounding with intent to do GBH etc.	3	—	3	2	—	2	5	—	5
Wounding or inflicting GBH with or without weapon	12	—	12	3	—		15	—	15
Sexual offences	—	1	1	2	—	2	2	1	3
Other violence against the person	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Drugs									
Supplying or offering to supply	—	—	—	3	—	3	3	—	3
Possession of a controlled drug	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Possession with intent to supply	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other drug offences	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total indictable offences	364	3	367	69	1	70	433	4	437
Total summary non-motoring offences	81	—	81	—	—	—	81	—	81
Total summary motoring offences	5	—	5	—	—	—	5	—	5
Total all offences	450	3	453	69	1	70	519	4	523

[1]Provisional

West Yorkshire

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he next intends to pay an official visit to West Yorkshire.

Mr. Howard: I intend to visit West Yorkshire when my diary permits.

Wrongful Convictions

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action has been taken to date in investigating possible wrongful convictions in each of the cases of which notice has been given to him; and in those cases where a person has already been released, what compensation has been paid.

Mr. Maclean: I will write to the hon. Member.

Prisoners (Court Transfers)

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list for the Metropolitan police area, for the year to 30 June *(a)* the number of prison movements to and from courts, *(b)* the number of prisoner escapes from police and Prison Service custody in transit to and from courts, and from custody at court, *(c)* the number of deaths, including suicides, by prisoners at court or in transit to and from court, *(d)* the number of assaults on police and prison officers while escorting prisoners to and from courts and *(e)* the number of prisoners arriving at court more than one hour late.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The information requested is as follows:

(a) prison movements to and from magistrates courts—57,213.
(b) prisoner escapes—12 from police custody, 5 from Prison Service custody.
(c) deaths—1 suicide.
(d) assaults—56 police officers, 4 prison officers.
(e) Information on the number of prisoners arriving more than one hour late for court is not available centrally.

Rape

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list for each of the last five years and for the current year to date *(a)* the number of cases of (i) rape and (ii) attempted rape on males that have been reported and *(b)* the number of successful convictions that have ensued in (i) and (ii).

Mr. Maclean: The available information relates to the number of male offenders cautioned and convicted of acts of non-consensual buggery and is given in the table. Data for 1993 will not be available until autumn 1994.

Male offenders cautioned and convicted at all courts of certain buggery offences 1988-92

England and Wales — *Number*

Offence/Year	Cautions	Convictions
Buggery by a man with a male person of the age of 16 or over without consent		
1988	n/a	18
1989	11	15
1990	10	13
1991	6	14
1992[1]	6	15
Attempt by a man to commit buggery with a male person of the age of 16 or over without consent		
1988	n/a	5
1989	n/a	2
1990	2	2
1991	n/a	2
1992[1]	2	2

[1]Provisional.
n/a = Not available.

Miscarriages of Justice

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when C3 division expects to complete its current investigations into alleged miscarriages of justice; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: In each of the cases of alleged miscarriage of justice currently under consideration, we shall aim to reach a decision as quickly as possible. Some cases may take longer than others to decide, depending upon the nature of the representations and the extent of any police or other inquiries which may need to be made.

C3 Division

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people are currently employed in his Department's C3 division; and if he will list each individual employee's qualifications.

Mr. Maclean: A total of 69 staff, of whom 22 are engaged in considering alleged miscarriages of justice, are currently employed in C3 division of the Home Office. All are administrative civil servants in grades up to and including grade 5, having a variety of backgrounds, experience and qualifications.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many cases C3 division are currently investigating in respect of alleged miscarriages of justice; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: On 30 September 1993 179 cases of alleged miscarriage of justice were under consideration in C3 division of the Home Office.

Mentally Disturbed Patients

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list by regional health authority and by year for the last five years and the current year to date the number of cases reported of *(a)* unlawful sexual intercourse with (i) a male and (ii) a female who is a defective under the terms of the Sexual Offences Act 1956, section 7, as amended by the Mental Health Act 1959, section 127, *(b)* a (i) male and (ii) female member of staff of a hospital or mental nursing home having unlawful sexual intercourse with a patient under the terms of the Mental Health Act 1959, section 128(1)*(a)* and *(c)* a (i) male and (ii) female having unlawful sexual intercourse with a mentally disordered patient who is subject to care under the terms of the Mental Health Act 1959, section 128(i)*(b)*; and how many successful convictions have ensued in each category listed.

Mr. Maclean: The readily available information for England and Wales is provided in the tables.

Information is available only for the numbers prosecuted and those cautioned or found guilty in the courts. These specific offences are not separately identified in the statistics of recorded crime. Statistics on courts proceedings are not available by regional health authority.

The Mental Health Act 1959 refers only to males who have unlawful sexual intercourse with females.

Persons found guilty or cautioned for specified offences of unlawful sexual intercourse with a mentally disordered person

Numbers found guilty (Cautions given in brackets)

Code	Description	Act	1988	1989	1990	1991	[1]1992
19.2	Man having unlawful sexual intercourse with a woman who is a defective	Sexual Offences Act 1956 sec 7 as amended by the Mental Health Act 1959 sec 127	[2]6	4(3)	7(7)	5(1)	4(8)
19.3	Male member of staff of hospital or mental nursing home having unlawful sexual intercourse with a female patient	Mental Health Act 1959 sec 128(1)(a)	1	1	1(1)	2(1)	1
16.5	Male member of staff of hospital or mental nursing home committing buggery or an act of gross indecency with male patient	Mental Health Act 1959 sec 128(1)(a) as amended by Sexual Offences Act 1967 sec 1(4)	—	1	—	1	—
16.6	Man committing buggery or act of gross indecency with mentally disordered male patient who is subject to his care	Mental Health Act 1959 sec 128(1)(a) as amended by Sexual Offences Act 1967 sec 1(4)	—	—	—	—	1
19.4	Man having unlawful sexual intercourse with mentally disordered female patient who is subject to his care	Mental Health Act 1959 sec 128(1)(b)	—	1	—	—	1

[1] Provisional date.
[2] Cautions data for 1988 offence sub-classifications is not available.

Persons prosecuted for specified offences of unlawful sexual intercourse with a mentally disordered person

Numbers prosecuted

Code	Description	Act	1988	1989	1990	1991	[1]1992
19.2	Man having unlawful sexual intercourse with a woman who is a defective	Sexual Offences Act 1956 sec 7 as amended by the Mental Health Act 1959 sec 127	9	7	4	8	14
19.3	Male member of staff of hospital or mental nursing home having unlawful sexual intercourse with a female patient	Mental Health Act 1959 sec 128(1)(a)	1	1	2	1	—
16.5	Male member of staff of hospital or mental nursing home committing buggery or an act of gross indecency with male patient	Mental Health Act 1959 sec 128(1)(a) as amended by Sexual Offences Act 1967 sec 1(4)	—	—	4	1	—
16.6	Man committing buggery or act of gross indecency with mentally disordered male patient who is subject to his care	Mental Health Act 1959 sec 128(1)(a) as amended by Sexual Offences Act 1967 sec 1(4)	—	—	—	—	—
19.4	Man having unlawful sexual intercourse with mentally disordered female patient who is subject to his care	Mental Health Act 1959 sec 128(1)(b)	1	—	1	2	1

[1] Provisional data.

Drink Driving

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list significant changes in law, enforcement and sentencing relating to drink driving since 1979.

Mr. Maclean: The Transport Act 1981 introduced evidential breath testing in May 1983.

A "high risk offenders scheme" under which certain categories of drink-drive offenders must demonstrate that they are not alcohol dependent before their licences are restored to them was introduced in 1982 and extended in 1990.

A new offence of causing death by careless driving while under the influence of alcohol or drugs was introduced in July 1992 under the Road Traffic Act 1991 to strengthen the courts' powers to deal with those drink-drivers who kill. The maximum penalty for this offence was doubled to 10 years' imprisonment in August 1993.

The same 1991 Act also introduced an experimental scheme of rehabilitation courses for those convicted of drink-driving offences, designed to influence the attitudes of such offenders away from alcohol and driving.

The Department of Transport runs at least one major publicity campaign on a drink-drive theme each year and in many years there have been two such campaigns.

Taken together, these measures to which my hon. Friend made a significant contribution as Minister of State, have resulted in a reduction in the estimated number of drink-related fatalities on the roads from 1,550 in 1982 to 610 in 1992.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list as a ratio the number of drink-drive related deaths compared with the number of murder victims in each year from 1979.

Mr. Maclean: The available information on murder relates to the number of offences decided at court to be murder. Figures for the number of deaths in drink-drive accidents have been supplied by the Department of Transport. These figures, and the calculated ratios, are given in the following table.

Offences decided at court to be murder, fatalities in drink-drive accidents, and the ratio between them, 1979 to 1991
England and Wales

Year	(a) Offences decided at court to be murder	(b) Drink-drive fatalities	(b)/(a)
1979	160	1,640	10·25
1980	126	1,450	11·51
1981	148	1,420	9·59
1982	160	1,550	9·69
1983	152	1,110	7·30
1984	165	1,170	7·09
1985	167	1,040	6·23
1986	204	990	4·85
1987	198	900	4·55
1988	178	790	4·44
1989	183	810	4·43
1990	179	760	4·25
1991	[1]124	660	5·32

[1] At the time these statistics were compiled (September 1992), there were 204 court decisions pending on offences initially recorded in 1991. On past experience, about 65 further offences will eventually be decided at court to have been murder.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will estimate the number of crimes *(a)* excluding and *(b)* including drink driving in 1979 and in the latest year;

(2) if he will estimate the number of offences and the proportion detected in 1979 and in the latest available year.

Mr. Maclean: Drink driving is not a notifiable offence and does not form part of the recorded crime series. The available information relating to drink driving is on findings of guilt at all courts for driving or being in charge of a vehicle after consuming alcohol or taking drugs. There were 67,000 findings of guilt in 1979 and 103,800 in 1991, the latest available year.

The information relating to notifiable offences recorded and cleared up by the police is published for 1979 in tables 2.17 and 2.18 of "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales 1989" and, for 1992, in table 6 of Home Office Statistical Bulletin 9/93; copies of both publications are available in the Library.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will estimate the number of fatalities associated with drink driving in 1979 and the latest year.

Mr. Key: It is estimated that in 1992 around 610 people were killed in accidents where a driver or rider was over the legal limit compared with 1,640 in 1979. The way in which these figures were derived is explained in "Road Accidents Great Britain 1992".

West Midlands Police

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the West Midlands chief constable as to how many officers were disciplined as a result of the West Yorkshire inquiry; what were the offences involved; and what penalties were imposed.

Mr. Charles Wardle: No. These are matters for the chief constable of the West Midlands.

Police Reform

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has had from the Greater Manchester police authority in regard to police reform; what reply he is sending; what action he is taking; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Since the White Paper on police reform was published in June, we have received representations from the Greater Manchester police authority in the form of a letter dated 23 September from the clerk to the police authority. A reply was sent on 7 October. The points raised in the letter are being taken into account as work on developing the proposals for police reform proceeds.

Anti-British National Party Demonstration

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the estimated cost of *(a)* policing the anti-British National party demonstration in Woolwich and Bexleyheath on 16 October, *(b)* the overall additional police costs arising out of protecting the BNP and *(c)* what contribution the BNP will be asked to make towards these additional costs.

Mr. Charles Wardle: My right hon. and noble Friend the Earl Ferrers will write to the hon. Member.

Police, Plumstead and Greenwich

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what representations he has received regarding the reduction in the number of police constables in the Plumstead division and the proposed further reduction before the end of this year; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will meet a deputation from the Greenwich police consultative committee to discuss their concerns about reduced policing levels in the Plumstead and Greenwich divisions.

Mr. Charles Wardle: My right hon. and noble Friend the Earl Ferrers will write to the hon. Member.

Victim Support

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what is the level of funding for victim support in the current financial year; and which plan he has to increase this sum;

(2) what is the expected level of funding for victim support in 1994-95.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 21 October 1993]:* Home Office grant aid to Victim Support in the current financial year will amount to £8·375 million, an increase of 15 per cent. on last year's grant of £7·26 million.

In November 1991, we informed Victim Support that the increase in funding it would be receiving over the next three years would be £7·3 million, £8·3 million and £8·6 million, respectively. We made it clear that it would need to devise budgets to operate within this level of funding and that there could be no expectation of further increases.

Details of Home Office funding for 1994-95 will be made known as soon as possible.

Young People (Remand)

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many 15-year-old *(a)* males and *(b)* females, remanded into custody pending trial or sentence in 1993 to the latest date available, received custodial sentences at the conclusion of their cases;

(2) how many 15-year-old *(a)* males and *(b)* females, remanded into custody pending trial or sentence in 1992, received custodial sentences at the conclusion of their cases.

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 19 October 1993]:* In 1992, of the 376 persons aged 15, all of whom were male, received into Prison Service establishments on remand, about 120 were recorded as subsequently received under sentence. I regret that information for 1993 is not yet available.

EDUCATION

Chief Education Officer, Birmingham

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations he has received concerning his remarks about the Birmingham chief education officer; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Patten: I have received a number of letters.

School Numbers

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Education on how many occasions since 1 January his Department has declined a local education authority application to reduce standard numbers.

Mr. Robin Squire: Since 1 January my right hon. Friend has declined 43 applications from LEAs to reduce school standard numbers. Over the same period he has approved reductions at 312 schools, of which 215 were approved without modification.

National Curriculum Council

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what are the costs of relocating and merging the National Curriculum Council and the Schools Examination and Assessment Council.

Mr. Robin Squire: The estimated total cost of establishing the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority and winding up the National Curriculum Council and School Examinations and Assessment Council is £4 million. There will be recurrent savings, estimated at £1 million a year, arising mainly from a reduction of almost 50 in the total number of staff employed and from giving up the NCC's premises in York.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) how many OFSTED reports on grant-maintained schools have been published;

(2) how many grant-maintained schools have received OFSTED inspections.

Mr. Robin Squire: The arrangements for inspecting schools under the Education (Schools) Act 1992 are a matter for OFSTED.

I have asked Professor Sutherland to write to the hon. Member.

Primary School Teachers

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many comments he has received on his Department's draft circular on the initial training of primary school teachers; and how many expressed opposition to the circular.

Mr. Robin Squire: My right hon. Friend has received about 4,000 responses to the draft circular on the initial training of primary school teachers, expressing a wide range of views on the various proposals it contains. My right hon. Friend intends to issue a substantive circular later this autumn which will take account of these responses.

Student Unions

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many comments he has received on his proposals for the reform of student unions; and how many have expressed their opposition to the proposals.

Mr. Boswell: Since my right hon. Friend announced his proposals for student union reform on 1 July, he has received some 1,265 written representations in response to the consultations on implementation. Comments have also been received in meetings and visits. Many comments have questioned particular aspects of the implementation of the reforms, while passing others in silence; others have similarly expressed support for particular points and for the principles which underlie the reforms.

Special Educational Needs

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the sum of money that the Further Education Funding Council spent on special educational needs in 1992-93, by local authority area.

Mr. Boswell: The Further Education Funding Council did not assume its responsibilities until 1 April 1993. In 1993-94 the council has allocated the bulk of the funding for provision for students with learning difficulties and disabilities as part of colleges' recurrent funding. The allocations represent broadly stable funding and reflect the council's commitment to providing continuity of provision for these students.

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Education when he intends to respond to the third report from the Education Select Committee of Session 1992-93 on "Meeting Special Educational Needs: Statements of Needs and Provision".

Mr. Heald: To ask the Secretary of State for Education when he intends to respond to the third report from the Education Select Committee of Session 1992-93 on "Meeting Special Educational Needs: Statements of Needs and Provision".

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend today issued the Government's response to the report "Meeting Special Educational Needs: Statements of Needs and Provision" by the Select Committee on Education. The Government welcome the report. The provisions in the Education Act 1993, including the draft code of practice on the identification and assessment of special educational needs, published today, will improve the framework for special education.

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for Education when he intends to consult about a draft code of practice on special educational needs under section 158 of the Education Act 1993.

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend is today issuing for consultation a draft of the code of practice on the identification and assessment of children with special educational needs together with drafts of the regulations governing statutory assessments and statements. Copies will be placed in the Library. All maintained schools and local education authorities will have to have regard to the code, as will district health authorities and social services departments when they assist LEAs in their duties towards children with special educational needs. The consultation period will last until 14 January. Subject to the approval of Parliament, the code will come into effect in September 1994.

Schools Technology Initiative

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many applications he has received from businesses willing to participate in his schools technology initiative.

Mr. Robin Squire: Schools wishing to become technology colleges under the programe which the Government announced on 27 September will prepare a development plan backed by private sector sponsors. It is not for sponsors to apply direct to the Department for Education. Over 100 schools have already expressed interest in becoming technology colleges. Many of these have identified business sponsors and have begun to prepare their development plans. My right hon. Friend expects to announce in the new year the names of the first group of schools which will begin operating as technology colleges in September 1994.

Student Finance

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) what plans he has to compensate students in higher education to take account of the imposition of VAT on fuel; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what estimate he has made of the impact on student incomes of the imposition of VAT on fuel; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Boswell: It is my right hon. Friend's policy to review annually the overall level of mandatory support available to students through the basic grant and loan, in the light of forecast cost movements. The rates for the 1994-95 academic year will be announced in due course.

Mr. Bill Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the annual expenditure on discretionary awards for students attending further education college courses for each of the metropolitan authorities, for each financial year since 1990-91.

Mr. Boswell: Expenditure on discretionary awards for further education by metropolitan authorities for the academic years 1990-91 and 1991-92 is shown in the table. Data for later years are not yet available.

Discretionary awards expenditure for further education in the metropolitan authorities in 1990-91 and 1991-92

LEA NO	*1990-91 Expenditure (£000)*	*1991-92 Expenditure (£000)*
West Midlands		
Birmingham	922·6	1,298·6
Coventry	527·4	558·4
Dudley	455·6	393·0
Sandwell	496·9	870·7
Solihull	128·9	200·6
Walsall	1,450·9	1,894·3
Wolverhampton	74·6	34·6
Merseyside		
Knowsley	1,046·8	1,368·8
Liverpool	5,696·6	4,432·7
St. Helens	530·6	678·3
Sefton	277·8	224·4

LEA NO	1990-91 Expenditure (£000)	1991-92 Expenditure (£000)
Wirral	1,453·1	1,652·9
Greater Manchester		
Bolton	536·1	821·2
Bury	510·2	642·3
Manchester	0·0	1,835·6
Oldham	544·3	459·5
Rochdale	490·2	741·1
Salford	423·0	314·4
Stockport	504·4	691·2
Tameside	238·9	352·5
Trafford[1]	n/a	302·2
Wigan	418·1	499·1
South Yorkshire		
Barnsley	1,269·5	788·8
Doncaster	698·0	685·0
Rotherham	669·0	904·4
Sheffield	2,025·6	1,930·6
West Yorkshire		
Bradford	1,612·0	1,778·3
Calderdale	249·6	310·3
Kirklees	1,402·9	2,[illegible]·9
Leeds	2,117·1	2,742·9
Wakefield	1,017·7	1,048·2
Tyne and Wear		
Gateshead	454·3	375·8
Newcastle upon Tyne	608·7	770·4
North Tyneside	706·1	1,023·8
South Tyneside	325·8	450·4
Sunderland[1]	n/a	933·3
Total Metropolitan Authorities	29,883·1	36,204·4

[1] Discretionary data not provided in 1990-91

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Forestry

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will give, for each of those forest areas in Lincolnshire, Yorkshire and Humberside currently for sale to the private sector, details of *(a)* how rights of public access will be maintained, *(b)* how the environmental code for forestry enterprise will be enforced, *(c)* what charges she will allow for access, *(d)* how many people are currently employed on these forests, *(e)* what percentage it is of the Forestry Commission's land in each county (i) in 1980 and (ii) at present and *(f)* what were the criteria for selection for privatisation.

Mr. Jack: The areas of forest land currently being offered for sale by the Forestry Commission in Lincolnshire, Yorkshire and Humberside are shown in the table.

	Area (hectares)
Lincolnshire	[1]—
Yorkshire	
Cannon Park Estate	194
Gateforth East	27
Gateforth West	47
Hayton Wood	51
Hazelhead Wood	94
Hazelwood	56
Howsham Wood	81
Humberside	
Greenwickdale	44

[1]=None.

a. Access to Forestry Commission woodlands can be either by means of public rights of way or by permission. Public rights of way will not be affected by a change of ownership. Arrangements for securing continued permissive public access to Forestry Commission woodlands after sale, through prior agreements entered into between the Commission and local authorities, were introduced in October 1991. Of the forest areas listed above, access agreements have been concluded under these arrangements for Gateforth East, Hayton Wood and Hazelwood, and an agreement is currently being negotiated for Hazelhead Wood.

b. The Environmental Code was drawn up specifically in relation to the management of the Commission's woodlands by its Forest Enterprise arm. Private woodland owners participating in the Woodland Grant Scheme are required to follow environmental guidelines published by the Forestry Commission. Grants are withheld if the guidelines are not followed.

c. No charges are allowed for public access under the agreements described at a. above.

d. These are small woodlands which do not have any staff assigned to them on a regular basis.

e. The areas of forest land currently for sale in Yorkshire amount to about 2 per cent. of the total woodland area managed by the Forestry Commission in the county, both in 1980 and in 1993. The one area for sale in Humberside represents about 8 per cent. of the total woodland area managed in 1980 and about 12 per cent. of the current area.

f. The main considerations to be taken into account in selecting properties for disposal were set out in 1981 by the then Secretary of State for Scotland in a letter to the Chairman of the Commission. That letter is reproduced at Appendix V to the Commission's 1981-82 Annual Report, copies of which are in the Library of the House.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will list all the pieces of Forestry Commission land in Yorkshire which have been sold in the last 10 years; and if she will list for each sale *(a)* the name of the forest or piece of land, *(b)* its area in acres, *(c)* the sale price, *(d)* the name and address of the purchaser and *(e)* whether the current owner provides a public right of access to the land.

Mr. Jack: Details of the areas of forest land sold by the Forestry Commission in each county, from the start of the disposals programme in July 1981 to December 1992, are given in lists held in the Library of the House. For all sales since June 1985 the commission has sought permission from the purchasers to disclose their names and the prices paid; where such permission has been given these details are included in the lists.

Information about the sale of other categories of land, such as agricultural land, houses and gardens, is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

The Government retain no direct interest in land which has been sold by the commission, so no official records have been collected on the provision of public access by the new owners. Public rights of way will not, however, be affected by a change of ownership.

Cereals

Sir Ralph Howell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the current world price of *(a)* feed wheat and *(b)* milling wheat.

Mr. Jack: There is no single definition of what constitutes millling wheat or feed wheat—considerable quantities of miling wheat are used for feed—and prices and price differentials for wheat on world markets vary according to quality and other factors. Illustrative prices for 1992-93 and September 1993 are given in the table, but it should be noted that the current exceptionally wide divergence in prices reflects shortages of high quality wheat on world markets.

Wheat prices on world markets (£'000)

	Canadian Western Red Spring No. 1 (fob Vancouver)[1]	*US Hard Red Winter (fob Gulf)*[2]	*EEC Standard Wheat (fob Rouen)*[3]
1992-93	120	88	82
September 1993	164	87	57

[1]Canadian Western Red Spring No. 1 is a premium hard wheat with a protein content of 14 per cent. or above. Because of its high protein content and quality, it is used for premium breadmaking.

[2]US Hard Red Winter wheat also has a high protein content (12-13 per cent.) and is used for breadmaking.

[3]EEC Standard wheat has a lower protein content (9·5-10 per cent. on an equivalent moisture basis) and produces a softer flour. It is used for some types of bread and gluten can be added to improve the strength of the grist. Depending on supplies and prices, this wheat may also be used for animal feed.

Porcine Somatotropin

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information she has on the commercial availability of porcine somatotropin; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: Porcine somatotropin is not commercially available in the United Kingdom. I have no information on its commercial availability in other countries.

Chemical Pollution

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what policy proposals she has developed as a result of the findings and recommendations of the second joint annual report of the Committee on Toxicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment and the Committee on Carcinogenicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment.

Mr. Soames: So far as the responsibilities of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food are concerned, the safety assessments carried out by these committees form an essential basis for all policies related to the safety of food. In the case of the second joint annual report, the conclusions of the committees were reflected in the policies pursued in EC negotiations on the approval of specific food additives, in the clearance of food use of a novel fat, and in the withdrawal from sale of certain comfrey products.

Ostriches

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many consignments of ostriches have been flown in to the United Kingdom since January 1993; how many birds were involved; and how many birds died during transit.

Mr. Soames: Two consignments have been flown to the United Kingdom this year involving 107 ostriches. The Welfare of Animals during Transport Order 1992 and EC directive 91/628 require all such transport to comply with standards of care laid down by the International Air Transport Association. One ostrich died during the journey.

The Department is monitoring this trade and guidance has been prepared for the authorities in other countries and importers on the additional welfare standards to be observed during air transport.

Live Animal Imports

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will give an estimate of the annual number of live animals arriving in the United Kingdom illegally; what type of animals are involved; what countries are involved; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: Comprehensive information on live animals imported into the United Kingdom in contravention of animal health import legislation, which is enforced by local authorities, is not held centrally.

However, a number of importers are still failing to provide my Ministry with the required advance notification of their intention to import live animals and consignments have been imported with incorrect official health certification. In each case my Ministry has taken up the matter either with importer concerned or with the veterinary authorities in the exporting member state, as appropriate.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations she has received concerning EC legislation to protect the welfare of live farm animals during transport.

Mr. Soames: During the last 12 months the Government have received over 100,000 pieces of correspondence, and 81 petitions representing approximately 27,000 signatures, concerning the welfare of animals during transport, of which the majority concern our trade with the Community. New proposals to amend directive 91/628, on the welfare of animals during transport, were sent to over 500 interested organisations and individuals for consultation this summer. We have received 86 replies.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the proportion of consignments of animals imported from other EC member states from which blood samples have been taken since January; and what were the equivalent proportions for each of the previous two years.

Mr. Soames: The state veterinary service is carrying out at places of destination a significant number of veterinary checks—which includes, if appropriate, the taking of samples for testing—on animals imported from other member states. The number of blood, or other, samples varies according to the species of animal being imported, the country of origin, and the perceived disease risk at the time of import, but precise figures cannot be published for operational reasons.

Beta-agonists

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will make a statement on the use of beta-agonists in food animals.

Mr. Soames: Beta-agonists are a group of drugs which have been used for a number of years in both human and veterinary medicines. In the United Kingdom there are five licensed veterinary medicines containing clenbuterol, a member of the family of beta-agonist drugs. These can be used legally only on prescription from a veterinary surgeon and are used in the treatment of respiratory ailments in cattle and horses and as an aid to cattle at the time of calving.

When fed to food-producing animals at high dosages, beta-agonists have been found to improve the lean content of the carcase. No beta-agonists have, however, been licensed in the United Kingdom or in any other member state for this purpose and any such use would therefore be illegal.

Surveillance for residues of beta-agonists in meat is carried out in Great Britain under the national surveillance scheme for residues in meat. Under this scheme randomly selected samples are collected from carcases at slaughterhouses and from live animals on farms. No beta-agonist positives have been identified from samples taken under this scheme since testing commenced in August 1989.

Separate surveillance arrangements directed at retail and wholesale premises, cover both imported and domestic supplies. Two clenbuterol positive samples were reported in 1992 (*Official Report*, 2 March 1993, column *78*). Neither was likely to have posed any threat to human health, but it was not possible to establish whether the samples originated in Great Britain or elsewhere. No further positive samples have been reported in 1993 to date.

Because of the evidence of abuse of beta-agonists outside Great Britain, surveillance has been increased under both schemes this year. In particular, as a result of the recent reports in the media following the finding by Somerset county council of traces of clenbuterol in samples of pig liver pâté manufactured in Belgium, sampling of pâté has been increased. Under the retail animal products survey approximately 70 samples of pig liver pâté will have been collected from retail outlets across the United Kingdom by the end of November. The full results of this survey will be published as soon as all the confirmed results become available. The confirmed results of the analysis of the first 25 samples taken during September have, however, shown no evidence of contamination with clenbuterol.

Overseas Staff and Premises

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the cost of the current financial year of her Department having *(a)* premises and *(b)* personnel overseas; and what were the comparable figures for *(a)* 12, *(b)* 24, *(c)* 36 and *(d)* 48 months ago.

Mr. Jack: The Department has no overseas premises, nor does it have any personnel based overseas who are carrying out departmental functions. Staff on loan to work in the agriculture sections of British embassies are funded by the Foreign Office.

RAF Aston Down

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will list the nature of the work carried out by the wildlife unit based at Royal Air Force station Aston Down; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: The wildlife unit carries out badger removal operations to control the spread of bovine tuberculosis from badgers to cattle and advises farmers who have experienced a breakdown on methods designed to reduce the risk of further cattle infection.

Peat

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will make it her policy to promote the use of long-term set-aside for peat soil adjacent to raised bog habitats.

Mr. Jack: We have recently completed consultations on the introduction in England of a habitat scheme which will offer incentives to take selected agricultural land out of production for 20 years. There was general support for the priorities identified for this scheme, but land adjacent to raised bog habitats was not one of them. As a result, we do not plan to include such land in the pilot phase of the scheme.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans she has to produce a manual for professional horticulturalists identifying the available peat-free products and giving advice on their use in horticulture.

Mr. Jack: Advice on the range and use of commercial products is a matter for the suppliers themselves. The Horticultural Development Council is, however, undertaking research on peat alternatives and plan a seminar on this subject on 1 December. Currently I am not planning to publish a manual on this matter.

Sewage Sludge Dump, Bristol Channel

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will place in the Library a map showing the boundaries of the sewage sludge dump in the Bristol channel.

Mr. Jack: All dumping of sewage sludge in the Bristol channel ceased in October 1992. The two designated disposal sites in use at that time were each circular areas of radius of 1 nautical mile centred at co-ordinates:

51 22.5N 03 56.0W (site LU050) and
51 24.5N 04 04.0W (site LU160).

A map showing these areas has been placed in the Library.

Stoke Park Wood

Mr. Milligan: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans she has to sell Stoke Park wood in Bishopstoke, Hampshire.

Mr. Jack: There are no plans to sell this wood.

Set-aside

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what percentage of land, and what amount in hectares, in rotational set-aside in 1993-94 she predicts will be put into non-rotational set-aside for the following year.

Mr. Jack: There has been considerable interest shown in non-rotational set-aside, but detailed figures will not be available until aid applications are submitted next year.

EC Surplus Cereals

Mr. Cox: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the price charged at the most recent date for surplus cereals from the EC sold on the world market; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: Export sales from intervention are made by weekly tender. In setting prices under these tenders, account is taken of factors such as the current market situation, demand for the grain concerned, the need to minimise intervention stocks and the need to obtain the best possible price.

Details of the most recent sales on to the world market from EC intervention stores are as follows:

Quantity (tonnes)	*Price (ECU/tonne)*	*Member State*
Wheat (21 October 1993)		
192,867	71·23	Germany
72,446	73·10	France
Barley (14 October 1993)		
138,254	55·58	Germany
34,540	57·72	France
Maize (21 October 1993)		
27,700	91·02	France
Rye (21 October 1993)		
7,131	52·12	Germany

In the current marketing year, no cereals have been exported on to the world market from United Kingdom intervention stocks.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what amounts of cereals are in storage in each of the 12 member states of the EC.

Mr. Jack: According to information supplied by the EC Commission, at 17 October 1993, the amounts of cereals in intervention in each member state are as follows:

Member state	*Quantity (tonnes)*
Belgium	252,211
Denmark	1,362,375
Germany	10,446,515
Greece	789,731
Spain	1,056,491
France	7,973,282
Ireland	235,792
Italy	2,459,03[illegible]
Luxembourg	2,20[illegible]
Netherlands	—
Portugal	4[illegible]
United Kingdo[illegible]	1,729,849

Dairy Intervention Stocks

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the level of intervention stocks held in the United Kingdom in the dairy sector at the last date for which figures are available.

Mr. Jack: On 16 October 1993 there were 9,236 tonnes of butter and 1,200 tonnes of skimmed milk powder in intervention stores in the United Kingdom. This is down on the stocks held on the same day last year when there were 9,941 tonnes of butter and 1,700 tonnes of skimmed milk powder in intervention stores.

Pig Slaughtering

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will make a statement on the number and percentage of pigs which have to be re-stunned at slaughter; and what steps she is taking to reduce this number and percentage.

Mr. Soames: There are no centrally held figures, although a MAFF-commissioned survey undertaken by Bristol university during the period 1989 to 1992 suggested that in the region of 13·5 per cent. of pigs were re-stunned. On 1 January this year two statutory codes of practice on the welfare of red meat animals at slaughter came into force and the requirement for supervision by official veterinary surgeons was extended to all licensed slaughterhouses. In response to the survey results we have recently issued new comprehensive guidance to pig slaughterhouse operators and enforcement authorities on the electrical stunning of pigs. In addition, veterinary officers from this Department have been asked to pay particular attention to pig stunning and slaughter practices during their monitoring visits, and to report on the standards observed.

Novel Foods and Processes

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will list the members of the Advisory Committee on Novel Foods and Processes indicating what sector or establishment each of them comes from.

Mr. Soames: The membership of the Advisory Committee on Novel Foods and Processes is listed, together with details of the establishment to which each member belongs.

Professor Derek Burke, BSc PhD HonLLD (Chairman)
Vice-Chancellor of the University of East Anglia.

Professor G. E. Adams, BSc PhD DSc [illegible]CR
Director, Medical Research Council Ra[illegible]biology Unit, Oxford.

Professor A. T. Atkinson, BSc PhD [illegible]

Deputy Director, Public Health Laboratory Service, Centre for Applied Microbiology and Research, Porton Down.

Dr. A. C. Baird-Parker, OBE BSc PhD
Head of Microbiology Division, Unilever Research.

Professor E. Cocking, BSc PhD DSc FIBiol FRS
Plant Genetic Manipulation Group, University of Nottingham.

Professor H. M. Dick, MD FIBiol FRCP FRCPath FRSE
Department of Medical Microbiology, Ninewells Hospital and Medical School, Dundee.

Dr. Michael J. Gasson, BSc PhD
Head of Genetics and Microbiology Department, Agriculture and Food Research Council Institute of Food Research, Norwich.

Professor W. P. T. James, MA MD DSc FRCP FRCP(Edin) FRSE
Director, Rowett Research Institute, Aberdeen.

Professor V. Marks, DM FRCP FRCPath
School of Biological Sciences, University of Surrey.

Mrs. H Millar, MA
Adult Education Department, University of Glasgow.

Professor B. E. Moseley, MSc PhD
Head of Reading Laboratory, Agriculture and Food Research Council Institute of Food Research, Reading.

Rev. J. Polkinghorne, MA PhD ScD FRS
The President, Queens' College, Cambridge.

Professor P. Richmond, BSc PhD DSc CPhys FInstP
Co-operative Wholesale Society Technical Services, Manchester.

Dr. P. J. Rodgers, MA DPhil
Zeneca Bio Products, Billingham, Cleveland.

Professor J. E. Smith, BSc MSc PhD DSc FIBiol FRSE
Head of Applied Microbiology Division, University of Strathclyde.

Professor D. A. T. Southgate, BSc PhD MIBiol
Visiting Professor to the School of Biological and Nutritional Sciences, University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

Professor R. Walker, BSc PhD FRSD CChem FIFST
Professor of Food Science, University of Surrey.

Professor H. F. Woods, BSc BM BCh MRCP DPhil FFPM FRCP
Head of Department of Medicine and Pharmacology, Royal Hallamshire Hospital, Sheffield.

Marine Mammals

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what measures she intends to introduce in order to meet the requirements to monitor and control incidental capture and killing of cetaceans as set out in the EC habitats and species directive article 12(4).

Mr. Jack: Article 12(4) of the EC habitats and species directive requires member states to establish a system to monitor the incidental capture and killing of certain animal species, including cetaceans. In anticipation of this obligation, in January 1992 the UK Fisheries Departments introduced a voluntary scheme for fishermen to report incidents involving the accidental capture of marine mammals. This scheme has not been successful and is currently being reconsidered. Separately, the Department of the Environment funds marine mammal strandings schemes for England and Wales and for Scotland through which post mortems on recovered carcases are carried out and particular stranding incidents investigated.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what powers her Ministry possesses to regulate fishing operations, including attaching conditions on the siting or the use of fishing nets, for the express purpose of conserving cetaceans.

Mr. Jack: The powers available to regulate fishing operations are in relation to sea fish as defined in the Sea Fish (Conservation) Act 1967. This definition does not include cetaceans. Obligations on the United Kingdom in relation to the incidental capture and killing of cetaceans are set out in the EC habitats and species directive.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many reports have been received from fishermen of incidental catches of marine mammals under her Ministry's voluntary monitoring scheme; what assessment she has made of the extent to which this is a true reflection of the scale of incidental catches around the United Kingdom coast; and if she will make a statement on the adequacy of this scheme.

Mr. Jack: Since the scheme was introduced by the United Kingdom Fisheries Departments in January 1992 six reports of incidental catches have been received. These involved five common porpoises, three common seals, one grey seal and one common dolphin. Two of the common seals and the dolphin survived and were released. The scheme has not been successful as returns clearly fall short of the number of strandings from all sources recorded by the Department of the Environment's marine strandings co-ordinators. The scheme is currently being reconsidered.

Weeds Act 1959

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans she has for the future of the Weeds Act 1959; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: After careful consideration by Agriculture Ministers of responses to consultations on the future of the Weeds Act we have decided to retain it. This was announced on 11 October by my noble Friend the Earl Howe.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Customs Searches

Mr. McFall: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what records are kept on the ethnicity of persons entering the United Kingdom who are stopped and searched by Customs and Excise officials.

Sir John Cope: HM Customs and Excise record the ethnic grouping of persons who, on entry to the United Kingdom, are selected for search of their person.

Reading Material

Rev. William McCrea: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans the Government have to impose VAT on reading material in the Province.

Sir John Cope: It would be inappropriate for me to comment in advance of the Budget statement.

Income Tax

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 2 April, *Official Report*, column *479*, what is his most recent estimate of the number of taxpayers with gross and taxable incomes within specific income bands.

Mr. Dorrell: Latest estimates for 1993-94 are given in the table.

Thousands

	Number of taxpayers by range of Gross income[1]	*Taxable income*[2]
Under 5,000	2,100	8,200
5,000 to 10,000	7,800	6,800
10,000 to 15,000	6,100	4,400
15,000 to 20,000	3,900	2,400
20,000 to 25,000	2,000	1,200
25,000 to 30,000	1,100	630
30,000 to 40,000	940	590
40,000 to 50,000	340	210
50,000 to 70,000	250	180
70,000 to 80,000	60	40
over 80,000	170	140
Total taxpayers	24,800	24,800

[1] Gross income is defined as total income for income tax purposes. It excludes income from certain social security benefits and some investment income such as National Savings Certificates.

[2] Taxable income is defined as gross income for income tax purposes less those allowances and reliefs which are available at the taxpayer's marginal rate.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 25 February, *Official Report*, column *683*, what estimate he has made of the effect of increases on the lower rate band of tax, in 1994-95.

Mr. Dorrell: Estimated costs compared with the statutory indexation of allowances and with the lower rate band width of £3,000 announced in the March 1993 Budget are in the table.

Increase in the lower rate band £	*Revenue cost in 1994-95* £ *million*	*Revenue cost in a full year* £ *million*	*Additional numbers of taxpayers with a marginal rate of 20 per cent.* *Males (000s)*	*Females (000s)*
100	80	100	60	80
500	400	500	310	450
1,000	780	980	710	860

Mr. Cormack: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what would be the estimated cost if the higher rate of income tax were levied only on those earning over £45,000 per annum;

(2) what would be the estimated yield if the higher rate of tax were increased to 50 per cent. on those earning over £70,000 per annum.

Mr. Dorrell: Higher rate income tax is charged on taxable income—that is gross income for income tax purposes less those allowances and reliefs, which are available at the taxpayer's marginal rate—in excess of the basic rate limit.

At 1994-95 income levels the estimated full-year cost of increasing the basic rate limit to £45,000 would be £3.4 billion compared with statutory indexation. The yield from the introduction of a 50 per cent. rate on taxable incomes over £70,000 would be about £1·4 billion. These estimates do not allow for any behavioural effect that might result from such changes to the tax system and do not include capital gains tax.

VAT

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has had from British Airways and other airlines in regard to VAT on domestic air fares; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Cope: A number of such representations have been received. It would be inappropriate for me to comment in advance of my right hon. and learned Friend's forthcoming Budget statement.

Mr. Cormack: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the yield if VAT at 5 per cent. were levied on all items which are currently zero rated or exempt other than food.

Sir John Cope: The publication "Tax Ready Reckoner and Tax Reliefs" shows the cost of not applying VAT at the standard rate to those goods currently zero rated or exempt. Although such a calculation may be misleading, adding together the figures for 1993-94 for all items in these groups other than food comes to £17·8 billion. It is not possible to calculate pro rata the figure for exempt goods but 5 per cent. on zero rated items other than food would be expected to raise £3·0 billion. These estimates take no account of behavioural changes.

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment has been made of the revenue to be gained from imposing VAT on the footwear and clothing of women whose size enables their clothing to be free of VAT.

Sir John Cope *[holding answer 25 October 1993]:* The law provides that articles designed as clothing or footwear for young children and not suitable for older persons are zero rated. Although certain adults may be able to purchase certain items of zero rated clothing for themselves, we do not believe the VAT receipts forgone from these purchases to be large.

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what calculation he has made of the effective transfer of resources from families of children aged 10 to 16 years in the top clothing size quartile to families of children aged 10 to 16 years in the bottom clothing size quartile arising from the present VAT provisions.

Sir John Cope *[holding answer 25 October 1993]:* None, as there is not the data on which to base a reliable calculation.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Matrix Churchill

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what requests for information on Government export control policy have been received from Lord Howe in connection with the Scott inquiry.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Like other witnesses before the Scott inquiry, Lord Howe has been given access to papers relevant to his evidence by the Departments in which he held office.

Israel

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further steps he has taken to ascertain the whereabouts of the Israeli navigator captain Ron Arad.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We continue to raise the case of Ron Arad with those who might be able to help, but we have not obtained reliable information as to his whereabouts. We continue to believe that the best hope for a solution lies with the efforts of the United Nations.

Science Museum

Mr. Shersby: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what assessment he has made of whether the trustees of the science museum are able to meet their obligation under the National Heritage Act 1983 and to discharge the museum's mission statement including care and research of the national collection; if the proposed reduction in staff will leave in po ' an adequate number of curators, conservation staff and librarians; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sproat: Under the National Heritage Act 1983, the trustees of the science museum may generally promote the public's enjoyment and understanding of science and technology and of the development of those subjects, both by means of the board's collections and by such other means as they consider appropriate.

In considering future policy for the national museum of science and industry the trustees are naturally aware of their fiduciary responsibilities to the collections and the care and research that attaches to them. They are concerned to ensure that the buildings that house the museums and the public displays presented in them meet the museum's stated mission. The current plans are being implemented in the light of those concerns in order that the museum can improve what it delivers to its various publics and play its proper role in promoting the public understanding of the history and—in particular—the contemporary practice of science, technology, industry and medicine.

Works of Art (Export)

Mr. Jessel: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage when the report of the reviewing committee on the export of works of art 1992-93 will be published.

Mr. Brooke: The reviewing committee's annual report 1992-93 has been published today, and copies have been laid before both Houses.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Mobile Phones

Mr. Redmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the completion of his Department's project, "Interaction of the Body with Radio Emissions from Hand Held Transceivers".

Mr. McLoughlin: The project, "Interaction of the Body with Radio Emissions from Hand Held Transceivers", is due to complete in December 1995. On completion of the project, a document summarising the results will be made public. I will review the need for a statement at that time.

Nuclear Power

Mr. Redmond: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what level of capital investment is required for building nuclear power stations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: It remains Government policy that Nuclear Electric plc will not be granted capital expenditure approval for any new nuclear stations pending the outcome of a review of the future prospects for nuclear power in the United Kingdom. Options for the scope and format of that review are currently under consideration within Government.

Telecommunications

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to alter the wayleave regulations under the Telecommunications Act 1984 following privatisation to make them more suited to use by private companies laying fibre optic cables.

Mr. McLoughlin: Any operator licensed under the Telecommunications Act 1984 may negotiate wayleaves freely for the installation of any kind of apparatus. In addition, licensees granted powers under that Act's telecommunications code may, in certain circumstances, ask the court to decide the terms of a wayleave which has not been freely agreed by the landowner. I have no plans to alter these arrangements.

Pollution Control Equipment

Mr. Dafis: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what action has been undertaken by his Department to stimulate the development of pollution control equipment in industry in the United Kingdom following the Centre for Exporation of Science and Technology's report in 1991.

Mr. McLoughlin: Since the publication of the Centre for the Exploitation of Science and Technology's report in 1991, the DTI has created, in association with the Department of Environment, the joint environmental markets unit. The main aims of the unit are to increase United Kingdom firms' awareness of the huge and growing markets for environmental goods and services and to assist United Kingdom companies to exploit such opportunities. In addition to the creation of this unit, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister launched, in March this year, the technology partnership initiative which aims to encourage appropriate environmental technology co-operation

between United Kingdom business and developing countries. These two initiatives mean that the DTI is developing a close working relationship with United Kingdom manufacturers and suppliers in the environmental field.

Under a three-year environmental technology programme—DEMOS, ETIS and Euroenviron—grants amounting to £13·8 million have been made to a total of 77 projects involved with the development of innovative environmental technologies, techniques and processes, including pollution control equipment.

Nuclear Safety

Mr. Dafis: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make representations to the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate and Nuclear Electric requiring them to state what accident scenarios are considered during the planning and carrying out of defuelling and decommissioning of nuclear reactors.

Mr. Eggar: This is a matter for the Health and Safety Executive's nuclear installations inspectorate and Nuclear Electric plc. NE is required by nuclear site licence conditions to produce a safety case which demonstrates the safety of such activities to the HSE's NII. This includes an emergency plan to ensure that the public would be adequately protected in the unlikely event of an accident occurring during the decommissioning process.

Exports to China

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade to what extent the embargo on arms exports to China applies to the export of radar systems for use by military aircraft.

Mr. Needham: The terms of our arms embargo on China were announced to the House by my right hon. Friend the then Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on 6 June 1989, *Official Report*, column *30*. The embargo applies to the sale of weapons as well as any equipment that could be used for internal repression.

Thermal Oxide Reprocessing Plant

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what communications his Department has had with the International Plutonium Management Study Committee of the Japanese Science and Technology Agency about the THORP contracts; and what documents have been provided by the committee on the management of Japanese-owned plutonium at Sellafield.

Mr. Eggar: My Department has frequent discussions with representatives of the Japanese Science and Technology Agency on a range of topics of mutual interest. The THORP contracts are a commercial matter for British Nuclear Fuels plc and its customers.

Electricity Imports

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer 19 July, *Official Report*, column 13, what are the latest monthly figures for the amount of electricity imported via the channel interconnector; and what are the prospects for the remainder of 1993 and the first half of 1994.

Mr. Eggar: Net imports across the interconnector in the five months from May to September 1993 were 6·75 TWh. As I said in my answer of 19 July, the future pattern of trade will depend on the operation of commercial contracts.

Coal Imports

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 28 June, *Official Report*, column *371*, what are the latest monthly figures for coal imports; and what assessment he has made of the prospects for the remainder of 1993 and the first half of 1994.

Mr. Eggar: Import figures for 1993 are still subject to revision, but estimates for the period January to August 1993 suggest that imports in 1993 will be about 10 to 20 per cent. below imports in 1992.

Orkney Wind Turbine

Mr. Wallace: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the number of hours of operation and the electricity generated, in kilowatt hours, by the Orkney 3 MW wind turbine at Burgar hill in each year since 1988 and in 1993 to date.

Mr. Eggar: Operating records of the Orkney 3 MW wind turbine at Burgar hill are described in the table:

Year	*Hours run*	*mKWh generated*
1989	1,551	1·926
1990	1,103	1·549
1991	790	1·135
1992	3,662	5·152
1993	—	—

The machine has not operated in 1993 pending a decision on recommissioning it following completion of its experimental programme.

Mr. Wallace: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what estimate he has made of the costs of repairing the crack in the rotor in the Orkney 3 MW wind turbine discovered in December 1992; and when he expects the repairs to be completed;

(2) if he will make a statement on the future operational programme for the Orkney 3 MW wind turbine.

Mr. Eggar: The turbine has completed its experimental programme and therefore its future depends on its viability as a generator of electricity. This is under consideration and my Department and Scottish Hydro-Electric plc hope to make a statement before the end of the year. The cost of repairing and recommissioning would be in the region of £50,000.

Nuclear Review

Dr. Michael Clark: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he will announce the terms of reference of the 1994 nuclear review.

Mr. Eggar: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I made on Wednesday 20 October to the hon. Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill), *Official Report*, column *245*.

Energy Review Panel

Dr. Michael Clark: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he will appoint members of the energy review panel, which he announced in the coal White Paper.

Mr. Eggar: I announced to the House on 20 October that I had asked Dr. Martin Holdgate to chair the energy advisory panel, and had written to other experts in the energy field asking them to serve as members. I will make an announcement of the full membership of the panel as soon as possible.

Post Office Pension Schemes

Ms Estelle Morris: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what access to the funds and assets of the Post Office superannuation and Post Office pension schemes will be afforded private companies who take over ownership in the event of privatisation of Post Office Counters Ltd., Royal Mail Ltd. and Parcelforce Ltd.;

(2) what arrangements are planned in the event of the privatisation of Post Office Counters Ltd., Royal Mail Ltd., and Parcelforce Ltd., for any staff made redundant to take their current pension entitlements with them to alternative employment.

Mr McLoughlin: The Government are continuing their review into the future structure and organisation of the Post Office. Once the Government have decided on the future of the Post Office and its constituent businesses, they will be able to consider any implications for pensions in detail. Until then, these questions are hypothetical.

Post Office Chairman

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the President of the Board of Trade on what criteria he judges the performance of the chairman of the Post Office; when he will next review his performance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 25 October 1993]:* I look to the chairman of the Post Office to lead the board and the Post Office as a whole in providing high quality of service to its customers, efficiently and effectively, particularly measured against the financial and efficiency targets for the Post Office and its businesses set by Government as detailed in the Post Office annual report and accounts, and against targets agreed for the quality of service provided by the businesses.

Redirected Mail

Mr. Hain: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what were the percentage and actual increases in the charges for redirection of mail between 1991 and 1993, and what was the retail prices index increase over the equivalent period.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 25 October 1993]:* Charges for redirection of mail service have increased between 1991 and 1993 as follows:

Charge from:	*1 month*	*3 months*	*12 months*
16 September 1991	£3·50	£7·75	£18·75
13 September 1993	£6·00	£13·00	£30·00
Percentage increase	71·4	67·7	60·0

The retail price index increase between September 1991 and September 1993 was 5·4 per cent.

These increases bring the charges more closely into line with the costs of the mail redirection service and reflect the improvements recently made to these services.

Mr. Patrick Doyle

Mr. Dobson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish a list of all meetings held and correspondence exchanged in the past 10 years between his Department and Mr. Patrick Doyle, now of AST Training; what was the nature of such meetings or correspondence; what plans he has to meet Mr. Patrick Doyle; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neil Hamilton *[holding answer 21 October 1993]:* My Department has no record of any contact with Mr. Patrick Doyle.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

R. *v.* Morris, Reade and Woodwiss

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will place in the Library a copy of Mr. Justice Garland's judgment in the case of R. *v.* Morris, Reade and Woodwiss.

Mr. John M. Taylor: I have arranged for a copy of Mr. Justice Garland's judgment to be placed in the Library.

WALES

Welsh Language Board

Mr. Rowlands: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what his estimate is of the budget for a full year of the Welsh Language Board.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The budget for 1993-94 for the advisory Welsh Language Board is £400,000. Decisions about future provision for the statutory Welsh Language Board will be made in the context of the current and subsequent public expenditure surveys and will take into account the change in status, duties, functions and remit of the board brought about by the Welsh Language Act 1993. I will announce my decisions in due course in the normal way.

Community Care Housing

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what level of increased capital funding has been granted to Tai Cymru to meet community care housing needs.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Housing needs of this type are provided for from within the gross resources available to Housing for Wales which for this financial year represent an increase of approximately 5 per cent. on 1992-93, excluding acquisition initiative funding.

Special Needs Housing

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proportion of Tai Cymru funding was allocated towards approved development programmes of new housing for *(a)* special needs groups and *(b)* sheltered housing for elderly people in each year since 1990-91.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Capital funding for new special needs projects as a percentage of the total programme was as follows:

	Per cent
1990-91	9·3
1991-92	7·2
1992-93	4·4

Housing for Wales estimates that the figure for 1993-94 will be 8 per cent.

Separate figures for sheltered elderly allocation are not available for the period in question.

These figures are for new build only. They do not include the increasing number of homes being allocated to people in these groups from general needs provision.

Morriston Hospital, Swansea

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales by what date the new cardiac surgery centre will be completed at Morriston hospital, Swansea; and in what year 600 adult open-heart operations will be carried out there.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: There is presently no estimated completion date, but the project board established to manage the development of cardiac services at Morriston hospital is drawing up a detailed timetable for the project.

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many dedicated intensive care beds will be provided at the new cardiac surgery unit at Morriston hospital, Swansea.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: My announcement on 21 June gave the overall capacity of the unit—600 open heart procedures a year. Clearly, appropriate intensive care facilities will be needed to support this level of activity, but the detailed planning under way has not yet reached a stage where I could indicate the precise services to be provided.

Dental Treatment

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will place in the Library for each family health service authority area in Wales, the telephone number and contact name for use by any person not registered with a general dental practitioner who requires emergency dental treatment at night or during the weekends.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Non-registered patients requiring emergency treatment at night or at weekends should contact their nearest local dentist who may be willing to treat them. Alternatively, patients should contact their GP who will be able to provide pain relief and, where clinically necessary, refer the patient onwards to a local casualty department or appropriate hospital unit. Patients may also refer themselves to casualty departments.

Local Government Boundaries

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will ensure that the geographical boundaries of the proposed new unitary local authorities will be co-terminous with health authority and family health service authority boundaries.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The Government propose, in consultation with the health authorities and the family health service authorities, to review their boundaries so that, as far as possible, they do not cross those of the new unitary authorities.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish the dates by which he will require hospital trusts in Wales to publish their annual reports.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Except in the first year of operation, the statutory annual public meeting of NHS trusts must be held on or before 30 September to present the audited accounts, annual report and any report on the accounts.

Diabetes

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people in Wales are diabetics dependent on insulin injections; and in what form and at what level of disaggregation the information is held.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The Welsh Health Planning Forum's protocol on physical and sensory disability, which was published by the Welsh Office in November 1991, estimated that there are between 50,000 and 60,000 diabetics in Wales, of whom 30 to 40 per cent. are dependent on insulin injections. This estimate drew on the Welsh Medical Committee's report on diabetes, published the same year.

Further information on the number of people with diabetes, their capacity to cope with everyday life and their views on the management of their care will be available in 1994 from a survey of the health of the people of Wales commissioned by the Welsh Office.

NHS Trusts and Fund Holders

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the current official listed business address of *(a)* each NHS hospital trust and *(b)* each general practitioner fund-holding practice in Wales.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The list of addresses is as follows.

NHS Trust

1. Pembrokeshire NHS Trust.

   Chief Executive
   Pembrokeshire NHS Trust
   Withybush Hospital
   Fishguard Road
   HAVERFORDWEST SA61 2PZ

2. Glan Clwyd District General Hospital NHS Trust
   Glan Clwyd Hospital
   Bodelwyddan
   NR. RHYL
   Clwyd LL18 5UJ

3. Wrexham Maelor Hospital NHS Trust
   Wrexham Maelor Hospital
   Croesnewydd Road
   WREXHAM
   Clwyd LL13 7TD

4. Gofal Cymuned Clwydian Community Care NHS Trust
   Catherine Gladstone House
   Hawarden Way
   DEESIDE
   Clwyd CH5 2EP

5. Powys Health Care NHS Trust

Unit Offices
Felindre
Bronllys Hospital
Bronllys
BRECON
Powys LD3 0LS

6. Glan Hafren NHS Trust
Royal Gwent Hospital
Cardiff Road
NEWPORT
Gwent NP9 2UB

7. Gwent Community Health NHS Trust
Grange House
Llanfrechfa Grange Hospital
CWMBRAN
Gwent NP44 8YN

8. Llandough Hospital NHS Trust
Llandough Hospital
Llandough
PENARTH
South Glamorgan CF6 1XX

9. Bridgend and District NHS Trust
Nurses Home Offices
Quarella Road
BRIDGEND
Mid Glamorgan CF31 1YE

10. Swansea NHS Trust
Singleton Hospital
Sketty
SWANSEA
SA2 0FB

11. Llanelli Dinefwr NHS Trust
Prince Philip Hospital
Bryngwynmawr
Dafen
LLANELLI SA14 8QF

12. Carmarthen and District NHS Trust
West Wales General Hospital
Glangwili
CARMARTHEN
Dyfed SA31 2AF

13. Ceredigion and Mid Wales NHS Trust
Bronglais General Hospital
Caradog Road
ABERYSTWYTH
Dyfed SY23 1ER

14. South and East Wales Ambulance NHS Trust
South Glamorgan Ambulance Headquarters
Ty Bronna
St Fagans Road
Fairwater
CARDIFF CF5 3XP

GP Fundholders

Clwyd
Dr. W. B. Clarke & Partners
The Health Centre
Padeswood Road
Buckley CH7 2JL

Dr. C. W. Spencer & Partners
The Health Centre
Padeswood Road
Buckley
and
83 Main Road
Broughton CH4 0NR

Dr. D. E. Jones & Partners
Beech House
Vale Street
Denbigh LL16 3AU

Dr. J. G. Thomas & Partners
Bronyffynnon
Bridge Street
Denbigh LL16 3TH

Dr. G. O. Jones & Partners
Pendre Surgery
Coleshill Street
Holywell CH8 7UP

Dr. E. W. Jones & Partners
The Health Centre
Regent Street
Llangollen LL20 8HL

Dr. G. W. Jones & Partners
Cadwgan Surgery
360 Abergele Road
Old Colwyn LL29 9LW

Dr. N. Evans & Partners
Central Surgery
Ffordd Pendyffryn
Prestatyn LL19 9DH

Dr. J. N. Taylor & Partners
The Health Centre
Pen y Bont
The Roe
St. Asaph LL17 0LD

Dyfed
Dr. R. W. Burns & Partners
St. Thomas' Surgery
Rifleman Lane
St. Thomas' Green
Haverfordwest SA61 1QX

Dr. I. A. Davies & Partners
Meddygfa Teilo
Crescent Road
Llandeilo SA19 6HL

Gwent
Dr. S. M. Telang & Partners
Gray Hill Surgery
Woodstock Way
Caldicot NP6 4DB

Dr. P. E. Jones & Partners
Bellevue Surgery
Courtybella Terrace
Newport NP9 2WQ

Dr. M. Thomas & Partners
The Mount Surgery
George Street
Pontypool NP4 6YL

Dr. A. C. Pugh & Partners
Abersychan Surgery
Old Road
Abersychan
Pontypool NP4 7BQ

Powys
Dr. E. J. Welton & Partners
The Surgery
Well Street
Montgomery SY15 6PF

West Glamorgan
Dr. M. D. Edwards & Partners
22 Mill Street
Gowerton
Swansea SA4 3ED

Drs. Davies, O'Kane & Partners
Sketty Surgery
De La Beche Road
Sketty
Swansea SA2 9EA

Dr. D. G. Bromham & Partners
Castle Surgery
1 Prince of Wales Drive
Neath SA11 3EW

GP FUNDHOLDING SCHEME

Dr. B. K. Shah & Partners
The Surgery
Oakfield Street
Ystrad Mynach
Hengoed
Mid Glamorgan CF8 7WX

Drs. D. S. B. James, Jones & Partners
The Ashgrove Surgery
Morgan Street
Pontypridd
Mid Glamorgan CF37 2DR

Dr. W. A. Jerrett & Partners
Old School Surgery
School Street
Pontyclun
Mid Glamorgan

Dr. D. Parry & Partners
Gwlad y Mor
45-47 South Road
Porthcawl
Mid Glamorgan CF36 3DG

Drs. G. F. Morgan, Edwards & Partners
Ely Bridge Surgery
23 Mill Road
Ely
Cardiff CF5 4AE

Dr. S. P. Jenkins & Partners
Ty'r Felin Surgery
Cecil Road
Gorseinon
Swansea
West Glamorgan SA4 2BY

Dr. B. F. Bracewell & Partners
Clarence House
14 Russell Road
Rhyl
Clwyd LL18 3BY

GP FUNDHOLDING:

Clywd
Dr. D. Jones & Partners
Plas y Bryn Surgery
Chapel Street
Wrexham
LL13 7DD

Drs. Alstead, Alstead & Williams*
The Surgery
40 St Georges Crescent
Wrexham
LL13 8DB

Drs. Saul & Buchanan*
The Clinic
Beech Avenue
Rhos
Wrexham
LL14 1AA

Dr. J. Tattersall & Partners
The Clinic
First Avenue
Gwersyllt
Wrexham

Dr. R. Rouse & Partners
Rysseldene
98 Conway Road
Colwyn Bay
LL29 7LE

Dr. D. Ryan & Partners
The Surgery
Gardden Road
Rhos
Wrexham
LL14 2EN

Dr. W. Jolly & Partners
Shotton Lane Surgery
38, Shotton Lane
Shotton CH5 1QW

Dr. S. B. Patel & Partners
Rhoslan Surgery
4 Pwllycrochan Avenue
Colwyn Bay LL29 7DA

Dyfed
Dr. R. R. E. Evans & Partners
Furnace House Surgery
St. Andrews Road
Carmarthen
SA31 1LW

Dr. N. J. Lupini & Partners
Ty Elli Surgery
Vauxhall
Llanelli
SA15 3BD

Dr. E. L. Anthony & Partners
Avenue Villa Surgery
Brynmor Road
Llanelli
SA15 2TJ

Dr. D. E. C. Hurle & Partners
The Medical Centre
Westfield Road
Saundersfoot
SA69 9JW

Gwent
Dr. S. J. Thomas & Partners
Isca General Practice Unit
Cadoc House, High Street
Caerleon
Newport NP6 1AZ

Dr. R. H. Jones & Partners
The Health Centre
Regent Way
Chepstow
NP6 5BS

Dr. D. C. B. Bissett & Partners
Glan Rhyd Surgery
Riverside
Beaufort
Ebbw Vale NP3 5PB

Dr. A. E. Gray & Partners
Beechwood Surgery
371 Chepstow Road
Newport
NP9 8HL

Dr. D. W. John & Partners
St. Davids Clinic
Courtybella Terrace
Newport
NP9 2LD

Dr. A. W. Davies & Partners
The Grange Clinic
Westfield Avenue
Malpas
Newport NP9 6EY

Dr. R. H. Jones & Partners
Risca Surgery
Church House Field
St. Mary Street
Risca NP1 6YS

Dr. D. McPherson & Partners
Chippenham Surgery
Monmouth
Gwent
NP5 3EQ

Dr. A. L. Calland & Partners
The Wye Valley Practice
St. Briavels Surgery
Briavels
Lydney, Glos
GL15 6SA

Gwynedd
Dr. D. J. Bowen & Partners
The New Surgery
Longford Road
Holyhead LL65 1TR

Mid Glamorgan
Dr. P. W. Jones & Partners
Parc Canol Surgery
Central Park
Church Village
CF38 1RJ

Dr. B. Wookey & Partners
Pontcae Surgery
Georgetown
Merthyr Tydfil
CF48 1YE

Dr. C. D. V. Jones & Partners
The Medical Centre
Duffryn Road
Rhydyfelin
Pontypridd

Powys
Dr. A. J. M. Cavenagh & Partners
Brecon Medical Group Practice
Ruperra House
St. Mary's Street
Brecon LD3 7AA

Dr. A. R. W. Harriss & Partners
Glandwr Park
Builth Wells
LD2 3DZ

Dr. J. R. Waring & Partners
War Memorial Health Centre
Beaufort Street
Crickhowell
NP8 1AG

Dr. E. T. Scrase & Partners
The Health Centre
Llanidloes
SY18 6EZ

South Glamorgan
Dr. M. T. K. Wheeler & Partners
Fairwater Health Centre
Plasmawr Road
Fairwater
Cardiff CF5 3JT

Dr. D. W. Williamson & Partners
Clifton Surgery
151-153 Newport Road
Roath
Cardiff CF2 1AG

Dr. D. A. Richards & Partners
The North Cardiff Medical Centre
Excalibur Drive
Thornhill
Cardiff
CF4 9BB

Dr. M. J. O'Kane & Partners
The Health Centre
Caebricks Road
Cwmbwrla
Swansea
SA5 8NS

Dr. D. G. Lewis & Partners*
Fforestfach Health Centre
Ravenhill Road
Fforestfach
Swansea SA5 5AA

Dr. I. M. Millington & Partners*
Fforestfach Health Centre
Fforestfach
Swansea

Dr. A. L. Foulkes & Partners
Llwynbrwydrau Surgery
3 Frederick Place
Llansamlet
Swansea SA7 9RY

Dr. M. K. Hopkins & Partners
Manselton Surgery
Elgin Street
Manselton
Swansea
SA5 8QE

Dr. B. Lervy & Partners
The Surgery
65 Sway Road
Morriston
Swansea SA6 6JA

Dr. D. H. Gamage & Partners
St. Thomas Surgery
Ysgol Street
St. Thomas
Swansea SA1 8LH

West Glamorgan

Dr. R. B. D. Skidmore & Partners*
The Health Centre
Hunter Street
Briton Ferry
SA11 2SF

Dr. C. S. Selby & Partners*
The Health Centre
Hunter Street
Briton Ferry
SA11 2SF

Dr. D. M. Davies
Dyfed Road Health Centre
Dyfed Road
Neath
SA11 3AP

Dr. T. V. Barrow & Partners
The Health Centre
Pontardawe

Swansea
SA8 4JU

Dr. R. R. Jones & Partners
140 St Helens Road
Swansea
SA1 4DE

Dr. A. Law & Partners
The Surgery
Trinity Buildings
21 Orchard Street
Swansea
SA1 5EB

Dr. J. R. Evans & Partners
Tal y Bont Surgery
Station Road
Pontardulais
Swansea
SA4 1TL

Dr. J. G. Williams
48 Sketty Road
Uplands
Swansea
SA2 0LJ
and
49 Queens Road
Mumbles
Swansea
SA3 4AW

Dr. G. H. Jones
The Surgery
78 Newton Road
Swansea
SA3 4BE

*Group application

VAT (Headquarters Buildings)

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has had in relation to the treatment of VAT on new headquarters buildings to be owned by *(a)* training and enterprise councils, *(b)* the Welsh Development Agency or *(c)* training and enterprise councils and the Welsh Development Agency jointly; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: None. North East Wales training and enterprise council and the Welsh Development Agency have taken account of, inter alia, VAT requirements in preparing their proposals.

Urban Investment Grant

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 11 June, *Official Report*, columns *346-48*, if he will list for each of the recipients of urban investment grant in Wales, both as regards Welsh Office direct payment and via Cardiff Bay development corporation, how much has been *(a)* agreed, and *(b)* paid in each quarter.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply my right hon. Friend gave him on 11 June and on 22 June at column *114*.

Details of projects approved in each of the quarters are given at table 1—Welsh Office—and table 2—CBDC. Payments are made in arrears and calculated on the basis of certificated measured work and, where appropriate, site acquisition costs.

Table 1: Welsh Office Approved Projects

Quarter and Project and Developer	*Grant approved* £
April-June 1991	
Goat Mill Road, Merthyr	
Breamvalley Estates Ltd.	315,000
July-September 1991	
Llewellyn's Quay, Port Talbot	
Comfort House Investments Ltd.	175,000
October-December 1991	
Beacons View, Dowlais	
Comfort House Investments Ltd.	100,000
Quay West, Swansea	
Andrew Scott Developments Ltd.	500,000
St. David's Church, Aberdare	
R. A. & C. T. Davies	43,000
January-March 1992	
Harold Wilson Industrial Estate, Caerphilly	
G. A. Spacey (Management Services) Ltd.	136,000
Cromwell Service Station, Newport	
Sinclair Garages (Port Talbot) Ltd.	245,000
Cardiff Road, Aberaman	
Beazer Urban Developments	328,000
Letchworth Road, Ebbw Vale	
Barakat Property Developers Ltd.	84,000
Old Bus Station, Merthyr	
Redrow Homes (South Wales) Ltd.	250,000
Warnill's Foundry, Abertillery	
Safeway Stores plc	150,000
April-June 1992	
Blaenant Business Park	
Short (Bros.) Plant Ltd.	25,000
King Street, Mold	
MPH (North Wales) Ltd.	70,000
July-September 1992	
Clase Road, Morriston	
Castle Leisure Ltd.	200,000
Royal Opera House Scenery Store, Aberaman	
Macob Holdings Ltd.	1,336,000
October-December 1992	
Nil	
January-March 1993	
Former YMCA, Aberaman	
R. A. & C. T. Davies	45,000
Castle Court, Caerphilly	
Macob Construction Ltd.	95,000
Dimond Street, Pembroke Dock	
Peter Morris & Mewbeck Ltd.	55,000

Table 2: Cardiff Bay development corporation approved grants

Quarter and project and developer	*Grant approved* £
January-March 1993	
NCM Offices, Capital Waterside	
Associated British Ports	2,500,000

North-east Wales Training and Enterprise Council

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has had in relation to the development of a new headquarters for the North-east Wales training and enterprise council; what consent has been *(a)* sought and *(b)* refused for capital expenditure for such a purpose; what consent has been (i) sought, and (ii)

refused for a new headquarters for North-east Wales for the Welsh Development Agency; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: Representations have been received from those listed as follows about the proposed North East Wales business development centre which would include office accommodation for both the training and enterprise council and the Welsh Development Agency. Aspects of the proposal are still under consideration.

Welsh Development Agency
North East Wales Training and Enterprise Council
Mr. John Bragg
Dr. John Marek MP
Mr. Barry Jones MP
Mr. R. J. Dutton, Chairman, Wrexham ITEC Management Advisory Group
Mr. B. Goodhall, Wrexham Maelor Borough Council
Mr. Rhodri Morgan MP

European Elections

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what has been the advertising expenditure of his Department on the proposed new Euro-constituency boundaries in Wales; and if he will separately distinguish the sum spent on *(a)* television advertising and *(b)* newspaper advertising.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I have been asked to reply.

The total sum spent on advertising the provisionally recommended boundaries for European parliamentary constituencies in Wales has so far been £5,336·23. This was all spent on newspaper advertising, in both English and Welsh in the following papers: *Western Mail,* Liverpool *Daily Post, Evening Leader,* Wrexham, *Y Cymru.*

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the names and addresses of all the establishments in Wales where members of the public may view the boundaries of the proposed Euro-constituencies within Wales.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: I have been asked to reply.

The provisional recommendations of the European Parliamentary Constituency Committee for Wales were placed on public deposit on Monday 13 September 1993 at the following locations:

Clwyd
Council Offices, Russel House, Churton Road, Rhyl
Council Offices, Wynnstay Road, Ruthin
Council Offices, Glynne Way, Hawarden
Delyn House, Chapel Street, Flint
Guildhall, Wrexham
Civic Centre, Abergele Road, Colwyn Bay

Dyfed
Council Offices, 3 Spilman Street, Carmarthen
Town Hall, Aberystwyth
Town Hall, Llanelli
Cambria House, Haverfordwest
District Offices, Llanion Park, Pembroke Dock
Municipal Offices, Crescent Road, Llandeilo

Gwynedd
Council Offices, Cae Penarlag, Dolgellau
Council Offices, Pwllheli
Council Offices, Bodlondeb, Conwy
Borough Council Office, Llangefni
Town Hall, Bangor

Mid Glamorgan
Civic Offices, Angel Street, Bridgend
Council Offices, Talbot Street, Maesteg
Municipal Buildings, Morgan Street, Pontypridd
Council Offices, Ystrad Fawr, Ystrad Mynach, Hengoed
Civic Centre, Castle Street, Merthyr Tydfil
Municipal Offices, Llewellyn Street, Pentre, Rhondda
Council Offices, Rock Grounds, High Street, Aberdare

South Glamorgan
City Hall, Cardiff
Council Offices, Holton Road, Barry

West Glamorgan
Civic Centre, Penllergaer
The Guildhall, Swansea
Civic Centre, Neath
Civic Centre, Port Talbot

Gwent
Municipal Offices, Civic Centre, Ebbw Vale
Civic Centre, Blackwood
Civic Centre, Pontypool
Mamhilad House, Mamhilad Park Estate, Pontypool
Civic Centre, Newport

Powys
Council Offices, Severn Road, Welshpool
Neuadd Brycheiniog, Cambrian Way, The Watton, Brecon
District Council Offices, Llandrindod Wells

PRIME MINISTER

Overseas Journeys

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Prime Minister what has been the total cost to public funds of his journeys abroad since 9 April 1992.

The Prime Minister: The cost to public funds of my journeys abroad since 9 April 1992 is estimated to be £1,979,000.

Yasser Arafat

Mr. Parry: To ask the Prime Minister what plans he has to meet Mr. Yasser Arafat; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I hope to see Mr Arafat in London before the end of the year.

Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make a statement on the outcome of the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in Cyprus.

The Prime Minister: With my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, I attended the meeting of the Commonwealth Heads of Government in Cyprus from 21 to 25 October. The final communiqué of the meeting and accompanying documents have been placed in the Library of the House.

The emphasis of the meeting was on the practical and constructive work of the Commonwealth. Agreement was reached on a range of important subjects. The "Limassol Statement on the Uruguay Round" expressed the Commonwealth's strong collective commitment to a comprehensive, equitable and balanced conclusion of the round by 15 December 1993. Commonwealth Heads decided to send a mission of Ministers from Barbados, Canada, Ghana, Malaysia and Mauritius to call on the GATT Director General in Geneva, the European Commission in Brussels and selected capitals to press for

urgent progress in the trade talks. Nothing will do more to promote growth and jobs for developed and developing countries alike.

The meeting called for additional measures to reduce the debt burden of developing countries to sustainable levels and, in particular, for the full implementation of the Trinidad terms. These discussions confirmed me in the view that the neediest countries, with a trace record of economic reform, should be offered early and sufficient reduction on their whole stock of official debt. We will continue to press for this.

I secured strong support for my proposal that Commonwealth countries should strengthen their co-operation in combating the international menace of financial crime. There was agreement to work towards implementation of the 40 recommendations of the financial action task force set up in 1989 at G7 initiative. The United Kingdom is the current chairman. This means that Commonwealth countries will seek to adopt best international practice in this area. Law and Finance Ministers are following up in detail. This will also help Commonwealth work on drug abuse and proceeds of illicit trafficking. I encouraged all Commonwealth Governments not yet party to the relevant 1988 United Nations convention to do so as soon as possible and put in place enforcement mechanisms.

We agreed that the Commonwealth observer mission to South Africa was making an important contribution towards helping to stem the violence and should remain there until after the election next year. We also agreed that a Commonwealth group should observe the elections as part of a wider international presence to build confidence in the electoral process. We looked forward to welcoming South Africa back into the Commonwealth at the earliest possible opportunity after democratic elections, if South Africa decides to reapply for membership. In lifting all economic sanctions still in place, we endorsed the appeals by President de Klerk and Dr. Nelson Mandela for foreign investment in, and increased trade with, South Africa to help overcome the social and economic legacy of apartheid.

The 1991 Harare declaration on good governance has proved its worth. Since 1991, five out of the nine Commonwealth members without democratic government then have held multi-party elections. The Commonwealth has sent observer missions to each of these countries and has provided technical assistance to help the process. Much work on fundamental political values remains to be done. We recognised that in this field the Commonwealth has its particular vocation. We mandated the Secretary-General to give it a high priority.

In this context, the meeting considered Cameroon's application for Commonwealth membership. It agreed to welcome Cameroon to membership at our next meeting in 1995, on the condition that current efforts to establish a democratic system, consistent with the Harare Commonwealth declaration, were by then completed.

The meeting discussed a wide range of international political matters, including Bosnia and the Cyprus problem, and agreed that the Commonwealth action group on Cyprus should continue to monitor developments.

Commonwealth Heads accepted with pleasure the Canadian invitation extended to all governments to participate in the Commonwealth Games in Victoria, British Columbia during 18 to 28 August 1994. Commonwealth Heads also accepted with pleasure New Zealand's invitation to them to hold the next meeting of Commonwealth Heads of Government in 1995.

Lockerbie Bombing

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will obtain for the library of No. 10 Downing street a copy of the book, the details of which have been supplied to him, relating to the loss of Pan Am 103 over Lockerbie.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 19 October 1993]:* No. A copy is already available in the Treasury library.

Mr. Patrick Doyle

Mr. Dobson: To ask the Prime Minister if he will publish a list of all meetings held and correspondence exchanged in the past 10 years between his Office and Mr. Patrick Doyle, now of AST Training; what was the nature of such meetings or correspondence; what plans he has to meet Mr. Patrick Doyle; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 22 October 1993]:* I am unaware of any such contacts and have no plans to meet Mr. Doyle.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Child Support Agency

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the latest estimate of the sum in maintenance which should be paid by absent parents as a result of Child Support Agency assessments *(a)* in the agency's first year of operation and *(b)* in a full year on the assumption that the assessments are in operation at current levels.

Mr. Burt: It is estimated that the sum in maintenance paid by absent parents as a result of Child Support Agency assessments will be some £530 million in the agency's first year and £900 million in the long run.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the latest estimate of the sum in maintenance payments resulting from Child Support Agency assessments which will go to the Treasury or which will benefit the Treasury by reducing income support payments in the agency's first year of operation; and what percentage this is of the total of maintenance payments assessed by the agency.

Mr. Burt: It is estimated that the savings to the taxpayer from reductions in income support payments in 1993-94 will be approximately £450 million. This represents 85 per cent. of the estimated total of the maintenance payments which will be made as a result of assessments.

Mr. Milligan: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to trace absent parents who are now living elsewhere in the European Community and are not paying maintenance for their children.

Mr. Burt: The jurisdiction of the Child Support Agency does not extend beyond the United Kingdom. The Lord Chancellor's Department administers reciprocal enforcement agreements with many countries both inside and outside the European Community. These provisions

allow for the enforcement of British court orders abroad and of foreign orders in the United Kingdom. The Government have no plans to change these arrangements.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to review the operation of the Child Support Agency and in particular the financial formula for calculating the maintenance liabilities of absent parents; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Burt: The new child support maintenance system is a major Government initiative and we are keeping its implementation under close scrutiny. We have no current plans for changes to the formula.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the latest estimate of the sum that will be paid in maintenance as a result of Child Support Agency assessments in the agency's first year of operation which will be *(a)* retained by parents with care and *(b)* recovered through reduced benefit payments.

Mr. Burt: It is estimated that some £50 million of maintenance will be retained by parents with care and about £480 million will be recovered through reduced benefit payments.

Mr. Mills: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what assessment he has made of the effect of the Child Support Agency calculations on the level of maintenance required from responsible fathers already paying maintenance.

Mr. Burt: It is estimated that average awards of maintenance by the Child Support Agency will be about £45 to £50 per week, compared with awards of £25 to £30 under the previous arrangements. This increase is in part due to the fact that many awards under the old system have run for years without review. Awards by the Child Support Agency will be reviewed annually.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to undertake a review of the Child Support Agency's workings.

Mr. Burt: The new child support maintenance system is a major Government initiative and we are keeping its implementation under close scrutiny. We have no current plans for change.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what consideration he has given to the extent to which the new maintenance arrangements for child support *(a)* penalise second families in respect of absentee parents partners have their income taken into account and *(b)* undermine the clean break principle by disturbing previously agreed maintenance arrangements.

Mr. Burt: Assessment of child support maintenance is based on an absent parent's own income and essential expenditure. A partner's income is taken into account only to assess whether the partner can contribute towards the support of any child of the couple themselves; and whether the amount the absent parent has been assessed to pay under the maintenance formula should be reduced to avoid his second family's resources falling below a prescribed level.

The clean break principle is restricted to arrangements between couples who divorce and it has always been the case that there can be no clean break between parents and their children. The child support maintenance formula takes account of the practical consequences of a clean break settlement by allowing the absent parent's housing costs in his exempt income.

Independent Living Fund

Ms Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when his Department will provide guidance to local authorities concerning the administration of the independent living fund, and the consequent responsibilities of local authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: The independent living (extension) fund and the independent living (1993) fund are independent and discretionary trust funds. I am informed by the director of the funds that detailed guidance on the operation of the independent living (1993) fund was issued to local authorities on 6 September 1993.

Lone Parents

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security in what percentage of the cases in which a maintenance assessment has been issued and the parent with care is in receipt of income support that parent no longer will be eligible for income support as the result of the payment of the assessed maintenance.

Mr. Burt: The cost of establishing the number of such cases would be disproportionately high.

However, it is estimated that in the long run about 30,000 lone parents will no longer be dependent on the taxpayer by requiring income support because they are receiving maintenance. This represents just under 10 per cent. of all lone parents expected to be receiving child support maintenance.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the latest estimate of his Department's current annual expenditure on single parents.

Mr. Burt: It is estimated that the total benefit expenditure on lone parents was £6·6 billion during 1992-93.

Maxwell Pensioners

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what measures his Department has taken to secure the return of Maxwell pension scheme funds from Credit Suisse to the Maxwell pensioners;

(2) what measures his Department has taken to secure the return of Maxwell pension scheme funds from Lehman Brothers to the Maxwell pensioners.

Mr. Hague: Responsibility for the recovery of missing Maxwell pension scheme assets rests with the trustees of the pension schemes and the joint liquidators of Bishopsgate Investment Management Ltd.

The trustees of the Maxwell Pensioners Trust have taken an initiative to promote an overall settlement to the many disputes relating to missing Maxwell pension scheme assets. The Government welcome this initiative, which is being taken forward on behalf of the trust by Sir Peter Webster, a retired High Court judge.

Maxwell pensions have been kept in payment while asset recovery work has continued, initially by means of

Government emergency funding amounting to £2·5 million. Assistance is currently provided through loans to the pension schemes from the Maxwell Pensioners Trust.

Pensioners (Consumer Goods)

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the latest available information on the level of ownership among pensioners of *(a)* motor cars, *(b)* central heating, *(c)* telephones, *(d)* televisions, *(e)* personal computers or word processors, *(f)* housing, *(g)* washing machines, *(h)* dishwashers and (i) refrigerators; what were the figures for 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hague: The information requested is in the table.

Pensioner households—Ownership of goods

Item	*1979* *Per cent*	*1992* *Per cent*
Motor Cars	23	39
Central Heating	43	78
Telephones	50	90
Televisions	94	98
Personal Computers or word processors	n/a	1
Housing	43	57
Washing machines	56	75
Dishwashers	n/a	n/a
Refrigerators	84	99

Source: Family Expenditure Survey

Notes:

1. Ownership of dishwashers is not recorded in the Family Expenditure Survey.
2. Ownership of personal computers or word processors is not recorded for 1979.

Housing Benefit

Ms Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people received housing benefit in Tower Hamlets for the last three years, broken down into local authority tenants, housing association tenants and private tenants.

Mr. Burt: The latest available information is in the table.

Year	*Local authority tenants*	*All private tenants (a+b)*	*Housing Association tenants (a)*	*Other private tenants (b)*
1990	22,507	3,708	—	—
1991	23,581	4,410	—	—
1992	24,780	5,288	2,560	2,838

Notes:

1. The information covers benefit units, and not individuals, couples are counted as one unit.
2. Discrete information on the numbers of Housing Association Tenants is available only from 1992. Prior to that date, the data is included with that of all Private Tenants.
3. The source of the data is the Housing Benefit Management Information System quarterly caseload returns for February, May, August and November for 1990, 1991 and 1992.

VAT on Fuel

Mr. Cormack: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what would be the estimated cost of measures to relieve those in receipt of benefits from the effect of VAT on domestic fuel at *(a)* 17½ per cent., *(b)* 8 per cent. and *(c)* 5 per cent.

Mr. Burt: The costs of compensation will depend on the measures taken and the benefits covered. Extra help will be given to poorer pensioners and others on low incomes. An announcement will be made later in the autumn.

Among the points to be taken into account is the fact that domestic fuel prices, on average, have fallen by 17·5 per cent. in real terms since their peak in 1983.

Medical Reports

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will require medical reports, undertaken on behalf of his Department for the purposes of benefit claims, to be typewritten in the interests of clarity; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hague: The provision of medical reports for benefit purposes is a matter for Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. David Hinchliffe, dated 25 October 1993:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency it is my responsibility to answer questions raised about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security, asking if he will require medical reports, undertaken on behalf of his Department for the purpose of benefit claims, to be typewritten in the interests of clarity.

I should explain that it is the responsibility of the Benefits Agency Medical Services (BAMS) to provide advice and written reports following medical examination to support the adjudication of benefit claims.

Whilst some reports are already typed, in response to the stated requirements of their customers, BAMS are now piloting various schemes in different parts of the country to determine the most cost-effective way of providing typed reports for all benefits. They are committed to implementing this improvement in the service they provide as soon as is practically possible.

Until the change can be implemented, all doctors working for BAMS continue to be reminded of the importance of writing clearly when they have to provide a handwritten report.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the Official Report and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Disabilities Allowances

Mr. Miller: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has for changes to the facilities available to right hon. and hon. Members in respect of the hotline service for the disability living allowance in Blackpool; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hague: The administration of disability living allowance is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Michael Bichard to Mr. Andrew Miller, dated 25 October 1993:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency it is my responsibility to answer questions raised about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security, asking if there are any plans for changes to the facilities available to honourable and right honourable Members in respect of the DLA hotline service.

The hotline continues to operate in Blackpool and achieve a 48 hour call back service. There are presently no plans to alter these facilities. However, as the performance for handling DLA claims is now being sustained at a high level, we will have to consider at some point whether there remains a need for the service in the same form to be maintained in the future. Members will be advised of any changes if, and when, we propose such changes.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the Official Report and a copy will also be placed in the Library.

EMPLOYMENT

Overseas Staff and Premises

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the cost for the current financial year of his Department having *(a)* premises and *(b)* personnel overseas; and what were the comparable figures for *(a)* 12, *(b)* 24, *(c)* 36 and *(d)* 48 months ago.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The figures set out in the table show the Employment Department's costs for premises and personnel overseas in 1992-93 and in 1993-94 to date. Information for the financial years 1991-92, 1990-91 and 1989-90 is not readily available.

Year	*Premises costs*	*Personnel costs*
1992-93	—	£979,585
1993-94 (to end September)	—	£565,893

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what research has been undertaken by his Department on the job creation potential stemming from the development of energy efficiency programmes in the United Kingdom.

Miss Widdecombe: The Department has not undertaken any such research.

Jobs, Birmingham

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many new vacancies were notified to jobcentres in Birmingham in each of the last 12 months.

Miss Widdecombe: The information is given in the table and is also available from the NOMIS database in the Library.

Vacancies notified to Jobcentres covering Birmingham local authority district

Date	*Number*
October 1992	2,669
November 1992	3,134
December 1992	2,055
January 1993	1,556
February 1993	2,095
March 1993	2,041
April 1993	2,177
May 1993	2,433
June 1993	2,042
July 1993	2,309
August 1993	2,722
September 1993	2,390

Jobs, Lancashire

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many vacancies are currently available at jobcentres in Lancashire offering jobs at *(a)* £3·10 an hour or less and *(b)* £3·50 an hour or less.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M.E.G. Fogden to Mr. Gordon Prentice, dated 26 October 1993:

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, the Secretary of State has asked me to write to you direct to respond to your Parliamentary Question to him about the number of vacancies currently available at Jobcentres in Lancashire offering jobs at *(a)* £3·10 an hour or less and *(b)* £3·50 an hour or less. This is something which falls within the responsibilities delegated to me as Chief Executive of the Agency.

Unfortunately, I am unable to answer your question without disproportionate costs being incurred. There are 25 Jobcentres in Lancashire and it would be necessary for each to carry out a separate survey, as the information requested is not routinely collected. However, details have been obtained from a sample of four of the larger Jobcentres in the county namely Burnley, Blackpool North, Blackburn and Lancaster. On 22 October these offices held a total of 747 vacancies offering jobs at £3·50 an hour or less, including 511 offering £3·10 an hour or less. For each of the four offices some vacancies from adjacent offices have been included because of arrangements to circulate information within travel to work areas.

I hope this is helpful.

As decided by the Administration Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to written Parliamentary Questions will now be published in the Official Report. I will also place a copy of this letter in the Library of the House.

Farm Accidents

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the number of people killed in farm accidents in England and Wales in each of the last five years.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Deaths occuring on farms cannot be separately identified. The fatal accidents in agriculture and horticulture reported to the enforcement authorities in England and Wales under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrencies Regulations 1985 are set out in the table.

Fatal Accidents in the Agriculture and Horticulture Industry[1] Reported to the Enforcement Authorities in England and Wales, 1987-88 to 1991-92

Year[2]	Employees[3]	Self employed	Members of Public[4]	Total
1987-88	18	24	7	49
1988-89	16	20	13	49
1989-90	14	21	11	46
1990-91	17	16	13	46
1991-92	12	24	2	38

[1] As defined by standard industrial classification 1980, class 01.
[2] Year commencing 1 April.
[3] Including trainees.
[4] Killed as a result of someone else's work activity.

Fireworks

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what standards are required of imported fireworks relative to those manufactured in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: In deciding whether or not to grant an importation licence, the explosives inspectorate of the Health and Safety Executive applies the same standards to those required of domestically manufactured fireworks.

Sheltered Placements

Mr. Illsley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what considerations underlie the prohibition on local authorities which operate their own sheltered placement schemes from offering further placements where funding is available from Remploy Interwork.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. Eric Illsley, dated 26 October 1993:

As the Employment Service is an Executive Agency, the Secretary of State has asked me to write to you direct to respond to your Parliamentary Question to him about local authority Sheltered Placement Schemes (SPS). This is something which falls within the responsibilities delegated to me as Chief Executive of the Agency.

There is nothing to prevent a local authority which acts both as a sponsor and a host organisation of SPS from also having Interwork placements within their organisation.

I hope this is helpful.

As decided by the Administrative Committee of the House of Commons, Chief Executive replies to written Parliamentary Questions will now be published in the official Report. I will also place a copy of this letter in the library of the House.

HEALTH

Health Service Reforms

12. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the latest report she has received from the Guy's and St. Thomas' national health service trust relating to health service reforms in London.

Dr. Mawhinney: Guy's and St. Thomas' hospital trust are currently exploring options for the siting of their services as required by "Making London Better". I expect to receive a report from the trust board by mid-November.

Hospital Treatment

13. **Mr. Bayley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on progress on pacing of treatment in hospital.

Dr. Mawhinney: Early evidence indicates that, overall, hospitals are managing their workload effectively over the year. Guidance was issued by the National Health Service Management Executive to ensure that monitoring systems are in place so that local managers can identify problems early and take action to maintain a balanced activity throughout the year.

GP Fund Holders

14. **Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will review the working of general practitioner fund holders; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: The fund-holding scheme has been a remarkable success since its introduction in 1991. In England, one in four patients are benefiting from fund holders' services. From 1 April 1994, about one in three patients will benefit.

The purpose of the scheme is to deliver better care for patients, to achieve better value for money, and to give general practitioners more influence in the service provided to their patients. There is clear evidence to show that it succeeds on all three counts.

15. **Mr. Duncan Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many smaller family doctor practices are planning to join the fund-holding scheme in April 1994 by joining together; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: More than 350 small practices have expressed an interest in joining the fund-holding scheme from April 1994 by joining together as groups to hold a fund. This is the largest cohort of small practices coming forward so far.

22. **Dr. Twinn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many general practitioners have expressed an interest in joining the fund-holding scheme in April 1994; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: More than 800 practices are preparing to join the scheme from April 1994. From that date about one in three of the population will be covered by a general practitioner fund holder.

26. **Mr. Ian Taylor:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what progress has been made in extending the range of services which can be provided by general practitioner fund holders.

Dr. Mawhinney: From 1 April 1993 fund holders have been able to purchase community health services from their patients, and can receive payment from the fund for performing secondary care procedures at practice level. We keep the range of services for which fund holders can contract under constant review.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what provision exists *(a)* to assess whether a fund-holding general practitioner practice was over-funded in its initial year of operation and *(b)* to recover funds from a fund-holding practice that has been overfunded.

Dr. Mawhinney: Regional health authorities are responsible for setting fair budgets for general practitioner fundholders. If budgets are set incorrectly, for example because of data problems, regions agree with fund holders how to resolve the problem. Excessive surpluses can be returned at the end of the year and regions hold contingency reserves for cases where budgets are set too low.

Occupational Health

17. **Mr. Roy Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients the national health service treated in 1990-91 and 1991-92 for *(a)* occupational health related diseases and *(b)* industrial accidents.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally.

Barnet Health Authority

18. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement about the number of patients treated by the Barnet health authority in 1992-93 and 1982-83.

Mr. Sackville: Between 1982-83 and 1992-93 in-patient and out-patient activity both went up by approximately 5 per cent. to 42,906 and 226,317 respectively. Over the same period daycase activity trebled to 9,627.

Treatment in Barnet from April 1992 is provided by the Wellhouse Trust, comprising Barnet and Edgware hospitals. Previously the hospitals were managed by Barnet health authority.

Residential Care

19. **Mr. Illsley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has received from representatives of residential care homes regarding assessments by local authorities.

Mr. Bowis: I have regular meetings with care home representatives at which we discuss various issues including local authority assessments.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make it her policy to monitor the effect of the deregistration of residential care homes for vulnerable people upon service provision to their inhabitants.

Mr. Bowis: I am aware of a few homes in the drug and alcohol field which have been deregistered. These services have been and are continuing to be monitored by Goldsmith's college, whose first report was published on 28 July and a copy of which is available in the Library.

Domiciliary Care Agencies

20. **Ms Glenda Jackson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will introduce legislation to require the registration and inspection of domiciliary care agencies.

Mr. Bowis: We have no plans to introduce such legislation.

National Health Service

21. **Mr. Kynoch:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to make the public aware of how they can help the national health service to provide a better service.

Dr. Mawhinney: Every opportunity is used to emphasise how important the public's help is to the national health service in providing a better service. When the patient's charter was launched two years ago it included a section on how patients could help the NHS. More recently the Department of Health has developed and issued throughout the NHS a "Help Us to Help You" information pack. This initiative will stimulate and encourage local campaigns.

23. **Sir David Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of the gross domestic product was spent on the national health service in the most recent year for which figures are available; and what was the percentage in 1978.

Mr. Sackville: Total national health service expenditure in the United Kingdom was equivalent to 6·1 per cent. of gross domestic product in 1992-93, compared with 4·7 per cent. in 1978-79.

Harlow Wood Hospital

24. **Mr. Tipping:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what are the future plans for the Harlow Wood hospital, Nottinghamshire.

Mr. Sackville: No final decision has been made on the long-term future of the hospital. I understand that the North Nottinghamshire health authority is considering various options to secure orthopaedic services for local people.

Patients Charter

25. **Ms Eagle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the patients charter.

Dr. Mawhinney: Since the patients charter came into effect in April 1992, patients throughout the national health service have seen the benefits in terms of better services. The patients charter has stimulated many innovative ideas and much good practice at local level and the efforts of the national health service should be applauded.

Health Information

27. **Mr. Couchman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps have been taken to improve the provision of information on health matters for patients.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Government are committed to improving the information available to patients and the public about the national health service and health matters. The patients charter emphasises that patients have a right to be given detailed information on local health services. The national freephone health information service was launched in January this year, providing a free and confidential service to patients on a wide range of health issues, including information on diseases, treatments, self-help groups and local services. The freephone number of HIS is 0800 66 55 44.

The Government provide £36 million per year for the funding of the Health Education Authority, which

promotes a wide range of health education and advice, both directly to the public and through others. The Department also produces information on such areas as help with charges for prescriptions, optical and dental treatment and the costs of travel to hospital.

Care in the Community

28. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has received about the role of voluntary groups in care in the community.

Mr. Bowis: We have received a variety of representations from different voluntary organisations. We meet regularly with many of them and we greatly value the contribution they make to the care of individuals whether in their own homes or in community-based residential establishments.

Mental Health Facilities

Mr. Hoyle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients in 1991-92 were retained in the hospital system under sections 2 or 3 of the Mental Health Act 1983 because *(a)* suitable accommodation outside the hospital was not available or *(b)* an alternative but less restrictive mental health facility was not available.

Mr. Bowis: This information is not collected centrally.

Child Care, Lambeth

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of the delivery of child care services in the London borough of Lambeth; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: Following the social services inspectorate report of April 1992 into child protection services, Lambeth has been asked to provide regular reports on these services in the borough. The latest report covers the period up to 1 October 1993 and shows that, despite some work towards achieving improved standards in management and quality of services, there are continuing causes for concern, including an unacceptably high level of unallocated casework. Lambeth will be asked to send a further report by 1 March 1994. In addition, Lambeth is addressing recommendations in a recent social services inspectorate report on three of its children's homes.

Charitable Trusts

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what advice she has offered or will offer district health authorities who now no longer manage patient services regarding the transfer of district charitable trust funds to hospitals for the benefit of patients.

Mr. Sackville: The administration of charitable funds is the responsibility of the trustees. We have given advice on the legal process required when trustees' responsibilities are transferred from health authorities to national health service trusts. The latest such advice (FDL(93)24) was issued in March 1993, and will be placed in the Library.

Offenders (Mental Disorders)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she will reply to Dr. John Reed, principal medical officer at her Department to his recommendations made last November in respect of improvements to the treatment of offenders with mental disorders; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo) gave my hon. Friend the Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls) on 27 November 1992 at cols. *873-74*.

We have endorsed the guiding principles of the joint Department of Health/Home Office review, which point in particular to services being provided, as far as is compatible with public safety, in more local and less institutional settings. In addition we have reaffirmed the policy that, wherever possible, mentally disordered offenders should be cared for and treated by health and social services rather than in the criminal justice system.

The implementation of these recommendations falls largely to the agencies concerned at local level. We have made services for mentally disordered offenders a first order priority for the national health service in 1994-95. This means that health authorities are required to work with personal social services and criminal justice agencies to develop strategic and purchasing plans for services for mentally disordered offenders, based on the recommendations of the interdepartmental review. Regional health authorities are currently carrying out an assessment of the need for these services which builds on an initial assessment last year.

We have increased central capital funding for medium secure psychiatric services from £3 million in 1991-92 to £17 million in 1992-93, and have made available a further £22 million in 1993-94. We have also made a total of £422,000 available in 1992-93 and 1993-94 for pump-priming of local multi-agency initiatives to help mentally disordered offenders. We have received many imaginative proposals and have so far allocated funds to 61 schemes. The Home Office has provided funds to assist the development of Court assessment and diversion schemes. At least 60 of these schemes are now operating in England, of which 26 are receiving central funding this year.

The committee which we set up to advise the Department of Health and the Home Office on action to follow up the review has been appointed and has held its first meeting. We fully recognise the importance of sustaining the development of these services and will take full account of the committee's advice in taking this forward.

Warner Report

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the current situation in respect of the Warner report.

Mr. Bowis: Following publication of the report in December 1992, local authorities were asked to improve methods of recruitment and vetting of staff responsible for children in residential care. On 1 July this year, local authorities were asked to address other recommendations in the report and to submit progress returns to the Department. On 22 July I announced the membership and the terms of reference for the children's residential care support force in a reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury (Mr. Brazier) at columns *291-92*.

Life Expectancy

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make it her policy to institute standard and objective means to monitor healthy life expectancy among the population aged over 50 years.

Mr. Bowis: We have recently commissioned research to help us to measure healthy life expectancy more accurately and to identify the factors we need to target to increase healthy life expectancy among older people. The results will be available early next year.

Peripheral Nerve Damage

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will consider holding centrally information on the number of patients treated for peripheral nerve damage by *(a)* regional health authorities and *(b)* district health authorities; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: Information is collected centrally in the hospital episode system on the number of episodes of in-patient treatment for peripheral nerve damage, as well as those where operations are carried out. The latest England and regional data are published in "Hospital Episode Statistics. Volume 1: Finished Consultant Episodes by diagnosis, operation and specialty, England: Financial year 1989-90", a copy of which is available in the Library.

Drug and Alcohol Services

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement outlining the outcome of her departmental review of drug and alcohol rehabilitation services.

Mr. Bowis: The report carried out for the Department by Goldsmith's college was published on 28 July. I issued a press statement at the time of publication and my hon. Friend the Minister for Health wrote to local authorities to draw their attention to matters raised in the report which required their further action. Copies of the press release (H93/896) and the report are available in the Library.

Tinnitus

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the current Government financial support to voluntary organisations dealing with tinnitus for the year 1993-94.

Mr. Sackville: Under section 64 of the Health Services and Public Health Act 1968 the Government are providing £22,500 this year and for the next two financial years to the British Tinnitus Association.

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list central Government's financial initiatives with regard to the treatment of tinnitus for the year 1992-93.

Mr. Sackville: People suffering from tinnitus may receive treatment under normal service funding arrangements.

Child Immunisation

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she can provide a league table of childhood immunisation take-up rates in regional health authorities and local health authorities.

Mr. Sackville: The information can be found in table 7 of "Vaccination and immunisation 1991-92 Summary Information from Forms KC50, KC50A and KC51" produced by the Government Statistical Service. Copies of which are available in the Library.

Optometrists

Dame Jill Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if an agreement has been reached with optometrists providing general ophthalmic services on their remuneration for the year beginning 1 April.

Dr. Mawhinney: Representatives of optometrists have been consulted about the national health service sight test fee and the fee for domiciliary visits. As yet no agreement has been reached about the level of fees for 1993-94.

Dame Jill Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the relationship between the functions provided for optometrists and ophthalmic medical practitioners in respect of general ophthalmic services; and to what extent they are subject to the same terms of service.

Dr. Mawhinney: Optometrists and ophthalmic medical practitioners may be registered with a family health service authority to provide national health service sight tests under the general ophthalmic services. In this respect they are subject to the same terms of service.

Schizophrenics

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research her Department has undertaken into the number of schizophrenics killing *(a)* themselves and *(b)* others.

Mr. Bowis: In 1991 the Department established the confidential inquiry into homicides and suicides by mentally ill people being conducted by the Royal College of Psychiatrists. This aims to cover all homicides and suicides by people who are currently in contact with the mental health services or who have been in contact within the last 12 months. Information is collected in respect of the various diagnostic groups, including schizophrenia.

Long-term Medication

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the chronic medical disorders requiring long-term medication for which there is no exemption from the payment of prescription charges.

Dr. Mawhinney: Medical conditions which attract exemption from national health service prescription charges are listed in leaflet P11, copies of which are available in the Library. No other medical conditions confer this entitlement.

Myalgic Encephalomyelitis

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what provision has been made in the current financial year and each of the last four financial years for research into myalgic encephalomyelitis; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The main agency through which the Government support biomedical and clinical research is

the Medical Research Council, which receives its grant-in-aid from the office of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. The MRC has been funding a study at the Institute of Psychiatry for four years where researchers are attempting to find ways to help myalgic encephalomyelitis sufferers cope with their disease and regain their health. The estimated cost of this project is £91,000. The Department and the MRC are always willing to receive and consider soundly-based research proposals in competition with other applications. The Department also keeps in touch with research being funded by bodies such as the Linbury Trust.

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the current assessment of the number of people in England suffering from myalgic encephalomyelitis; and how that figure is obtained.

Mr. Sackville: We are currently awaiting an evaluation of data from existing studies which is being undertaken by the myalgic encephalomyelitis task force with funding from the Department. A draft report is being prepared for discussion in early 1994.

Diabetics

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people are diabetics dependent on insulin injections; and in what form and at what level of disaggregation the information is held by her Department.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally.

Creutzfeldt-Jakob Syndrome

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what evidence she has linking the incidence of Creutzfeldt-Jakob syndrome with transmission of a virus at dental surgeries.

Dr. Mawhinney: None.

Dentistry

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will investigate the consideration underlying the decision not to invite the General Dental Practitioners Association to attend the working group of the Dental Practice Board which prepared the publication, "Access to Information" held by the Dental Practice Board.

Dr. Mawhinney: Membership of the working group which considered access to information held by the Dental Practice Board was kept to a minimum to enable it to work effectively. The dental profession was represented by members from the General Dental Services Committee.

Child Supervision Orders

Ms Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many supervision orders with restriction requirements were made under provisions of the Children Act 1989 during each of the last two years for which figures are available.

Mr. Bowis: The Children Act 1989 came into force on 14 October 1991. Information is not yet available about the number of supervision orders with restriction requirements.

Ophthalmic Services

Dame Jill Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what criteria govern the settlement of the remuneration of contractors who provide general ophthalmic services; and what changes there have been in the criteria in 1993-94 relative to previous years.

Dr. Mawhinney: National health service sight test fees are determined by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, following consultation with the profession, in such a way as to ensure that there are adequate general ophthalmic services, of the right calibre. In doing this, regard is had to recruitment, retention and motivation factors, within the amount that can be afforded. These criteria have been used consistently for several years, including 1993-94.

Dame Jill Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Health by what amount *(a)* optometrists and *(b)* ophthalmic medical practitioners providing general ophthalmic services are remunerated for their practice expenses.

Dr. Mawhinney: Optometrists are currently paid a fee of £12·75 for each national health service sight test they carry out, which covers both pay and expenses. These elements are not considered separately.

Ophthalmic medical practitioners are paid a fee of £10·15. This contains a pay element of £7·53 and an expenses element of £2·62.

NHS Management Executive

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the expenditure of the NHS Management Executive in each of the last five years.

Mr. Sackville: Expenditure figures for the National Health Service Management Executive from 1990-91 onwards are as shown—figures are not available prior to 1990-91. Figures have not been adjusted for inflation and are not directly comparable from year to year because of organisational changes between the NHSME and the rest of the Department.

Year	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*1992-93*	*1993-94 (Current allocation)*
Running costs (£)	29,933,505	29,402,541	42,883,317	33,922,969
Capital (£)	339,000	483,712	511,745	6,415

Emergency Contraception Pill

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to investigate the deregulation and over-the-counter provision of the emergency contraception pill.

Mr. Sackville: The suggestion that emergency contraception should be available from pharmacies without a prescription was made in a recent article in the *British Medical Journal* on 18 September. The article and reactions to it are being studied in the Department.

Junior Doctors

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many junior doctors have been working over the new deal target of 83 hours after 1 April in each trust or directly managed unit and by region.

Dr. Mawhinney: The number of junior doctors and dentists in each region contracted for more than an average of 83 hours a week at 1 April 1993 is shown in the table:

	Number
Northern	0
Yorkshire	18
Trent	0
East Anglian	3
North West Thames	89
North East Thames	101
South East Thames	9
South West Thames	21
Wessex	4
Oxford	31
South Western	2
West Midlands	33
Mersey	0
North Western	59
Total	370

Information for trusts and directly managed units is not available centrally.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the average number of hours being worked by junior hospital doctors in the week of 18 October 1992.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not available centrally.

Prempak C

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if Prempak C hormone replacement therapy treatment will be treated as a single prescription for charging purposes in the future.

Dr. Mawhinney: A prescription charge is payable in respect of each quantity of a drug or appliance dispensed, unless the patient is entitled to charge exemption or remission. Prempak C contains two separate preparations differentiated by colour and two prescription charges are, therefore, due when these items are dispensed. The fact that for convenience and, as an aid to patient compliance, the two preparations are supplied in one pack does not alter the patient's liability for prescription charges. We have no plans to change these arrangements.

Medicines Evaluation Agency

Mr. Luff: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish the results of the survey of key pharmaceutical companies regarding their preference for the siting of the European Medicines Evaluation Agency.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Thirty-nine major pharmaceutical companies from within and outside the EC were asked to rate the seven cities which are bidding for the European Medicines Evaluation Agency against 13 different aspects that were considered to be crucial to the success of the agency. Responses to this poll, commissioned from NOP Consumer Market Research, are still being received.

The interim results, based on responses from about half of the companies, reveal that for every aspect the total number of votes cast for the EMEA to be located in London was greater than for any other city. The degree to which London was the preferred location was, throughout, so overwhelming that the total number of votes cast for London exceeded the total of votes cast for all the other cities put together, by a factor of about four to one.

Out of 12 additional factors which the companies themselves suggested were relevant to the siting of the EMEA, London was preferred on 10 of these.

This shows clearly that the international pharmaceutical industry rates London the best place for the EMEA, by an overwhelming margin.

NHS Dental Services

Mr. Khabra: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement about the future payment of fees for dental services within the national health service.

Mr. Sackville: We will announce proposals for the future system of remuneration in the general dental services in due course.

Royal Free Hospital

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many representations she has received regarding the proposed closure of the renal unit at the Royal Free hospital; and what proportion of them indicated that hardship would occur if it were implemented.

Mr. Sackville: We have received a large number of representations regarding the Royal Free hospital following publication of the renal specialty review group's report. This report identified University College/ Middlesex hospital as a preferred site for tertiary renal services in the north-central sector of London. The specialty review report's are independent advice to Ministers and not policy. Any major proposals to change services will be subject to full public consultation.

Organ Transplants

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what latest conveniently available statistics she has on the shortage of donor organs for transplant.

Mr. Sackville: Increasing the supply of donor organs is a Government priority. The table shows the numbers of organs transplanted in 1992 and the numbers of patients awaiting organ transplants at 31 August 1993.

	Number
Transplanted in 1992	
Kidney	1,641
Heart	301
Heart and lung	53
Lung(s)	89
Liver	501
Awaiting at 31 August 1993	
Kidney	4,610
Heart	244
Heart and lung	189
Lung(s)	116
Liver	100

Note:
Figures supplied by United Kingdom Transplant Support Service Authority.

Regional Health Authorities

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on how she will advertise vacant chief executive and chairmen posts in regional health authorities before such authorities are reduced in number.

Dr. Mawhinney: The selection of chief executives is a matter for each individual authority, although it is our general expectation that most senior national health service managerial posts should be advertised. We do not consider it appropriate or necessary to advertise for candidates for appointment as chairman of a regional health authority, as there are many suitable ones already known to us both in other NHS bodies and from outside the NHS.

Nursery Education

Mr. Barnes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the latest available figure in England and Wales for the number of two to five-year-olds in the population; what percentage of them have pre-school day nursery places provided by *(a)* local authorities and the public sector and *(b)* the private sector; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Bowis: The information available is shown in the table. Information is collected on the number of places in registered, private and voluntary, day nurseries but not the number of children attending.

Day nursery provision and population data: England

	Amount
Number of children aged 2 and under 5 at 30 June 1991[1]	1,926,000
Number of children provided with a day nursery place[2] by a local authority at 31 March 1992 as a percentage of all children aged 2 and under 5	1·6 per cent.
Number of places[3] in registered day nurseries (private and voluntary) at 31 March 1992 as a percentage of all children aged 2 and under 5	4·8 per cent.

Notes:
[1] Estimated resident mid year population.
[2] All children under 5 on the register of local authority provision or placed by local authorities in registered provision.
[3] Includes places exempt from registration.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list by wave and salary band the projected expenses of *(a)* trust chairs and *(b)* non-executive directors.

Dr. Mawhinney: Chairmen and non-executive directors of national health service trusts are eligible to claim allowances for travel and subsistence costs necessarily incurred on trust business. The payment of such expenses is a matter for the appropriate trust: details of such payments are not available centrally.

Wessex RHA Chairman

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the circumstances in which the chairman of Wessex regional health authority tendered his resignation; when it was accepted; and what were the details of the financial settlement.

Dr. Mawhinney: Sir Robin Buchanan tendered his resignation in order to concentrate on his role as chairman of the National Health Service Supplies Authority. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State accepted his resignation on 26 August 1993. The date of his departure has yet to be agreed. There has been no financial settlement.

SCOTLAND

Children's Hearings

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what arrangements he proposes for the organisation of children's hearings following the reorganisation of local government in Scotland.

Mr. Stewart: The Government's proposals for the children's hearings system are set out in the White Paper on Local Government Reform (Cm 2267) and on Child Care Policy and Law (CM 2286).

The only organisational change proposed is the establishment of a children's reporter service for Scotland. This will be managed by a chief reporter responsible to a part-time board appointed by the Secretary of State. Against the background of the reform we see that step as the most advantageous way of ensuring consistency and the highest standards of professional practice among reporters across Scotland. Children's panels will continue to be appointed for local authority areas, thereby maintaining their links with the local communities which they serve. Children's panel advisory committees, which nominate panel members and monitor their performance, will continue on a similar basis.

Forestry

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when the Government expect to complete their forestry review; and when the findings of the review will be published.

Sir Hector Monro: My right hon. Friend and his fellow forestry Ministers expect to receive the advice of the forestry review group early next year. They will then require some time to consider it and come to a view on what the next stages in this work should be.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list those persons and organisations that have submitted evidence to the interdepartmental working party on the future of the Forestry Commission.

Sir Hector Monro: I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave him on 27 May at column *739*.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make it his policy to initiate a programme of public and parliamentary consultation on the recommendations of the interdepartmental forestry review group.

Sir Hector Monro: Forestry Ministers will decide what the next stages in this work should be once the advice of the forestry review group has been received in the new year.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the current reporting time scale of the interdepartmental forestry review group.

Sir Hector Monro: Forestry Ministers expect to receive the advice of the forestry review group early next year.

Winter Working Hours

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland to what extent farmers and building employers are subject to legal constraint on which hours to start work in winter.

Mr. Lang: There is no employment legislation governing the times when adult workers can be employed in the farming and building sectors. Environmental protection legislation concerning pollution and noise levels and health and safety at work legislation may, however, have a bearing on how early particular work can start.

Water Disconnections

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will consider collecting and holding centrally information on the number of industrial water disconnections made by water authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro: I have no plans to collect and hold centrally such information.

Orthodontics

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has on the number of private practices in orthodontics; and how many practices are providing NHS treatment.

Mr. Stewart: No information is held on dental practices which provide private treatment only. According to health board information there are around 50 practices undertaking NHS treatment in which a specialist practitioner provides only orthodontic services to patients. In addition to these specialist orthodontic practitioners, other general dental practitioners may provide orthodontic as well as other treatment, but these practitioners cannot be identified separately. NHS orthodontic treatment may also be available through the community dental service and the hospital dental service.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the practices within each health board which have opted out of providing NHS orthodontic care.

Mr. Stewart: Since July 1992 no practices which offer a specialised orthodontic service have opted out of providing NHS orthodontic care. Eleven general dental practitioners have, however, withdrawn from providing NHS general dental services and these may have included dentists who undertook some orthodontic treatment.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many orthodontists are currently in NHS hospitals, and in the community, within each health board area; and how many orthodontists were recruited to the NHS within each health board during the last four years.

Mr. Stewart: The number of orthodontists employed in the NHS at 30 September 1992, the latest date for which information is available centrally, is shown in table A. Information on the number of orthodontists employed in the community is not available centrally.

The number of orthodontists recruited to hospitals in the NHS in the 2 years to 30 September 1992, the latest date for which information is available centrally, is shown in table B. Prior to September 1991, the specialties of orthodontics and paediatric dentistry were combined. Therefore, orthodontists can be identified separately only from that date.

Table A:
Orthodontists employed by health board, at 30 September 1992

	Number	*Whole-time equivalent*
Scotland	54	38·3
Argyll and Clyde	2	2·0
Ayrshire and Arran	2	1·5
Borders	1	0·7
Dumfries and Galloway	3	1·1
Fife	8	5·9
Forth Valley	2	2·0
Grampian	6	1·5
Greater Glasgow	11	9·1
Highland	4	3·1
Lanarkshire	2	2·0
Lothian	6	5·5
Orkney	0	0·0
Shetland	0	0·0
Tayside	7	3·9
Western Isles	0	0·0

Table B
Orthodontists recruited to the NHS by health board

	Scotland	*Ayrshire and Arran*	*Fife*	*Grampian*	*Greater Glasgow*	*Lothian*	*Tayside*
Year ending 30 September 1991	11	1	—	2	2	5	1
Year ending 30 September 1992	7	1	3	2	—	—	1

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many patients are waiting for day care orthodontic treatment within each health board for *(a)* less than three months, *(b)* three to six months, *(c)* six to nine months, *(d)* nine to 12 months and *(e)* over one year;

(2) what is the average waiting time for orthodontic treatment within each health board;

(3) what was the number of patients waiting for orthodontic treatment for *(a)* less than three months, *(b)* three to six months, *(c)* six to nine months, *(d)* nine to 12 months and *(e)* over one year for each year since 1988.

Mr. Stewart: The numbers of patients awaiting in-patient or day case treatment in orthodontics and paediatric dentistry are relatively small. At 30 June 1993, the latest date for which information is centrally available, the in-patient waiting list for Scotland totalled 14 and there were no patients on the day case list. The majority of orthodontic and paediatric dentistry patients treated outwith the general dental service are seen at consultant out-patient clinics and the average waiting time for new out-patient referrals is set out in the table.

New outpatient referrals to orthodontics and paediatric dentistry
Quarter ended 30 June 1993
Scotland

Health board of residence	*Number*	*Mean wait*[1]
Argyll and Clyde	1,330	112·8
Ayrshire and Arran	615	175·3
Borders	230	43·8
Dumfries and Galloway	362	122·7
Fife	1,212	97·7
Forth Valley	498	57·0
Grampian	992	167·4
Greater Glasgow	922	103·3
Highland	474	104·1
Lanarkshire	941	109·0
Lothian	382	74·2
Orkney	—	—
Shetland	—	—
Tayside	727	94·7
Western Isles	1	128·0
SCOTLAND	8,686	111·6

[1] Days.
Source: SMRO.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps his Department is taking to monitor the performance of health boards, NHS trusts and individual hospitals in meeting the waiting time targets set for patients, in accordance with the patients charter for Scotland; and what action he proposes to take against any of these bodies failing to achieve the targets set for them.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 25 October 1993]:* The monitoring of the performance of health boards in relation to their responsibility to secure treatment for residents within such waiting time targets and guarantees as may apply is an ongoing function of the management executive of the NHS in Scotland. It is for individual boards to ensure delivery of such targets and guarantees through their contracting arrangements with NHS trusts and other hospitals. The success of boards in tackling such matters is addressed at the annual accountability review meeting which the management executive holds with every board.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are the waiting time targets set for Tayside health board, in accordance with the patients charter for Scotland, in each of the *(a)* general surgery, *(b)* orthopaedic surgery, *(c)* ophthalmology, *(d)* ear, nose and throat, *(e)* urology and *(f)* gynaecology specialties.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 25 October 1993]:* The waiting time targets for in-patient or day case treatment currently applying to residents of Tayside health board are as follows:

(a) General surgery—90 per cent. within six months.
(b) Orthopaedic surgery—90 per cent. within nine months.
(c) Ophthalmology—90 per cent. within six months.
(d) Ear, nose and throat—90 per cent. within nine months.
(e) Urology—90 per cent. within 12 months.
(f) Gynaecology—90 per cent. within three months.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what guarantees of treatment within a set time has been given by Tayside health board in accordance with the patients charter for Scotland for *(a)* hip replacement, *(b)* knee replacement, *(c)* cataracts and *(d)* for any other treatments.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 25 October 1993]:* The following are the current treatment guarantees applying to residents of Tayside health board:

Hip replacement—within 12 months.
Knee replacement—within 12 months.
Cataract removal—within six months.
Hysterectomy—within six months.
Pelvic floor—within six months.
Hernia—within six months.

Mr. McAllion: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what targets have been set by Tayside health board for informing patients of how long they will have to wait for an appointment at an out-patient clinic.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 25 October 1993]:* As an added reassurance to patients about the length of time they may expect to have to wait for an out-patient appointment following referral by their GP all health boards introduced out-patient waiting time guarantees from 1 April 1993. The guarantees which apply to residents of Tayside health board are as follows:

General surgery—within 12 weeks.
Orthopaedic surgery—within 20 weeks.
Ear, nose and throat—within 16 weeks.
Ophthalmology—within nine weeks.
Urology[1]—within 12 weeks.
Gynaecology[2]—within nine weeks.

[1] Guarantee does not apply to referrals for infertility or impotence.
[2] Guarantee does not apply to referrals for infertility.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the longest length of waiting time for national health service patients at any trust hospital and for what operation or treatment.

Mr. Stewart: Information on current waiting times for specific operations or treatments (other than those selected on a national basis to which guarantees apply) is not centrally available.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will instruct health boards to make accessible fast-track monthly waiting lists, similar to those made available by regional health authorities in England.

Mr. Stewart: No. Officials of the management executive of the national health service in Scotland, with officials of the information and statistics division of the Common Services Agency, are working with health boards and national health service trusts to ensure that the quarterly waiting times information is as up to date as possible.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what is the average waiting time for *(A)* private and *(b)* NHS (i) day-patient and (ii) in-patient (a) treatment and (B) operations at (1) Vale of Leven district general, (2) Falkirk and District royal infirmary, (3) Southern General, (4) Victoria infirmary, (5) Raigmore hospital, (6) Perth royal infirmary and (7) Stirling royal infirmary;

(2) what is the longest length of waiting time for private patients at any trust hospital; for what operation or treatment; and for how many weeks.

Mr. Stewart: Information on waiting times for patients currently waiting for in-patient or day case treatment in NHS hospitals does not differentiate between NHS and private patients.

Roads

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the volume of local traffic between East Lothian and Berwickshire on the A1 trunk road; and what proportion of the traffic on the road at Dunglass bridge is attributable to such local journeys.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The average annual daily traffic on the A1 between the Lothian/Borders boundary and the A1107 junction at Tower Farm in 1992 was 6,300 vehicles per day. The volume of local traffic with an origin or destination in Borders region is estimated from junction counts and other surveys to be around 1,200 vehicles per day. It is not possible from the information available to identify the proportion of that traffic which is undertaking local journeys between east Lothian and Berwickshire.

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the progress of his plans to upgrade the A1 trunk road to dual carriageway standard, giving the timetable for dualling each section and the target date for completion of dualling in Scotland.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Proposals have been published for the dualling of the A1 between Tranent and Haddington, and for local dualling schemes south of Dunbar and between Lemington and Howburn. Subject to the completion of statutory procedures, these three schemes which are valued at approximately £40 million could commence next year. The preparation of a further five dualling schemes valued at a total of £45 million is currently being progressed to take forward the Government's desire to dual fully the A1 between Edinburgh and Newcastle. Further progress will depend on the overall availability of resources, the relative claims of schemes elsewhere and the other normal criteria for bringing schemes forward.

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the volume of local traffic making journeys of 25 miles or less on *(a)* the A1 trunk road at Meadowmill, *(b)* the former A1 road west of Tranent and *(c)* the A198 at Meadowmill; and what proportion of the total traffic at these points is represented by such local traffic.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The traffic studies carried out as part of the Tranent to Haddington dualling proposals do not readily identify the volume of local traffic making journeys of 25 miles or less, nor did the studies include those roads west of Tranent.

The average daily traffic flow is of the order of 21,600 vehicles on the A1 west of Bankton roundabout and 14,800 vehicles on the A198. On the A1 at Meadowmill some 10,600 vehicles per day (49 per cent.) is traffic travelling from or to the surrounding area between Musselburgh and Haddington. On the A198 at Meadowmill, about 99 per cent. is local traffic.

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the numbers of minor, serious and fatal accidents on the A1 road in Scotland for the last five years; and if he will make a statement on the effectiveness of high-profile policing, speed cameras and enhanced road markings and signs in reducing serious and fatal accidents on the A1 over the last two years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The numbers of personal injury accidents on the A1 between Bankton roundabout and the National Borders for the past five years are as follows:

	Fatal	*Serious*	*Slight*	*Total*
1988	9	18	35	62
1989	6	24	40	70
1990	7	22	47	76
1991	3	13	39	55
1992	8	6	29	43

It is expected that the route action measures taken on the A1 will make an important and significant contribution to improving road safety on the A1. The reduction in the total number of personal injury accidents in 1991 and 1992 indicate an encouraging trend. The speed cameras on the route came into operation on 30 August this year. It is already clear from our monitoring that there has been a substantial reduction in vehicle speeds with the greatest reductions in speed recorded for the fastest 25 per cent. of drivers. This can be expected to result in further improvements in road safety.

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many days the B6355 road between Gifford and Duns has been closed due to severe weather during the last 10 years.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The B6355 is a local road and not one for which the Secretary of State has responsibility. Matters relating to the B6355, including winter maintenance, are the responsibility of Borders regional council, which is the local roads authority.

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on his policy for low-flow grade separation in planning for the dualling of trunk roads; and what is the relative accident rate at junctions with and without such grade separation on the A1 and elsewhere.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The choice of junction type for new dual carriageways and where existing dual carriageways are to be upgraded will depend on traffic flows on the main and side roads and other local conditions.

The only low-flow grade separation constructed to date is on the A1 at Lamberton. This junction was opened to traffic in August this year and it is therefore not yet possible to compare its performance in terms of road safety with other junctions on the route.

Gay Men (Health Services)

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a list of the services provided by each health board targeted to gay men.

Mr. Stewart: Health board services generally are available to all, including gay men. Comprehensive information about particular services provided specifically for gay men is not held centrally.

Heart Surgery

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the waiting times for each health board for coronary artery bypass grafting and angioplasty.

Mr. Stewart: Information on waiting times for coronary bypass grafts at 30 June 1993 is shown in the table. Information on patients currently waiting for coronary angioplasty is not available centrally.

Average waiting times for coronary bypass grafts for patients on waiting lists at 30 June 1993

Health board of residence	*Number of cases*	*Mean wait (days)*
Argyll and Clyde	68	174
Ayrshire and Arran	54	146
Borders	28	172
Dumfries and Galloway	23	110
Fife	52	151
Forth Valley	56	196
Grampian	61	173
Greater Glasgow	260	197
Highland	22	117
Lanarkshire	82	183
Lothian	122	134
Orkney	0	0
Shetland	0	0
Tayside	66	183
Western Isles	3	84
Outside Scotland	9	39
TOTAL	906	170

Environmental Protection Agency

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many of the responses he has received to the consultation paper on the proposed Scottish Environmental Protection Agency advocate that the agency should be given responsibility for the management of water catchments.

Sir Hector Monro: The responses advocated that the Scottish Environment Protection Agency should be given responsibilities relating to the management of water catchments in addition to those it will inherit from river purification authorities.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what duties the proposed Scottish Environmental Protection agency will have *(a)* in the conservation and enhancement of the natural heritage and *(b)* in aspects of water resource management other than pollution control.

Sir Hector Monro: Scottish Natural Heritage is the statutory body with primary responsibility for the conservation and enhancement of the natural heritage. Last year's consultation paper "Improving Scotland's Environment—The Way Forward", made it clear that the Government also intends the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) to have a statutory duty in relation to conservation of the natural heritage.

SEPA will inherit all the responsibilities of River Purification Aurthorities. In the light of views expressed in response to the consultation paper my right hon. Friend indicated in his reply to the hon. Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Kynoch) on 25 February at column 722 that we intend to give the agency enhanced powers of control over water abstraction. The responses to the consequent consultation paper "Abstraction Controls: A system for Scotland' are currently being considered.

Breast Cancer

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has for *(a)* breast cancer care and treatment and *(b)* research into the genetics of breast cancer; and how much will be spent on each this year and is planned in succeeding years.

Mr. Stewart: The Scottish figures for morbidity and mortality associated with cancer in general and breast cancer in particular are a matter of concern to the Government. It was with that specific concern in mind that we established the Scottish breast cancer screening programme in 1988. The primary target of the programme is to reduce mortality in the screened population in Scotland by 30 per cent. overall. By next year all Scottish women between the ages of 50 and 64 will have been invited for screening.

This is only one strategy in the fight against breast cancer. The work of the Scottish Cancer Therapy Network established by the Chief Scientist Office of the Scottish Office Home and Health Department is geared to the delivery to patients of the most effective and up-to-date treatment. The network will be setting up a working party to look specifically at breast cancer. Both the network and the Scottish cancer co-ordinating and advisory committee are looking at service provision in relation to all types of cancer. The committee has established a clinical and molecular genetics sub-committee to look at the possibility of identifying a gene responsible for the commonest forms of cancer, including breast cancer. The breast screening programme is organising a consensus conference in April next year on the treatment of small tumours. This will encourage dissemination of best practice in relation to breast and other types of cancer.

Total funding of the breast cancer screening programme is £3·8 million in 1993-94. A total figure for expenditure on all aspects of breast cancer care and treatment is not held centrally.

The Chief Scientist Office is funding a number of research projects concerned with the genetic aspects of breast cancer. Funding in the current financial year amounts to some £72,000 and in 1994-95 will total £95,000. A number of other projects are under consideration for future years, but no firm figure for funding is available at this stage.

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what investigations have been carried out regarding the validity of creating breast cancer treatment teams operating in hospitals.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 22 October 1993]:* The treatment of any condition is a matter for the judgement of

the clinicians involved. The team approach has evolved in all of the specialist breast clinics in Scotland as that which provides the optimum care of patients. I am not aware of any independent investigation of the validity of this approach. Both the Scottish cancer co-ordinating and advisory committee and the Scottish cancer therapy network are, however, considering service provision and can therefore be expected to examine this approach to treatment. A further opportunity will be provided by a consensus conference in April next year on the treatment of small tumours.

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what funding is available for breast cancer research in Scotland; and if he will give details of each project and details of the funding of each since 1980.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 22 October 1993]:* The Government are committed to encouraging research into breast cancer. The main Government agency for medical and related research is the Medical Research Council (MRC), which receives its grant-in-aid from the Office of Science and Technology under my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. I understand that MRC expenditure into breast cancer was £2·7 million in 1990-91 and £1·6 million in 1991-92, the latest years for which figures are available.

The Chief Scientist Office (CSO) of the Scottish Office has identified cancer services as one of its priority areas and has, since 1980, funded a wide range of research and development projects dealing with breast cancer at a total cost of £0·729 million. The projects funded by CSO are shown in the table.

R and D projects on breast cancer funded by Chief Scientist Office (1980-93)

Year and project	*£s*
1981	
Women's reasons for declining an opportunity for breast screening	6,677
1982	
Development of telediaphanography	1,933
An economic analysis of screening for breast cancer	27,821
The prediction of response to systemic treatment in patients with advanced cancer of the breast	51,711
1983	
Edinburgh Breast Cancer Screening Project	123,783
1985	
Maintenance of special pathological services for breast cancer screening pathology	100,000
Bile acids and bile acid metabolites in the serum of women with benign and malignant breast disease	11,299
Steriod receptor assays: current role in the therapy of breast cancer and influence of methodical developments	30,920
1986	
Economic evaluation of mobile breast cancer screening in areas near Edinburgh	26,612
A study of women's response to mobile breast screening	10,338
The relationship of cellular DNA to response in breast cancers treated with hormones	14,702
1987	
Follow-up study to measure the impact of services for the early detection of breast cancer on breast cancer mortality	7,728
1990	
UKCCCR breast cancer screening trials	139,000
1991	
Potential of immediate specimen—slice ranography to optimise pathological data in breast-conserving cancer therapy	13,361
1992	
Molecular pathology of cytochrome P450 in breast cancer and other malignant tumours	64,971
Ultrasound imaging in the symptomatic breast clinic: diagnostic management and psychological impact	4,775
Second round mamographic screening: will tailored invitations increase uptake?	14,588
1993	
Genetic analysis in families with breast and/or ovarian cancer in the West of Scotland	78,551
Total	728,770

Infertility Treatment

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many couples received assisted conception treatment in 1991 at each of the Aberdeen, Dundee, Glasgow and Edinburgh units.

Mr. Stewart: This information is not held centrally.

Public Transport

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many seats are available for bus passengers between East Lothian and Berwickshire on scheduled weekday services, and how many passengers are actually carried;

(2) how many seats are available for bus and train passengers between Musselburgh, Prestonpans and Wallyford and the rest of East Lothian on scheduled weekday services; and how many passengers are actually carried.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is not available centrally.

Tourism

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the number of business members *(a)* of the East Lothian tourist board and *(b)* from Berwickshire on the Scottish Borders tourist board.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The number of business members of *(a)* the East Lothian tourist board and *(b)* from the Berwickshire area of the Scottish Borders tourist board is 310 and 150 respectively.

Cystic Fibrosis

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has on cystic fibrosis patients *(a)* being refused repeat prescriptions, *(b)* being refused drugs

by doctors on grounds of cost, *(c)* being refused appointments or home visits by general practitioners and *(d)* experiencing difficulties in obtaining community physiotherapy.

Mr. Stewart: I have no information about patients experiencing these difficulties. Any patient who has a complaint about their treatment should raise the matter in the first instance with their health board.

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland which hospitals offer levels I, II, II, and IV services for cystic fibrosis patients.

Mr. Stewart: There are two major specialist centres (Level I/II) in Scotland: at the Western Infirmary, Glasgow and the Western General, Edinburgh. A local specialist service (Level III) is provided by Grampian Healthcare NHS Trust in Aberdeen. General localised services (Level IV) are provided across Scotland by district general hospitals and clinics but specific information on these services is not held centrally.

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on Scottish Nuclear's application for consent to construct a dry store for waste nuclear fuel at Torness following the public inquiry in December 1992.

Mr. Stewart: The Secretary of State has received the Report of the Public Inquiry into Scottish Nuclear's application to construct a dry store for spent nuclear fuel at Torness. My right hon. Friend will announce his decision in due course.

"A Partnership for Good"

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many telephone calls were received by the Scottish Office new central inquiry unit in the first three weeks of operation in connection with the Government's policy paper, "A Partnership for Good"; and what costs have been incurred by his Department in operating this scheme.

Mr. Lang: Since the launch of the Scottish inquiry line on Thursday 30 September the central inquiry unit has received 585 calls. Set-up operational costs amount to £26,871 and the annual costs of operating the scheme have been estimated at around £28,500. These figures exclude initial publicity costs of £150,000 necessarily incurred to make the new arrangements known to the public.

Mortality Statistics

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the total number of deaths each year since 1990 for *(a)* tuberculosis, *(b)* malignant neoplasm of the cervix, *(c)* Hodgkin's disease, *(d)* chronic rheumatic heart disease, *(e)* all respiratory diseases, *(f)* asthma, *(g)* appendicitis, *(h)* abdominal hernia, *(i)* cholelithiases and cholecistitis and *(j)* maternal deaths for each health board area.

Mr. Stewart: The figures requested are given in the tables:

Deaths from selected causes in each Health Board Area 1990

ICD	Cause of Death	Health Board Area															
	1990	Scotland	Borders	Forth Valley	Dumfries and Galloway	Fife	Grampian	Highland	Lothian	Tayside	Orkney	Shetland	Western Isles	Argyll and Clyde	Ayrshire and Arran	Greater Glasgow	Lanark-shire
010-018	Tuberculosis	39	—	3	—	—	2	—	3	1	—	—	—	4	3	17	6
180	Malignant neoplasm of cervix	162	6	6	8	13	12	4	19	18	—	—	—	19	10	35	12
201	Hodgkin's disease	45	—	2	2	7	5	1	8	2	—	—	—	2	2	5	9
393-398	Chronic rheumatic heart disease	205	3	12	—	10	21	4	34	15	—	—	—	31	13	40	22
460-519	Diseases of the respiratory system	7,231	184	350	189	437	605	207	989	589	30	21	51	595	556	1,672	756
493	Asthma	148	8	8	4	9	19	3	18	13	2	1	1	9	19	24	10
540-543	Appendicitis	7	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	1	1	4	—
550-553	Hernia of the abdominal cavity	62	2	4	1	2	7	3	13	3	—	—	1	8	5	9	4
574, 575.0, 575.1	Cholelithiasis and cholecystitis	46	1	1	1	3	7	2	7	1	—	1	—	3	2	11	6
630-676	Maternal deaths	4	—	1	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	—

Deaths from selected causes in each Health Board Area 1991

ICD	Cause of Death	Health Board Area															
	1991	Scotland	Borders	Forth Valley	Dumfries and Galloway	Fife	Grampian	Highland	Lothian	Tayside	Orkney	Shetland	Western Isles	Argyll and Clyde	Ayrshire and Arran	Greater Glasgow	Lanark-shire
010-018	Tuberculosis	56	—	2	1	3	3	1	6	4	—	1	1	7	4	19	4
180	Malignant neoplasm of cervix	175	3	11	6	9	15	7	21	13	—	2	1	16	14	40	17
201	Hodgkin's disease	35	—	5	—	1	5	1	4	3	1	—	1	2	4	4	4
393-398	Chronic rheumatic heart disease	180	5	8	5	17	7	2	36	10	—	—	—	13	9	42	26
460-519	Diseases of the respiratory system	7,068	175	384	225	476	625	250	927	547	27	16	48	549	576	1,530	713
493	Asthma	161	3	9	3	11	19	10	24	15	2	—	1	11	24	20	9
540-543	Appendicitis	10	—	—	—	1	1	1	2	—	—	—	—	2	1	2	—
550-553	Hernia of the abdominal cavity	59	3	3	4	2	7	2	9	2	—	—	—	5	4	13	5
574, 575.0, 575.1	Cholelithiasis and cholecystitis	57	—	4	4	4	3	2	10	4	—	—	—	7	5	11	3
630-676	Maternal deaths	9	—	1	1	—	—	—	2	1	—	—	—	1	2	1	—

Deaths from selected causes in each Health Board Area 1992

ICD	Cause of Death 1992	Scotland	Health Board Area: Borders	Forth Valley	Dumfries and Galloway	Fife	Grampian	Highland	Lothian	Tayside	Orkney	Shetland	Western Isles	Argyll and Clyde	Ayrshire and Arran	Greater Glasgow	Lanark-shire
010-018	Tuberculosis	46	2	4	2	3	1	—	5	2	—	—	1	7	2	9	8
180	Malignant neoplasm of cervix	183	2	16	9	13	11	4	30	16	—	—	2	13	13	32	22
201	Hodgkin's disease	38	2	3	3	1	4	—	9	4	—	—	—	1	4	4	4
393-398	Chronic rheumatic heart disease	186	—	10	6	13	15	5	37	7	1	—	—	16	7	49	20
460-519	Diseases of the respiratory system	6,999	149	368	182	480	609	227	936	580	28	29	58	569	480	1,559	745
493	Asthma	115	5	10	3	5	16	4	17	10	1	—	—	4	15	16	9
540-543	Appendicitis	10	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3	—	2	4
550-553	Hernia of the abdominal cavity	53	1	2	2	2	6	4	5	—	—	1	1	6	2	11	10
574, 575.0, 575.1	Cholelithiasis and cholecystitis	49	2	1	2	1	3	5	4	4	—	—	—	8	—	15	4
630-676	Maternal deaths	7	—	—	—	—	1	—	1	—	—	—	—	1	—	2	2

Special Waste

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will consider collecting and holding centrally information on the categories of special waste arisings; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro: Detailed information concerning consignments of special waste is held on registers kept by waste regulation authorities which, in Scotland, are district and islands councils. At present I do not have a need to collate this information centrally.

Ethnic Health Unit

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will create an ethnic health unit along the lines of that established by the Department of Health.

Mr. Stewart: My right hon. Friend has no plans to do so, but a working group has been set up to produce guidance on meeting the particular health needs of ethnic minority communities.

Brain Injuries

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many patients have been treated since the start of the Scottish Office national programme for the rehabilitation of the brain-injured at each of the three nationally designated brain injury units at Mondarstown castle, the Astley Ainslie hospital and the Royal Edinburgh hospital; what is the breakdown of patients from each referring health board for each unit; if he will list for each health board the total number of patients who have used the service since it started; and if he will express these numbers as a ratio per 100,000 of the population in the health board area.

Mr. Stewart: The information is not available in the form requested. The following table, based on 1992 figures, shows the number of patient weeks for which a central subsidy was paid to each individual health board. This is also shown as a percentage of overall occupancy at the unit concerned. The final column shows the proportion of patients originating in each health board area as a percentage of total patients in the three units.

Brain Injury Rehabilitation

1992-93	Scotcare		Astley Ainslie		Royal Edinburgh		Total		Board of Origin
	Number of Patient Weeks	Per cent.	Number of Patient Weeks	Per cent.	Number of Patient Weeks	Per cent.	Number of Patient Weeks	Per cent.	Per cent.
A and C	55	12	0	0	0	0	55	3	9
A and A	0	0	0	0	95	7	95	5	7
Borders	0	0	63	9	39	7	103	6	2
D and G	22	5	20	3	0	0	42	2	3
Fife	6	1	78	11	52	9	137	8	7
FV	36	8	150	20	48	9	233	13	5
Grampian	27	6	0	0	61	1	88	5	10
GGHB	182	40	0	0	0	0	182	10	18
Highland	12	3	3	0	0	0	15	1	4
Lanark	24	5	0	0	0	0	24	1	11
Lothian	0	0	423	57	242	43	665	38	15
Tayside	92	20	3	0	26	5	121	7	8
Orkney	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Shetland	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Western Isles	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
TOTAL	456	100	741	100	564	100	1,761	100	100

Paralytic Shellfish Poisoning

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the number of sampling points and the frequency of sampling in each islands and district council area where samples have been taken to test for the incidence of paralytic shellfish poisoning between 1 January and 30 September.

Mr. Lang: The information from commencement of the annual sampling programme in April 1993 is set out in the

table. The frequencies are normally weekly or fortnightly as indicated. However, when test results indicate that PSP toxins are present at a significant level the frequency of sampling is increased in the areas concerned.

	Site name	*Island or district council*	*Frequency of sampling*
1.	Eyemouth, St. Abbs	Berwickshire	Fortnightly
2.	Musselburgh	East Lothian	Fortnightly
3.	Elie; Pittenweem	North East Fife	Weekly
4.	Eden Estuary	North East Fife	Fortnightly
5.	Montrose	Angus	Fortnightly
6.	Aberdeen	Aberdeen	Weekly
7.	Fraserburgh	Banff and Buchan	Fortnightly
8.	Banff	Banff and Buchan	Weekly
9.	Lossiemouth; Burghead	Moray	Fortnightly
10.	Tain	Ross and Cromarty	Weekly
[1]11.	Moray Firth Scallop Grounds	Moray	Weekly
12.	Wick	Caithness	Fortnightly
13.	East Orkney Scallop Grounds	Orkney	Weekly
14.	South Scapa Flow	Orkney	Fortnightly
15.	North Scapa Flow	Orkney	Weekly
16.	Kirkwall	Orkney	Weekly
17.	Stronsay	Orkney	Fortnightly
18.	Sanday	Orkney	Fortnightly
19.	Westray	Orkney	Fortnightly
20.	South East Shetland	Shetland	Fortnightly
21.	North East Shetland	Shetland	Fortnightly
22.	North West Shetland	Shetland	Fortnightly
23.	South West Shetland	Shetland	Fortnightly
24.	Kyle of Tongue	Sutherland	Fortnightly
25.	Kinlochbervie	Sutherland	Fortnightly
26.	Lochinver	Sutherland	Weekly
27.	Ullapool	Ross and Cromarty	Fortnightly
28.	Little Loch Broom	Ross and Cromarty	Weekly
29.	Loch Ewe	Ross and Cromarty	Weekly
[2]30.	North Minch Scallop Grounds	Ross and Cromarty	Fortnightly
31.	Stornoway; Loch Erisort	Western Isles	Fortnightly
32.	West Lewis	Western Isles	Fortnightly
33.	North Uist	Western Isles	Fortnightly
34.	South Uist; Loch Boisdale	Western Isles	Fortnightly
35.	Loch Dunvegan	Skye and Lochalsh	Weekly
36.	Loch Harport	Skye and Lochalsh	Fortnightly
37.	Loch Eishort	Skye and Lochalsh	Weekly
38.	Scalpay	Skye and Lochalsh	Weekly
39.	Portree	Skye and Lochalsh	Fortnightly
40.	Loch Torridon	Skye and Lochalsh	Weekly
41.	Loch Kishorn	Skye and Lochalsh	Weekly
42.	Loch Hourn	Skye and Lochalsh	Weekly
43.	Mallaig	Lochaber	Fortnightly
[3]44.	South Minch Scallop Grounds	Lochaber	Fortnightly
45.	Ardtoe	Lochaber	Weekly
46.	Loch Sunart; Loch Teacuis	Lochaber	Fortnightly
47.	Isle of Ulva	Argyll and Bute	Fortnightly
48.	Loch Spelve	Argyll and Bute	Fortnightly
49.	Oban; Loch Etive	Argyll and Bute	Fortnightly
50.	Loch Leven	Argyll and Bute	Fortnightly
51.	Loch Melfort	Argyll and Bute	Fortnightly
52.	Islay Scallop Grounds	Argyll and Bute	Weekly
53.	Loch Sween	Argyll and Bute	Fortnightly
54.	West Loch Tarbert	Argyll and Bute	Fortnightly
55.	Campbeltown	Argyll and Bute	Fortnightly
56.	Tarbert	Argyll and Bute	Fortnightly
57.	Upper Loch Fyne	Argyll and Bute	Fortnightly
58.	Kyles of Bute	Argyll and Bute	Fortnightly
59.	Loch Striven	Argyll and Bute	Fortnightly
60.	Cumbrae	Cunninghame	Fortnightly
61.	Ayr	Kyle and Carrick	Fortnightly
62.	Loch Ryan	Wigtown	Fortnightly
63.	Luce Bay	Wigtown	Fortnightly
64.	Solway Cockle Beds	Nithsdale	Fortnightly
65.	Kirkcudbright	Stewartry	Fortnightly

[1] 11. Moray Firth Scallop Grounds—Also bordered by Banff and Buchan, Nairn, Inverness, Ross and Cromarty, Sutherland, Caithness.
[2] 30. North Minch Scallop Grounds—Also bordered by Sutherland, Western Isles, Skye and Lochalsh.
[3] 44. South Minch Scallop Grounds—Also bordered by Skye and Lochalsh, Western Isles, Argyll and Bute.

NHS Trusts

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the estimate of the number of *(a)* day-patient and *(b)* in-patient private patients that will receive (i) operations and (ii) treatment this year in each trust hospital; and what proportion that will be of the total number of patients treated in each case.

Mr. Stewart: This information is not available centrally. It is expected that, as in the previous year, a record number of NHS patients will be treated.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the state of the sea discharge pipeline for liquid radioactive waste from AEA Technology's nuclear facilities at Dounreay.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 25 October 1993]:* Discharges to sea from AEA Technology's facilities at Dounreay are regulated by means of an authorisation issued under the Radioactive Substances Act 1960. Under the authorisation, discharges have to be within authorised limits and are required to be made through the main effluent pipeline. The authority is also required to maintain and keep in god repair the system by which the waste is discharged. Her Majesty's industrial pollution inspectorate carries out regular inspections at the site and I am satisfied that these requirements are being met.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what progress has been made by his Department in rectifying the environmental hazards posed by the Dounreay waste shaft, identified in the report commissioned by his Department from R. M. Consultants of Abingdon.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 25 October 1993]:* The Dounreay waste shaft, as presently managed, does not present an environmental hazard. As regards the longer-term options for the shaft, R. M. Consultants were asked to examine a number of possible management options. However, an unequivocal best option has not been identified and studies are being continued by AEA Technology.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he commissioned the radiologocal research survey of the Solway coastal area from the Scottish Universities Research and Reactor Centre; how many copies of the report of the survey have been printed; to whom or to which organisations it has been distributed; and if he will publish a summary of the main finding of the survey.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 25 October 1993]:* The survey was commissioned in December 1992. The final report from the contractors is expected in December 1993 and will be pubished in accordance with normal Scottish Office practice. The report will contain a summary of the main findings and a copy of the report will be placed in the Library of the House.

Water Services

Mrs. Ray Michie To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to the letter of the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) referred to in his answer of 27 July, *Official Report*, columns *963-64*, regarding water disconnections, if he will list the six respondents to the consultation paper on local government reform who stated that they were in favour of allowing water service providers the power to disconnect supplies.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 22 October 1993]:* Further examination of the responses has shown that two were wrongly classified. Of the others only two were unreservedly in favour of disconnection of domestic customers for non-payment. Of these responses one was almost certainly ironical and the writer of the other requested confidentiality. Copies of the relevant responses which are not confidential are available through the Library of the House.

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to the letter of the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) referred to in his answer of 27 July, *Official Report*, columns *963-64*, regarding meetings with foreign-owned water supply companies, if he will give details of when the two meetings took place, which Scottish Office Ministers were present and which water companies were represented; and if he will make a statement regarding the involvement of foreign-owned water companies in the new water boards.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 22 October 1993]:* Scottish Office officials met representatives of the companies concerned, at the request of the companies, on 17 March 1993 and 27 April 1993 respectively. The meetings took place under terms of commercial confidentiality. No Ministers were present.

The proposed new water authorities will be wholly public bodies. The private sector will have a role, as now, in providing goods and services under contract. The negotiation of these contracts will be a matter for the new water authorities.

Environmental Consultation

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on progress following the consultation on the document "Improving Scotland's Environment—The Way Forward".

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 25 October 1993]:* I refer the hon. Member to the answer my right hon. Friend gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Kincardine and Deeside (Mr. Kynoch) on 25 February at column *722*.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list those organisations who have submitted comments on the proposals contained in the document "Improving Scotland's Environment—The Way Forward"; if he will place the representations in the Library; and how many of the comments received have been favourable and how many have been adverse.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 25 October 1993]:* Altogether 159 organisations responded. Copies of the responses which we were not asked to treat as confidential have been placed in the Library. While local authorities and river purification boards did not, in general, support our proposals, most other respondents, particularly those from industry, were broadly in favour.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will set aside the proposals contained in the document "Improving Scotland's Environment—The Way Forward" until after the proposed reform of local government in Scotland has been completed; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 25 October 1993]:* No. Our proposals for the agency are fully consistent with the forthcoming reorganisation of local government.

Sheep

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement providing details of the operation of the allocation of sheep quota from the national reserve; and when he expects to be in a position to accept applications from sheep producers for allocation of quota from the reserve.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 25 October 1993]:* Details of the operation of the national reserve of sheep annual premium quota are currently being finalised. The statutory instrument authorising Agriculture Departments to invite applications to, and make allocations from, the national reserve will be laid before Parliament as soon as these arrangements have been settled.

Local Government Reorganisation

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what meetings took place about the proposed linkage of Berwickshire and East Lothian in advance of publication of the White Paper which involved local district councillors;

(2) what meetings took place about the proposed linkage of Berwickshire and East Lothian in advance of publication of the White Paper which involved special or political advisers to the Secretary of State for Scotland and local representatives for either Berwickshire or East Lothian;

(3) if he will place in the Library a list of those who made representations on the proposal to link Berwickshire and East Lothian in the context of local government reform in Scotland;

(4) if he will make a statement on the reasons for the White Paper suggesting that Berwickshire should be joined to East Lothian; and who made the suggestion.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 25 October 1993]:* In reaching their decisions on the proposed boundaries for the new single-tier authorities that were included in the White paper "Shaping the Future—The New Councils", the Government took account of the responses to the consultation paper "Shaping The New Councils", and to a wide range of other factors including costs, the efficient delivery of services, accountability, economic development considerations, population and geography. No meetings were held with local authorities or other interest groups to discuss specific boundaries relating to Berwickshire and East Lothian prior to the publication of the White Paper. Since publication, however, I and my colleagues have met with a number of individuals and organisations from Berwickshire, East Lothian and other

parts of Scotland. A total of 417 individual letters have also been received about the proposed Berwickshire and East Lothian council. I have placed in the Library a list of those who have made representations. In addition, local campaigns about the Berwickshire and East Lothian proposals have generated postcards, pro forma letters and petition signatures.

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the transitional costs of the restructuring of local government; and if he intends those costs to be met from local or national resources.

Mr. Stewart: The Government's White Paper, "Shaping the Future—The New Council" estimated that transitional costs in the range of £120 million to £196 million would be incurred over a 15-year period. The Scottish Office has invited local authorities to submit estimates of the genuinely additional costs they expect to incur in the financial year 1994-95 and my right hon. Friend will be taking account of these in determining the level of the local government finance settlement for that year. Similarly the funding of costs in future years will be the subject of consultation with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities in the normal way.

Farm Statistics (Miscalculation)

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the reasons for the miscalculation in the statistics showing the amount of cereal production in Scotland for the years between 1989 and 1991.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 25 October 1993]:* There has been no miscalculation in the amount of cereal production in Scotland between 1989 and 1991. The European Commission recently agreed that the original base areas, provided on 16 September 1992, for the arable area payments scheme introduced this year should be adjusted in the light of information from claims submitted under the new scheme. This technical adjustment, between the less favoured area and the non-less favoured area base areas, did not alter the total base area originally provided.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what are the estimated losses per hectare that will result from miscalculation of statistics from farmers in the non-less favoured areas for cereals, oilseed rape, peas and beans and set-aside land;

(2) if he will make a statement on the increase in the amount of land to be set aside next year; and whether compensation is to be paid on the additional areas set aside.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 25 October 1993]:* Officials are working with the EC Commission to determine the revised rates of payment under the arable area payments scheme. These revised rates result from the adjustment in the distribution of land between the less favoured area (LFA) and the non-less favoured area (non-LFA) and from the overshoot in cropping in the non-less favoured area.

An announcement on the revised rates and on next year's additional set-aside requirement will be made as soon as possible.

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he has taken to ensure that the European Commission is aware of the effects of the changes as a result of the miscalculation of statistics for cereal production in Scotland; and what assurances he has had that the EC will not seek to exact penalties by way of further areas of set-aside in the coming year.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 25 October 1993]:* As soon as it became apparent from the claims submitted this year under the arable area payments scheme that an adjustment to the base area figures orginally submitted to the EC Commission was necessary, my right hon. Friend personally pressed the Commission to agree to a technical adjustment of the Scottish base areas. The Commission has now agreed to the necessary technical adjustment of the LFA and non-LFA elements within Scotland's total base area; and my right hon. Friend and I are most grateful to the Commission for agreeing to that re adjustment.

There remains an overshoot in the non-LFA area which reflects an increase in cropping in that area. The EC regulations governing the arable area payments scheme stipulate that the effect of this overshoot is to reduce arable aid payments within the non-LFA area proportionately in the current year and to increase the set-aside requirement in the coming year by the percentage by which the regional base has been exceeded, that increase being uncompensated.

My right hon. Friend and I fully recognise that any penalty will be unwelcome to arable farmers. We cannot, however, vary the total Scottish base area, which reflects data already formally submitted to the Commission; nor can we adjust the area base control regime in mid-stream. The Scheme is designed to penalise areas in excess of base areas on which aid is claimed; and we cannot simply wish away the problem of over-cropping and the resultant additional one-year set-aside requirement.

Set-aside Land

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) when he expects to meet representatives on the Scottish National Farmers Union to discuss proposals to mitigate financial losses that may result from the increased amount of land set aside;

(2) what proposals he has to compensate farmers who can prove they have suffered loss as a result of changes to the rules on set-aside.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 25 October 1993]:* My right hon. Friend and I fully recognise that any special set-aside requirement will be unwelcome to arable farmers. The EC regulations governing the arable area payments scheme, however, stipulate such an additional one-year requirement where an overshoot over base area has occurred; and they make it clear that this additional requirement is uncompensated. As I explained to representatives of the National Farmers Union of Scotland when I met them on 13 October, we cannot vary the total Scottish base area, which reflects statistics already lodged with the EC Commission and to which each member state is committed. Nor can we adjust in mid-course the area base control regime to which the Government are committed. The scheme is specifically designed to penalise areas which are in excess of base areas on which arable aid is claimed.

The additional set-aside requirement resulting from the overshoot should be seen in the context of the very significant continuing benefits to Scottish arable farmers

and to the rural economy generally of the arable area payments scheme under the common agricultural policy. Notwithstanding the penalty, farmers in the non-LFA area alone will receive some £80 million in arable area payments in 1993, with a further £12·5 million in payments in the LFA area. Moreover, the reduction in arable area payments to non-LFA farmers resulting from the overshoot in fact broadly equates with the global return generated from the additional land, over base area, brought into cropping this year.

Mental Illness

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to continue the mental illness specific grant in 1993, 1994 and 1995; whether the funding of service developments in the treatment of those suffering from traumatic brain injury will continue as an eligible category; what will be the sums of money provided for mental illness specific grant in the afore-mentioned financial years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 25 October 1993]:* Following an internal review of the scheme, it has recently been decided to continue the grant for at least another three years until 1997. Projects to assist people with acquired brain injury will continue to be eligible for grant.

In 1993-94, grant of £7 million supports projects worth £10 million. The level of grant for future years will be announced as part of the local government finance settlement for those years.

The scheme will be subject to a further review in 1996, based on a full study expected to report towards the end of 1995.

Pollution Appeals

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to announce the decisions in respect of the two appeals brought by the Inverclyde district council against H. L. Friel and Son Ltd. and Stephen Friel under the terms of the Control of Pollution (Amendment) Act 1989 and the Controlled Waste (Registration of Carriers and Seizure of Vehicles) Regulations 1991; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 25 October 1993]:* I expect that the decisions in respect of the appeals by H. L. Friel and Son Limited and Stephen Friel against Inverclyde district council's refusal to register them as carriers of controlled waste will be issued soon.

Arable Area Payments Scheme

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the amounts in hectares of the take-up under the arable area payments scheme in 1993 in Scotland for *(a)* cereals, *(b)* oilseeds, *(c)* protein crops excluding vining peas and *(d)* set-aside and the simplified scheme; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 25 October 1993]:* The areas claimed under the arable area payments scheme in 1993 in Scotland by commodity, and for set-aside, are as follows:

	Hectares
Cereals	317,621
Oilseeds	61,781
Proteins (excluding vining peas)	4,150
Set-aside	70,637
Simplified scheme	56,428

Mr. Martlew: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the number of applications in each region in Scotland under the *(a)* main arable area payments scheme and *(b)* the simplified scheme in 1993; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 25 October 1993]:* The number of applications in each region in Scotland under the arable area payments scheme in 1993 is as follows:

	Less-favoured area (LFA)	*Non-less-favoured area (NON-LFA)*	*Combined claims (LFA and NON-LFA)*
Main scheme	651	3,205	478
Simplified scheme	3,306	1,687	125

Combined claims are those which include both LFA and non-LFA land.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 27 October 1993

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Courts (Administration)

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what steps he is taking to speed up the process of administration in the courts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Taylor: Several steps are presently being taken to improve the process of administration in the courts.

In the Crown court, the recommendations of two major reports are being implemented or considered. The first is the inter-agency report of the pre-trial issues (PTI) working group issued in 1990 and which was presented to Parliament in February 1991. The second is the Royal Commission on Criminal Justice published in July this year.

In the magistrates courts a number of initiatives are being taken to reduce delays and waiting times. They include legislative amendments and the promotion of good practice in concert with all the criminal justice agencies. A standard computer system is being developed, as are changes to the management structure of courts, both of which will bring operational benefits.

In the county courts, centralised computer systems are being developed. These include a project to centralise the handling of payments under county court attachment of earnings orders.

Judges

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will introduce requirements for all judges to undergo comprehensive medical and psychological examinations on reaching the age of 65 years.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Lord Chancellor has no such plans.

Legal Aid

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what is the latest estimated cost of legal aid.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The 1993-94 Supply Estimate provision for legal aid is £1,284 million, net of receipts. Based on figures for expenditure to the end of August, we now forecast that net expenditure for legal aid in the current year is likely to be £1,254 million. At this stage in the year, however, there is inevitably still uncertainty about the eventual outturn. The reduction in the forecast is largely related to criminal legal aid. The changes in eligibility introduced in April, the effect of which was almost entirely in relation to civil legal aid and advice and assistance appear to be having broadly the effect anticipated.

Overseas Staff and Premises

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what is the cost for the current financial year of his Department having *(a)* premises and *(b)* personnel overseas; and what were the comparable figures for *(a)* 12, *(b)* 24, *(c)* 36 and *(d)* 48 months ago.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Lord Chancellor's Department incurs only minor expenditure overseas. The table shows the expenditure on premises and personnel for 1993-94 and the previous four years. Expenditure prior to 1993-94 relates solely to the Office of the Judge Advocate General in Germany. Since 1991-92 the bulk of expenditure on the Judge Advocate's premises there has been paid by the Ministry of Defence. For 1993-94 the personnel cost includes the secondment of one officer to the Government of Australia.

Cost of overseas premises and personnel

Year	*(a) Premises* £	*(b) Personnel* £
1989-90	81,361	266,235
1990-91	76,178	244,143
1991-92	5,624	261,526
1992-93	2,457	273,769
1993-94	—	342,159

NATIONAL HERITAGE

BBC Governor for Wales

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what proposals he has to review the appointment of the BBC national governor for Wales in the light of the report on the Welsh Development Agency presented to Parliament on 19 October.

Mr. Brooke: None.

TRANSPORT

Taxis

Mr. Bendall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will now publish the Green Paper on taxi and private hire services in England and Wales.

Mr. Norris: The Green Paper was published today. It is a consultation document addressing fundamental issues relating to taxi and private hire services throughout England and Wales, including London, and I hope it will generate a stimulating debate on the way forward. I have asked for responses by 1 March 1994. I have arranged for copies to be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Channel Tunnel Rail Link

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what period of consultation he intends to allow for those residents of Islington living to the west of Liverpool road in relation to Union Railways' proposal, announced on 22 September, for a grade-separated junction leading into St. Pancras station for the high-speed channel tunnel link.

Mr. Freeman: Local authorities and action groups have been briefed by Union Railways on the rail link options, which are to be reported to the Government at the end of October. These bodies have been invited to submit formal comments directly to my Department by 12 November. Union Railways has, moreover, set up visiting public information centres for all parts of the route to explain the options. Comments from members of the public may either be made to Union Railways at the information centres or they can be sent to my Department. All comments received will be taken into account in our decisions.

A1/M1 Link

Mr. Batiste: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects the A1/M1 link road works in Yorkshire *(a)* to commence and *(b)* to finish.

Mr. Key: The public inquiry into this scheme was held in January and February of this year. After considering the inspector's recommendations, the Secretaries of State for Transport and for the Environment will decide on the way forward. If a decision were taken to proceed with the proposals, construction would start after the completion of detailed design, subject to the availability of funds. Typically, schemes of this size take about three years to build.

A1, Northumberland

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will review the traffic volume criteria for grade separation at crossings in the design of further dual carriageway projects on the A1 road in Northumberland, to correspond with the standards which are being observed on the neighbouring section of the A1 in Scotland.

Mr. Key: The Department is already working closely with the Scottish Office and, indeed, also with the Welsh Office and DOE Northern Ireland on the development of common design criteria for grade separation of road junctions. The intention is to produce a United Kingdom-wide standard.

Vocational Drivers

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many medical appeals have been made to the DVLA since April 1992 by LGV/LPV vocational drivers; how many notified appeals were proceeded with; how many were resolved medically by the DVLA; how many *(a)* LGV cases and *(b)* LPV cases went to magistrates courts for appeal; how many appeals in each of the two categories were refused on grounds of drug abuse, alcohol abuse, diabetes, epilepsy, cardiac problems, history of strokes, non-epileptic fits and other conditions; and how many appeals were allowed in each of the categories in respect of diabetes, corrected vision, monocular vision, deafness, history of suicidal tendencies, psychotic illness, hydrocephalus and other conditions.

Mr. Key: In the period April 1992 to September 1993, DVLA received 257 notices of appeal from LGV/PCV drivers. Of these 242 were resolved at DVLA and did not proceed to court. Fifteen summonses were issued against the Department, of which, two were later withdrawn. The results of the remaining 13 appeals, by medical condition, are as follows:—

Two LGV appeals allowed. These consisted of:
Heart 1.
Epilepsy 1.

Eight LGV appeals refused. These consisted of:
Alcohol abuse 2.
Epilepsy 2.
Heart 1.
Blackout 3.

One PCV appeal allowed.
Cancer.

Two PCV appeals refused.
Epilepsy 1.
Head injury 1.

Mr. David Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what considerations he has given to establishing medical appeal tribunals analogous to those operated by the Department of Social Security for appeals against DVLA decisions on the issue of LGV/LPV licences.

Mr. Key: We are currently looking at the use of independent medical referees rather than the more expensive medical tribunal system.

Hold Baggage

Sir Ivan Lawrence: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what action he will take to ensure that hold baggage in passenger airplanes is accompanied by its owners on flights from London Heathrow and other British international airports.

Mr. Norris: At present, the aircraft operator is required by law to ensure that all originating passengers, operating crew, transit passengers and any transfer passengers whose hold baggage has been loaded into an aircraft, have boarded and will travel on that aircraft. The baggage of passengers who check in but do not board the aircraft is required to be removed and subjected to security controls. Unaccompanied baggage is not carried unless it is screened and if necessary hand-searched.

The United Kingdom has always complied with international requirements on passenger baggage. We are going further and introducing a requirement for airlines to account for and authorise for carriage every item of hold baggage that they carry. Trials are under way at several airports, and we are pressing suppliers of equipment to clear up the remaining technical difficulties.

MFV Pescado

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make public the marine accident investigation branch report and the video evidence of the damage to the MFV Pescado.

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 25 October 1993]:* Inquiries into the loss of the Pescado are being carried out with a view to prosecution. Consequently, all evidence collected by the marine accident investigation branch in the course of its investigation must be considered sub judice. For the same reason, publication of the detailed marine accident investigation branch report must await the outcome of those inquiries.

Jubilee Line

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the effect of the award of Jubilee line tunnelling contracts to foreign companies on the ability of British firms to compete for other large-scale civil projects.

Mr. Norris: The award of contracts for the Jubilee line extension (JLE) is entirely a matter for London Underground Limited. No major contracts for the JLE have yet been awarded; I understand that although some of the tunnelling contracts are likely to be awarded to foreign companies, the larger part of the tunnelling work will go to the United Kingdom.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Asylum

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the amount of the costs awarded by the Law Lords on 28 July against his predecessor the right hon. Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker) in respect of the Home Department being ruled guilty of contempt of court in relation to a court order banning deportation of the Zairean asylum seeker 'M'; how much of the costs his Department paid; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: The consequence of the ruling by the Judicial Committee in the House of Lords on 28 July is that the Home Office is liable for the applicant's costs in the proceedings in the Divisional Court, Court of Appeal and the House of Lords. The applicant's solicitors costs for the Divisional Court and the Court of Appeal have been taxed and are:

Divisional Court–£51,195·92
Court of Appeal–£41,110·30

The applicant's solicitors have submitted a bill for their costs in the House of Lords. When this has been taxed, all the applicant's outstanding costs will be paid.

Animal Experimentation

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will consider establishing a list of registered interests for members of the Animal Procedures Committee similar to those registers available for other independent Government advisory committees.

Mr. Charles Wardle: I shall arrange for such a list to be included in future reports of the Animal Procedures Committee.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the number of *(a)* procedures and *(b)* animals used for research on (i) tobacco, (ii) cosmetics and toiletries, (iii) food additives and (iv) alcohol in 1990, 1991 and 1992.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Categories (i) to (iv) are not separately recorded for medical or applied research purposes but are for procedures for safety evaluation. The number of procedures were as follows:

Year	*Tobacco*	*Cosmetics and toiletries*	*Food additives*	*Alcohol*
1990	659	4,365	10,822	1,429
1991	512	3,082	10,855	1,294
1992	197	2,164	6,134	1,087

The number of animals used in each procedure could be extracted from the recorded information only at disproportionate cost.

Crime Clear-up Rates

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the police authorities that recorded the five highest crime clear-up rates in each of the past seven years.

Mr. Maclean: The police forces with the highest clear-up rates, in order, were as follows:

1986
Dyfed-Powys, Gwent, Derbyshire, Hertfordshire, Lancashire.
1987
Gwent, Dyfed-Powys, Lancashire, Cumbria, Suffolk.
1988
Gwent, Dyfed-Powys, Cumbria, Lancashire, Cheshire.
1989
Gwent, Dyfed-Powys, Cheshire, Cumbria, Wiltshire.
1990
Gwent, Dyfed-Powys, Cheshire, West Mercia, South Yorkshire.
1991
Dyfed-Powys, Gwent, Lincolnshire, Merseyside, Dorset.
1992
Dyfed-Powys, Gwent, Merseyside, Suffolk, Lincolnshire.

Violent Crime

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what percentage of the prison population had been convicted of crimes involving violence for the last date for which figures are available.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answer 25 October 1993]:* Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the director general of the prison service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Mr. A. Butler to Mr. David Alton, dated 26 October 1993:

CONVICTION FOR CRIMES INVOLVING VIOLENCE

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Question asking what percentage of the prison population had been convicted of crimes involving violence for the latest date that figures are available.

Excluding those committed in default of payment of a fine some 49 per cent. of the total sentenced male and female prison population, for whom an offence was recorded, were serving sentences for violence against the person, robbery or for a sexual offence on 30 June 1993.

WALES

Local Government Finance

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a table showing the capital allocation to each of the county authorities in Wales for each of the last three financial years; what percentage of

each allocation was actually expended; and what is his calculation of what expenditure should have been incurred in respect of each of the main service areas.

Mr. Redwood: The available information is given in the following tables. The Government's new planning totals for the external financing of capital expenditure and the assumed gross expenditure by broad service group are available only for Wales as a whole.

Basic credit approvals (BCA) form the capital allocations which are not directed towards specific services or programmes. Other external capital financing is provided through supplementary credit approvals, capital grants and other contributions from central Government and their agencies. These latter sources are generally directed towards specific services or programmes. The total amount of external capital finance for local authorities is announced annually as the new planning total but, other than BCA, the amounts involved are not necessarily allocated to local authorities before the beginning of the financial year. In addition to the spending financed externally, local authorities can fund capital expenditure from revenue accounts and reserves and from capital receipts. This self-financed expenditure does not form part of the capital allocations or new planning totals. The amount the Government estimates authorities will have available for capital expenditure on each service, the assumed gross expenditure, is derived by summing the relevant capital allocations and forecasts of self-financed expenditure.

Table 1: Allocation and use of basic credit approvals (BCA)

	BCA issued (£ million)			*Use of BCA as a percentage of BCA issued*[1]		*Gross capital expenditure*[2] *(£ million)*		
	1990-91	*1991-92*	*1992-93*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*1992-93*
Clwyd	12·7	13·0	12·1	100	100	19·6	22·2	18·8
Dyfed	12·5	13·0	13·2	91	100	17·3	20·0	20·7
Gwent	12·1	13·8	14·4	100	100	32·8	34·2	46·2
Gwynedd	8·3	8·6	8·6	100	100	10·7	11·9	11·3
Mid Glamorgan	18·0	18·8	19·1	100	100	37·9	46·2	44·8
Powys	6·4	6·6	6·7	99	99	7·8	10·2	11·5
South Glamorgan	11·9	12·6	12·6	100	78	31·7	50·4	48·4
West Glamorgan	11·5	11·9	12·4	100	100	27·1	28·3	24·1
Total	93·4	98·3	99·1	99	97	185·0	223·4	225·7

Source: Welsh Office returns.

[1] Net of transfers between authorities. Not available for 1992-93.

[2] Includes expenditure financed by external sources other than BCA. Also includes self-financed expenditure. Excludes Law and Order. 1990-91 and 1991-92 outturn; 1992-93 provisional outturn.

Table 2: New planning total and assumed gross expenditure[1] *(£ million)*

	New planning total			*Assumed gross expenditure*		
	1990-91	*1991-92*	*1992-93*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*1992-93*
Education	50·1	56·7	55·2	53·7	66·6	63·0
Personal social services	9·9	10·3	11·2	10·8	12·2	12·8
Transport	81·4	99·5	100·9	86·6	115·1	113·4
Other local services	57·7	61·7	54·5	72·2	93·6	99·8
Housing	190·3	194·3	279·4	226·7	226·0	306·6
Urban programme	24·9	41·6	35·1	24·9	41·6	35·1
Total	414·3	464·1	536·3	474·9	555·0	630·7

[1] Excluding Law and Order.

Rural Housing

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he will respond to the third report of the Welsh Affairs Committee Session 1992-93 on rural housing.

Mr. Redwood: I am pleased to announce that the response has been published today.

Working Groups

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will place in the Library a list of all Welsh Office working groups together with the membership of each and a note of other public bodies to which any member also belongs.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The information required is not held centrally.

Public Appointments

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will place in the Library a copy of the register held by the Welsh Office of candidates suitable for public appointment.

Mr. Redwood: No—this information is confidential.

Peat Bogs

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the raised peat bogs within Wales.

Mr. Redwood: The information requested is as follows:

Fenns and Whixall Mosses, Clwyd
Nug and Merddwr complex, Clwyd
Cors Caron, Dyfed
Cors Fochno, Dyfed
Esgyrn Bottom, Dyfed
Gorslas, Dyfed
Cors Goch, Llanllwch, Dyfed

Arthog Bog, Gwynedd
Cors Goch, Trawsfynydd, Gwynedd
Rhosgoch Common, Powys
Craig-y-Ciliau, Powys
Nelson Bog, Mid Glamorgan

There may be some additional small mires which would fall into this category but these will require further investigation.

Traffic Calming

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement outlining the main findings to the formal consultation arranged by his Department on traffic calming measures.

Sir Wyn Roberts: On 23 February, in conjunction with the Department of Transport, we wrote to interested parties, including Welsh local authority associations and county surveyors, inviting comments on draft traffic calming regulations. The few comments received were of a technical nature and the proposals were generally welcomed. The Highways (Traffic Calming) Regulations 1993 came into force on 27 August.

Youth Training

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to include references to evaluation targets for youth training within his Department's annual expenditure plans.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The Department's annual expenditure plans are currently being prepared. It is my intention that these will include reference to agreed targets for youth training.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Konver Programme

Ms Janet Anderson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will re-examine the instruction currently being given by regional offices of his Department that funds under the EC Konver programme are only available to small and medium-sized enterprises.

Mr. Sainsbury: The Commission's list of the types of measures which Konver may part-finance includes "diversification of the region's economic structure, particularly through aid for the development of small and medium-sized firms".

Assistance from European structural funds community initiatives, such as Konver, is allocated in each member state in accordance with a national "programme" which may stipulate narrower priorities.

The United Kingdom is one of those member states in which Konver grants to companies will be limited to small and medium sized enterprises. This accords with the Government's priorities for the use of the sums of grant available from the funds generally.

Post Office Pension Schemes

Ms Estelle Morris: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what directions the Government propose to give to the trustees of the Post Office superannuation and Post Office pension schemes about division of their funds and assets in the event of the privatisation of Post Office Counters Ltd., Royal Mail Ltd., and Parcelforce Ltd.

Mr. McLoughlin: The Government are continuing their review into the future structure and organisation of the Post Office. Once the Government have decided on the future of the Post Office and its constituent businesses, it will be able to consider any implications for pensions in detail. Until then, this question is hypothetical.

Ms Estelle Morris: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what changes in the Post Office superannuation and Post Office pension schemes he expects to make in the light of the recommendations of the Goode report.

Mr. McLoughlin: Operational responsibility for the Post Office pension schemes rests not with Ministers but with the trustees of the schemes, together with the Post Office. The Goode report is being considered by Government, and the trustees of the Post Office schemes will no doubt wish to consider any implications which may arise in due course.

Wave Power

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what progress has been made, in conjunction with the European Communities, in establishing an offshore wave power generator project.

Mr. Eggar: Two United Kingdom proposals, from the Queen's university Belfast, and from Applied Research and Technology Ltd. (ART), of Inverness, for wave energy pilot plants with a power rating between 0·4MW and 2·0MW have been offered support from the Commission of the European Communities' JOULE programme. Both received assistance from the energy technology support unit (ETSU), acting on behalf of DTI, in preparing their proposals.

Nuclear Reactor, Sizewell

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what response he has made to the recent application by Nuclear Electric plc to build a third nuclear plant at Sizewell.

Mr. Eggar: My Department directed Nuclear Electric plc to advertise its application pursuant to the terms of the Electricity (Applications for Consent) Regulations 1990 and the Electricity and Pipe-line Works (Assessment of Environmental Effects) Regulations 1990.

Telephone System

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has received from Oftel to be given overall responsibility for the change in telephone codes due to take place in 1995; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: We have not received any such representations. Oftel is already working to ensure that, wherever possible, telecoms operators and the manufacturers and maintainers of telephony equipment discharge their responsibilities to their customers in relation to the national code change in a timely and co-ordinated way so as to minimise any costs and disruption to the end-user.

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to enable Oftel to take over control and allocation of telephone numbers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin: The 1991 White Paper, "Competition and Choice: Telecommunications Policy for the 1990s" (Cm 1461) made it clear that Oftel would be taking action to enable it to administer a national numbering plan. Operators' licences were subsequently amended to provide Oftel with the necessary powers once numbering conventions had been published and a specified numbering scheme determined. Oftel intends to take over responsibility for the allocation of numbers during the first half of 1994.

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the current telephone network operators; and what is his estimate of the likely number of telephone network operators in April 1995.

Mr. McLoughlin: Since the publication of the 1991 White Paper, "Competition and Choice: Telecommunications Policy for the 1990s" (Cm 1461), licences have been granted, in addition to those already granted to BT and Mercury Communications Ltd, to the following companies to run fixed-link public telecommunications systems throughout the United Kingdom: Ionica L3 Ltd; Energis Communications Ltd; Scottish Hydro-Electric plc; ScottishPower Telecommunications Ltd; Torch Communications Ltd; and MFS Communications Ltd. Applications for similar licences are also under consideration.

The number of licensed operators is expected to have increased by April 1995, but my Department does not produce estimates of the likely number of operators in future years. This will depend on the number of future applications and whether these meet the considerations which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has to take into account under the Telecommunications Act 1984 before granting a licence.

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what estimate he has made of the costs, both private and public, of reprogramming of telephone equipment due to the proposed code changes in 1995.

Mr. McLoughlin: This is a matter for Oftel. In July 1992 it published a study carried out by Ovum which estimated that the direct costs of modifications to customer premises equipment as a result of the national code change were likely to be in the order of £200 million.

Insolvency Service

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what recent representations he has received about the competence of insolvency service staff.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: No recent representations have been received.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many staff are employed in the insolvency service disqualification unit; and what was the average number employed in the unit for each year since 1987.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The insolvency service's disqualification unit currently employs 49·5 persons. The number averaged 47 in each year from 1987 to 1990, 49 in 1991 and 49·5 in 1992.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many insolvencies, identifying companies and bankruptcies were dealt with by the insolvency service together with the average number of staff, identifying permanent and casual, in post for each year from 1987.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The insolvency service dealt with the following number of cases:

	1987-88	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*1992-93*
Company winding-up orders	3,952	3,554	4,431	6,777	8,911	9,540
Bankruptcy orders	7,365	7,607	8,679	14,359	26,186	33,152
TOTAL	11,317	11,161	13,110	21,136	35,097	42,692

The average number of staff were:

	1987-88	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*1992-93*
Permanent	1,516	1,443	1,395	1,431	1,500	1,531
Casuals	[1]n/a	[1]n/a	10	24	85	158
TOTAL	1,516	1,443	1,405	1,455	1,585	1,689

[1] *Note:* No separate record of casuals, numbers insignificant.

Energy Review Panel

Dr. Michael Clark: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he will appoint members of the energy review panel which he announced in the coal White Paper.

Mr. Eggar *[pursuant to his reply, 26 October 1993]:* I announced to the House on 20 October that Dr. Martin Holdgate had agreed to chair the new energy advisory panel and that I had invited a number of independent experts in the energy field to serve as members. I am pleased to be able now to announce the full membership of the panel and look forward to the input which they will make to the energy report next year. I am sure that the report will be an invaluable document to all those with an interest in energy.

With the arrival of the panel, I have decided to dissolve the Department's former advisory council on research and development. ACORD has provided valuable technical advice to a succession of Ministers and Departments since it was first set up 45 years ago but major changes to the energy scene in recent years—particularly the privatisation of the nationalised energy industries—have meant that ACORD's main original function—a detailed technical overview of those industries research plans—is no longer necessary.

The council had itself recently suggested to me that its ambit might usefully be extended to issues of energy policy —an area where it would have overlapped directly with the panel.

I have written to ACORD members thanking them for their service.

The full membership of the energy advisory panel is as follows:

CHAIRMAN

Martin Holdgate
Currently Director General, International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources; formerly Chief Environment Scientist, Department of the Environment. Recent chairman of the Renewable Energy Advisory Group (REAG).

MEMBERS

Lady (Mary) Archer
Chairman of the National Energy Foundation, formerly a member of REAG.

Ron Campbell
Former Managing Director of Babcock Energy and Director of the Nuclear Power Group, now a consultant. Member of the Department's former Advisory council on Energy Research and Development (ACORD) and of the NII's Advisory Council on the Safety of Nuclear Installations (ACSNI).

Tony Cooper
General Secretary, Engineers' and Managers' Association.

Nigel Evans
Managing Director, Caminus Energy Ltd. former member of ACORD.

David Green, MBE
Director, Combined Heat and Power Association.

Dieter Helm
Oxford Economic Research Associates.

Peter Ibbotson
Director of Construction, Sainsbury plc.

Professor Alexander Kemp
University of Aberdeen Department of Economics.

Sam Laidlaw
Managing Director Amerada Hess (UK) Ltd., former president of the UK Offshore Operators' Association.

Mike Parker
Consultant, former Director of Economics, British Coal.

Paul Rich
Managing Director, Allied Steel and Wire.

Lynda Rouse
Director, Public Sector Unit, Barclays de Zoete Wedd Ltd.

Ann Scully
Vice-Chairman, National Consumers Council and Chairman, Domestic Coal Consumers' Council.

Anthony White
National Grid Company (NGC).

Professor Alan Williams
Leeds University Department of Fuel and Energy.

ENVIRONMENT

Accommodation Agencies Act 1953

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what conclusions he has reached as a result of the consultation carried out by his Department on whether there is a case for abolishing the Accommodation Agencies Act 1953.

Sir George Young: Following consultation, we have decided that the Accommodation Agencies Act 1953 should be retained. It is clear that the need to protect those seeking accommodation from unscrupulous or bogus agencies outweight the benefit which might come from allowing agencies to adopt new patterns of business by charging fees in advance to those seeking accommodation.

Sea Mammals

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the number of recorded fatalities of *(a)* dolphins and *(b)* whales and other cetaceans in United Kingdom waters in each of the last five years.

Mr. Yeo: The available figures on cetacean deaths come from a DOE-sponsored scheme for co-ordinated reports of stranded cetaceans around Great Britain. The scheme does not extend to Northern Ireland. The figures are:

Year	*Dolphins*	*Whales and other cetaceans*
1988	44	63
1989	43	95
1990	52	98
1991	78	116
1992	256	159

The 1992 figures appear to reflect an unusual series of strandings of common dolphins off the south-west coast of England in spring 1992 and additional information for Scottish waters following the appointment of a co-ordinator for Scottish reports.

Drinking Water Inspectorate

Mr. Brazier: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what arrangements he proposes to make to provide a more independent role for the drinking water inspectorate.

Mr. Yeo: We propose to transfer to the chief drinking water inspector certain statutory responsibilities of the Secretaries of State for the Environment and for Wales. These include the power to prosecute if water were to be supplied that was unfit for human consumption. We believe that the chief inspector should exercise these responsibilities independently. Legislation will be needed to make the change.

Overseas Staff and Premises

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the cost for the current financial year of his Department having *(a)* premises and *(b)* personnel overseas; and what were the comparable figures for *(a)* 12, *(b)* 24, *(c)* 36 and *(d)* 48 months ago.

Mr. Gummer: DOE (central) has one member of staff stationed in Germany. Personnel and premises costs are covered by payments received for the work carried out; hence, DOE (central) incurs no net expenditure.

In addition, the international arm of PSA Services had premises and personnel overseas in the past four years and the costs incurred were as follows:

	(a) Premises £'000	*(b) Personnel £'000*
1993-94	17	2,891
1992-93	167	17,648
1991-92	183	14,431
1990-91	594	64,680

These costs were fully met by receipts from the Ministry of Defence and other customers. PSA International closed on 30 September 1993, and no further costs will be incurred. Residual tasks are being completed by units in PSA Services.

Orimulsion

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what factors were taken into account in his decision to grant licences to Ince and Richborough power stations to burn orimulsion; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: The recent authorisation by HMIP is a registration of the existing process under the Environmental Protection Act 1990, rather than approval to a new use of orimulsion. Richborough and Ince power stations are now under integrated pollution control as applied to other large power stations earlier this year.

At Richborough and Ince, the limits on the release of sulphur dioxide have been set to ensure that emissions will be no higher than if heavy fuel oil was being burnt.

All power station authorisations include limits on the release of the main pollutants, including sulphur dioxide and nitrogen oxides emitted to air. These limits for releases to air vary from station to station depending on its environmental circumstances and are based on the consideration of the national plan, which aims progressively to reduce such emissions over a number of years, critical load, and local air quality.

The authorisations also contain controls on releases to water which accommodate the requirements of the National Rivers Authority.

Plants are required to use BATNEEC—best available techniques not entailing excessive cost—in controlling releases, and authorisations require operators to provide an improvement plan to bring the station up to new plant standards. Unless PowerGen can demonstrate adequate reasons to the contrary, they will be expected to employ appropriate sulphur abatement techniques at Richborough and Ince by 1 April 1998. This is three years earlier than the normal objective for coal fired stations because of the economics of burning orimulsion.

HMIP is satisfied that there are no environmental grounds for refusing authorisation for full scale burning of orimulsion.

Conservative Party Conference

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what costs were incurred by his Department for arrangements associated with the 1933 Conservative party conference in Blackpool.

Mr. Gummer: The only identifiable costs incurred by my Department were those in arranging for urgent Government papers to be sent to Ministers attending the Conservative party conference.

Sulphur

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made to date on reviewing the United Nations Economic Commission on Europe protocol on sulphur; and if he will make it his policy to sign the revised protocol.

Mr. Yeo: Negotiations are still in progress.

Peat

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to support the awarding of a European eco-label to peat-free soil conditioners and growing media based on organic waste materials only.

Mr. Yeo: The United Kingdom Ecolabelling Board has been established to administer and promote the European Community ecolabelling scheme nationally and has responsibility for dealing with the operational aspects of the scheme.

I understand, however, that the UKEB has submitted to the Commission proposals for soil improvers based on the use of composted waste products. Proposals for growing media are still under consideration.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those sites of special scientific interest which are being damaged by existing peat extraction work and those which have planning permission but are not yet being extracted.

Mr. Yeo: The information is not available in the form requested and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. However, under the terms of the agreement reached with Fisons peat extraction is continuing over previously cut areas at Thorne, Goole and Crowle moors, Hatfield moor, Wedholm Flow, Westhay moor and Shapwick heath. I am informed that some peat extraction is taking place at Fenns, Whixall and Bettesfield Mosses, Catcott, Chilton and Edington moors, Tealham and Tadham moors, Bolton Fell Moss, Chat Moss and Danes Moss under planning permissions give prior to SSSI notification.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will bring forward proposals to introduce a levy upon peat extraction.

Mr. Baldry: The Government have no plans at present to introduce a levy on peat extraction.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement outlining the outcome of his Department's review on the rehabilitation of bogs.

Mr. Baldry: The Department's review on the rehabilitation of lowland peat bogs is ongoing and results will be made available next year when the study is complete.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to establish a development agency to secure partnership between central Government and those with a commercial interest in developing and marketing peat-free growing media and soil conditioners.

Mr. Baldry: The Government have no plans at the present time to establish such an agency.

Sewage Sludge

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to change current sludge and land regulations to allow the immediate use of composted sewage sludge in amenity planting.

Mr. Yeo: Such use of composted sludge is already permitted. The restrictions in the Sludge (Use in Agriculture) Regulations 1989 govern the application of sludge only to agricultural land. There is also an exemption from the requirement to hold a waste disposal licence (in Schedule 6, paragraph 13 of the Collection and Disposal of Waste Regulations 1988) for the deposit of sewage sludge, whether composted or not, directly on to land for the purpose of fertilising or beneficially conditioning that land.

Minerals

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to change the compensation requirements payable for revocation or variation for mineral contents to enable money to be paid in proportion to any losses actually suffered.

Mr. Baldry: The existing legislation already provides for compensation to be calculated in relation to loss or damage suffered, although the amount of compensation can be abated in certain circumstances. However, the Government are reviewing the operation of that legislation as part of their wider review of old mineral permissions and I hope to be able to issue a consultation paper outlining reforms later this year.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to offer compensatory payments to any mineral planning authority minded to revoke an extant planning permission on a site of national or international conservation importance.

Mr. Baldry: Compensation payable for revoking or modifying minerals permissions on any site is governed by the 1981 Minerals Act. It will be reviewed as part of a wider review of old mineral permissions on which the Department hopes to issue a consultation paper early next year.

City Challenge

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will announce his plans for the third round of city challenge.

Mr. Baldry: We are keeping the position on a third round under review in the light of urban policy developments.

Horse Fairs

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the present status of the royal charter granted between 1123 and 1135 which stipulates that land at Lee Gap, Woodkirk, Morley, will be available for the holding of horse fairs; and which Department or agency of Government has responsibility for the maintenance of rights confirmed by royal charter.

Mr. Baldry: Information on royal charters is a matter for the Lord President of the Council, but the maintenance of such rights is a matter for the owner.

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment has been made by his Department of the possible impact of energy efficiency programme development on levels of fuel bill charges in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Yeo: I understand that the Energy Saving Trust is aiming to develop schemes which will by 2000 lead to energy savings by consumers equivalent to at least 2·5 million tonnes of carbon emissions a year. To achieve this the trust will need to offer incentives to investment in energy efficiency measures which may need to build up to about £400 million a year. Achievement of the trust's target will lead to substantial net financial savings to consumers by 2000, even if the gas and electricity regulators were to allow the entire cost of these incentives to be charged in gas and electricity tariffs. Before 2000, there will be times when consumers' savings have not yet fully offset the cost, and the peak level of increase in bills arising from this would be between 1 per cent. and 2 per cent.

Waste Incineration

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement outlining his Department's response to the recommendations on clinical waste incineration outlined in the report by the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution.

Mr. Yeo: The Government have welcomed the report by the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution on the incineration of waste as a comprehensive and clear analysis of the role of incineration as a waste management option. The Government will be making a full response to the commission's report in due course.

My Department is currently reviewing the advice given in waste management paper No. 25 on the arisings, treatment and disposal of clinical waste. A consultation paper was issued in August this year and it is hoped that the revised paper will be published in December.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to publish information on the chemical composition of incinerated waste in the United Kingdom

Mr. Yeo: Wastes incinerated in the United Kingdom include household waste, sewage sludge and organic chemical wastes. This wide range of incinerated wastes means it is not practicable for my right hon. Friend to publish information on their chemical composition.

Where such wastes are special wastes, details of their chemical composition will be available to the public from the register of consignment notes held by the waste regulation authority.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to adopt the four-stage waste management procedure outlined in the report on the incineration of waste by the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution.

Mr. Yeo: The Government's waste policies are based upon a hierarchy of waste management options; the reduction of waste, its re-use wherever possible, recycling and energy recovery, and final disposal.

The Government have welcomed the report by the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution on the incineration of waste as a clear and comprehensive analysis of the role of incineration as a waste management option. A full response by the Government to the report will be made in due course.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he plans to publish and implement the new waste management licensing laws under part 2 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

Mr. Yeo: I refer the hon. Member to the reply to the hon. Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Evans) on 29 April 1993 at column *470*, and the reply to the hon. Member for Gower (Mr. Wardell) on 18 May 1993 at columns *101-2*. It remains the Government's intention to bring the waste mangement licensing provisons of part II of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 into force as soon as possible.

Used Tyres

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to develop a United Kingdom-wide strategy for the safe handling and disposal of used tyres.

Mr. Yeo: Used tyres are controlled waste as defined by the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and as such they are subject to stringent controls. Section 34 of the Act—the duty of care—places a duty on everyone who has a responsibility for waste to ensure that it is properly managed from production to disposal. Producers of waste must, under the duty of care, satisfy themselves that they are passing on waste to people who will handle it properly and ensure its safe disposal. Facilities which accept used tyres for disposal require a waste disposal licence under the Control of Pollution Act 1974, soon to be superseded by the waste management licensing provisions of the Environmental Protection Act 1990. Such licences include conditions designed to prevent pollution of the environment and harm to human health.

The Government are participating in a European Community priority waste stream group to develop by the end of the year a strategy for reducing the environmental impact of used tyres, and are encouraging a number of initiatives to increase their recycling.

Environmental Protection

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what monitoring has been undertaken by his Department to date on compliance with the duty of care rules established under the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

Mr. Yeo: The duty of care, in section 34 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, requires all holders of waste—except private households—to take reasonable steps to prevent the illegal disposal of their waste. Under the duty, waste may be handed only to an authorised person and transfers of waste must be documented. It is in the nature of this duty that compliance is ensured mainly by each holder of waste in turn checking on the person to whom they consign waste, in order themselves to avoid committing an offence.

The Government therefore do not undertake nor require local authorities to undertake any monitoring or inspection of firms' compliance with the duty. However, there is some early evidence of a decline in fly-tipping incidents since the duty of care came into force on 1 April 1992.

Sustainable Development

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from the Institution of Environmental Health Officers concerning sustainable development; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: The Institution of Environmental Health Officers wrote to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment in May on the subject of sustainable development and the environmental health profession, and contributed a specific response in September to my Department's consultation paper on the United Kingdom strategy for sustainable development. These are among more than 600 representations which my Department has received during the Government's consultation process on the strategy, which we are currently preparing. Copies of this document will be laid before the House in the normal way.

Radioactive Substances

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the companies found guilty of breaking the terms of the Radioactive Substances Act 1960 in the United Kingdom since 1989; and if he will set out the company name, level of fine and the offence in each case.

Mr. Yeo: Details are set out in the table.

HMIP–RSA 1960 prosecutions (1989 to date)

Division/ Region	*Name*	*Act*	*Offence*	*Date of hearing*	*Verdict*	*Fine*	*Cost*
East	Grunwick Processing Laboratories, Hertfordshire	RSA 1960	Failure to notify the loss of a registered source and failure to keep the source within a suitable store.	1989-90	Guilty	£1,000	—
East	UK Atomic Energy Authority	RSA 1960	Incidents relating to the release of radioactive tritium gas to the atmosphere.	5 June 1991	Guilty	£3,000	£1,395

Division/ Region	Name	Act	Offence	Date of hearing	Verdict	Fine	Cost
North	BNFL, Springfield	RSA 1960	Unauthorised disposal of low level solid radioactive waste.	17 September 1991	Guilty	£7,500	£6,140
East	Leicester Royal Infirmary	RSA 1960	Failure to dispose of its solid radioactive waste properly.	20 February 1992	Guilty	£6,000	£5,000
East	Esselte Letraset	RSA 1960	Failure to comply with condition of registration to prevent unauthorised access to a radioactive source.	29 June 1992	Guilty	£100	£1,000
West	Xidex (UK) Ltd.	RSA 1960	Breach of conditions relating to storage of radioactive material.	7 September 1992	Guilty	£6,000	£5,000
West	British Coal	RSA 1960	Breach of conditions relating to storage of radioactive material.	12 October 1992	Guilty	£20,000	£6,410
West	West Midlands Regional Health Authority	RSA 1960	Breaching 17 offences under Section 13(1)(c) of the RSA.	18 December 1992	Guilty	£51,000	£8,000
Anglian	Nichols Institute Diagnostics	RSA 1960	Breach of conditions relating to accumulation of radioactive waste without authorisation.	6 April 1993	Guilty	£10,000	£2,726
Southern and HMNII	UK Atomic Energy Authority	RSA 1960	Failure to use BPM to limit the activity of radioactive waste released and to make a record of the means employed.	16 April 1993	Guilty	£5,000	n/a
Anglian	Plessey GEC Semiconductors Ltd.	RSA 1960	Holding a radioactive source without a certificate of registration.	17 May 1993	Guilty	£1,000	£2,261
Anglian	Essex University	RSA 1960	Exceeding the authorised limit for the incineration of radioactive waste.	21 May 1993	Guilty	£8,000	£2,651

(as at) 22 October 1993

Departmental Offices

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many civil servants are working in the Environment Department offices in Marsham street, London.

Mr. Gummer *[holding answer 25 October 1993]:* The Department currently has 2,218 employees working in Marsham street, of which 1,656 are located at No. 2, with 562 in Romney house and 43 Marsham street.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Overseas Staff and Premises

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Attorney-General what is the cost for the current financial year of his Department having *(a)* premises and *(b)* personnel overseas; and what were the comparable figures for *(a)* 12, *(b)* 24, *(c)* 36 and *(d)* 48 months ago.

The Attorney-General: The cost of personnel for the current financial year is expected to be approximately £20,000, £10,069·71 as at 30 September 1993. Comparable figures for previous financial years were *(a)* 1992-93 £19,830·49, *(b)* 1991-92 £18,874·49, *(c)* 1990-91 nil, and *(d)* 1989-90 nil. There are and have been no costs for premises.

Dropped Cases

Mr. John Morris: To ask the Attorney-General how many cases for the last available quarter the Crown prosecution service decided to drop; what proportion were dropped on public interest grounds; and how many on evidential grounds.

The Attorney-General: During the quarter ending June 1993, the CPS discontinued proceedings in respect of 43,997 defendants in magistrates' courts. This total comprises all cases discontinued by the 13 CPS areas, but does not include the specialised casework undertaken by the headquarters of the service.

Reasons for discontinuance are recorded on the files relating to individual defendants, but the information is not collected or collated centrally. The information requested could therefore be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

However, the Home Office has undertaken a research study which provides information about the circumstances in which the CPS terminates cases. An interim report shows that about half the cases terminated were discontinued on evidential grounds (54 per cent.), and just under one third were discontinued on public interest grounds (32 per cent.). The remaining cases could not proceed for various reasons: for example, where the defendant had died or could not be traced.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Open Government

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make it his policy to seek action at the appropriate European Council to remove the current statutory restrictions on information disclosure, to which reference is made at paragraph 6.12 of Cm 2290 on open government.

Mr. Waldegrave: Restrictions on disclosure of information which arise from EC legislation generally exist for good reasons, principally to protect commercial confidentiality and enable national regulatory authorities to exchange information in confidence. Nevertheless, if the process of preparing legislation to implement the proposed right of access to health and safety information reveals that particular EC-derived restrictions are unduly extensive, we will raise our concerns with our Community partners and the Commission.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will set out details of initiatives and

meetings his Department has sponsored, or participated in, to promote public discussion of the proposals contained in his White Paper on open government, Cm 2290.

Mr. Waldegrave: The White Paper itself invited comments on the proposals it contains. My office has received nearly 100 letters from members of the public and representative organisations putting their views on various aspects of the proposals.

On 21 October I addressed a public seminar on the White Paper organised by the Campaign for Freedom of Information and the First Division Association.

Public Services

Ms Mowlam: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he intends to announce the results of the survey of public perceptions of public services undertaken for his Department in March.

Mr. Waldegrave: I wrote to the hon. Member on 24 August 1993.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Forestry Commission

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what area of land in England has been sold by the Forestry Commission; what area she expects to be sold during the next five years; and what area she expects to remain in the ownership of the Commission by 2000.

Mr. Jack: The Forestry Commission has sold 33,500 hectares of land in England since the disposals programme was introduced in 1981. As announced in Cm 2214, "The Government's Expenditure Plans 1993-94 to 1995-96 for the Department of the Secretary of State for Scotland and the Forestry Commission", table 13.10, the commission plans to sell 15,000 hectares of forest land in Britain in each of the next three years. The proportion of this that will be sold in England will depend on the state of the market, particularly the demand for forest land in different parts of the country. The sales programme for 1996-97 and beyond is under consideration and it is not possible at this stage to estimate precisely what area of land will remain in the commission's ownership by the year 2000.

Set-aside

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what will be the predicted effect on wild birds of the move to non-rotational set-aside.

Mr. Jack: Non-rotational set-aside if properly managed can deliver considerable benefits to wild birds. We have issued specific guidance on how to manage set-aside land (either non-rotational or rotational) for ground-nesting birds and for wildfowl. In addition, one of the specific management options open to farmers is for wild bird cover, which can be used to provide winter feeding grounds for birds as well as cover during the rest of the year. However, it should not be forgotten that rotational set-aside land can also provide valuable feeding grounds for wild birds.

Mr. Cox: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the present acreage of land that is now in set aside; and what money is being paid in grants to farmers whose land is now in set aside.

Mr. Jack: Around 90,000 hectares—218,000 acres—of land are currently entered into the five-year set-aside scheme. There is no land currently in set-aside under the arable area payments scheme, since the set-aside period for 1992-93 ended earlier this summer. Provisional United Kingdom figures for the amount of land set-aside under the scheme for 1992-93 are 555,632 hectares (1,372,411 acres).

Payment rates under the five-year set-aside scheme vary, depending on which scheme option the applicant has chosen, how much land has been entered into the scheme and when the applicant joined the scheme. The maximum current payment rate for the permanent fallow option is £222 per hectare (approximately £90 per acre).

Payment rates under the arable area payments scheme are calculated on the basis of regional yields and therefore vary in the different countries of the United Kingdom. The payment rate for set-aside in England for 1992-93 is expected to be £253 per hectare (approximately £102 per acre).

Animal Welfare

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many investigations have been conducted by each local authority into potential breaches of the Welfare of Animals During Transport Order 1992; how many were successful prosecutions; and what was the average level of fine within each local authority area.

Mr. Soames: We have no information on how many individual investigations are carried out, but we have records of six successful prosecutions by local authorities under the order resulting in fines totalling £3,540. Local authorities have also issued more than 40 written cautions and regularly carry out random checks on livestock vehicles.

Fishing Nets

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what proposals are being considered to allow the continued use by EC fishing vessels of drift nets over 2·5 km in length after 31 December; and if she will make a statement;

(2) what measures currently exist to minimise the by-catch of striped and common dolphin by drift nets and other fishing methods.

Mr. Jack: Following international concern about the impact of large-scale pelagic drift netting on marine resources, including dolphins, the EC prohibited, from 1 June 1992, any EC fishing vessel from using drift nets more than 2·5 km long. However, a derogation allows vessels that fished for long-finned albacore tuna with drift nets in the north east Atlantic for at least two years before the regulation came into force, to use drift nets up to 5 km long until 31 December 1993. The headline of these nets must be submerged at a minimum depth of 2m to minimise risk of by-catches of small cetaceans. No United Kingdom vessels qualify for this derogation—which automatically expires unless the Council of Ministers decides to extend it in the light of scientific evidence showing the absence of any ecological risk. No proposal for a continuation of the derogation has been received. As a further measure to

minimise dolphin by-catches, in October 1992 the EC prohibited any EC fishing vessel from encircling schools or groups of marine mammals with purse seine nets.

Waste Disposal

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will make it her policy to make representations to the representatives of the Russian Federation attending the convention of contracting parties of the sea disposal of wastes, being held in London on 8 to 12 November, on the dumping of Russian liquid radioactive wastes in the sea of Japan on 17 October.

Mr. Jack: The consultative meeting of the London Convention 1972 will receive a report on the recent sea disposal of radioactive waste by Russia. This should permit a more informed view of what has taken place and will allow us to determine the terms of any necessary representations on this matter to the Russians. The United Kingdom expressed its concern about the past illegal Russian disposal of radioactive waste in the economic declaration following the G7 summit in Tokyo in July.

Sellafield

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will make a statement on the experiment in monitoring the sea discharge of radioactive technetium 99 from Sellafield.

Mr. Jack: This Ministry's fisheries laboratory at Lowestoft is carrying out measurements of technetium-99 in the Irish sea both as part of regular monitoring work, and in support of continuing research into the mechanisms of the distribution and uptake of this radionuclide within the marine environment. Reports on this work will be published in the normal way.

Official Hospitality

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much was spent on official hospitality in her Department in the financial year 1992-93.

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 20 October 1993]:* During the 1992-93 financial year, £80,314·80 was spent on official hospitality, including £20,336 for ministerial hospitality.

The principal items included hospitality:

to overseas officials and other visitors, including, for example visitors from EC organisations and from other member states;

to industry representatives, trade associations and professional bodies;

in the course of work being undertaken for the Department by individuals or groups of individuals in an advisory capacity; and

at agricultural and trade shows.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

Eastern Europe

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to the oral answer of the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs to the hon. Member for Wallasey (Ms Eagle) of 18 October, *Official Report*, column 16, if he will cite further examples of the popular policies in central and eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union to which he referred.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: There has been widespread adoption by Governments of the region of policies designed to promote individual enterprise and the development of a market economy, promote respect for private property, foster civic rights and encourage the development of small businesses and the banking services to support them. These policies enjoy general support. Differences are more concerned with the speed of transition than its general direction.

Kenya

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what help has been given by Her Majesty's Government to the Kenya Government to help in the rehabilitation of street children in Nairobi, Kenya.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have provided £9,600 as a contribution towards the cost of a health care centre.

Population Control, China

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) on what occasions his officials have visited the Chinese Family Planning Association, or the Chinese State Family Planning Commission, to observe and inspect their work; and if he will make a statement;

(2) on what occasions his officials have visited China with the purpose of inspecting the effects of Chinese population control policies at district and factory level; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answers 25 October 1993]:* As previously explained, the main source of information about the Chinese Family Planning Association is the International Planned Parenthood Federation. Additional information on Chinese family planning policies is obtained from officials of the British embassy in Peking.

Population Control

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what sums have been budgeted as the Overseas Development Administration's contribution to the International Planned Parenthood Federation and the United Nations Fund for Population Activities for the next three years.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 25 October 1993]:* The level of the United Kingdom contributions we provide to each of these organisations in 1994-95 is under consideration. We provide funds one year at a time.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what information has been supplied to him by the International Planned Parenthood Federation and the United Nations Fund for Population Activities regarding the detailed budgets and activities funded by the IPPF and UNFPA annual donations in support of the Chinese population control policy; and if such information is confidential;

(2) when the Overseas Development Administration became a participant at the International Planned Parenthood Federation annual doners meeting;

(3) on what date the Overseas Development Administration became a member of the United Nations Fund for Population Activities.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answers 25 October 1993]:* We have participated regularly in IPPF annual donors meetings since these started in 1971, and have funded UNFPA's global activities since 1968. UNFPA and IPPF provide donors with full details of their budgets and programmes in China.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the recent meeting between Dr. Halfdan Mahler and officials of his Department following the former's visit to China in February.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 25 October 1993]:* Officials discussed with Dr. Mahler a range of issues, including the question of coercion in China's family planning programmes, the quality of reproductive health care in China, and the role of IPPF and the Chinese Family Planning Association.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what information he has regarding the physical damage to Chinese who attempt to remove intra-uterine devices inserted by law; and what information he has on the levels of fines levied on women who are found to have illegally removed IUDs or illegally avoided their insertion;

(2) what information the International Planned Parenthood Federation and the United Nations Fund for Population Activities provided to his Department regarding regional laws and district-regional governing of Chinese population control.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 25 October 1993]:* We have received a number of reports on family planning legislation in China and are aware that family planning regulations in some provinces stipulate the imposition of fines if IUDs are removed without prior approval.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the factors taken into account by his Department in providing aid to organisations working in the field of population control.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 25 October 1993]:* The Overseas Development Administration aims to promote the ability of women and men to exercise free choice about when to have children, and to improve reproductive health. Funds are provided to a number of non-government and international agencies which share these goals and which are categorically opposed to all forms of coercion in family planning programmes.

Tibet

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what information he has regarding the activities of the Chinese Family Planning Association in Tibet;

(2) what response he is making to the Campaign Free Tibet publication, "Children of Despair", a copy of which has been sent to him.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 25 October 1993]:* We maintain a regular dialogue with the International Planned Parenthood Federation about the role and activities of the Chinese Family Planning Association. We will continue to raise with the Chinese authorities our concern about reports of human rights abuses in Tibet and elsewhere in China.

Infanticide, China and Tibet

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement regarding his investigation into the practice of infanticide, in China and Tibet, of babies born without state permission.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd *[holding answer 25 October 1993]:* We are aware of allegations of infanticide in China, but have obtained no further information which enables us to relate these allegations to Chinese Government policy.

PRIME MINISTER

Pensions

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Prime Minister what recent representations he has from the north west assembly of the Pensioners Liaison Forum about retirement pensions; what reply he is sending; and if he will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I have received a petition. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security will be arranging for a reply to be sent on my behalf.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Eurolunacies

Mr. Knapman: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will provide a full list of the developments referred to as Eurolunacies in page 3 of his booklet, "The European Community: Facts and Fairytales".

Mr. Goodlad: As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs has said in the foreward to the booklet, everyone has their own favourite story about the European Community. We all have our own ideas of things that we think the Community should not be doing. We have set out in the booklet some genuine examples of apparently unnecessary or even ridiculous Community rules, which we describe as "Eurolunacies".

Sudan

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what the British Government are doing to ensure that human rights are respected in Sudan and that the current violation of human rights is stopped;

(2) what the British Government are doing to further the peace process in Sudan and to bring the fighting to an end.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on 18 October at column 79 to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Godsiff).

Nuclear Non-proliferation

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the implications of the presentation on regional nuclear non-proliferation in south and east Asia made by the United States Secretary of State to the annual meeting of Foreign Ministers of the Association of South-East Asian Nations and their dialogue partners in Singapore on 26 July for the security of Hong Kong; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The United States Secretary of State devoted part of his statement at the Association of South East Asian Nations post-ministerial conference in July to regional security issues. He stressed the United States commitment to nuclear non-proliferation and said that the United States would continue to work with the nations of the region to maintain a peaceful and secure Asia. The achievement of their objective is in the interests of the whole region, including Hong Kong.

Embassies

Mr. Jenkin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will estimate the savings made to his budget by establishing United Kingdom diplomatic representation to the former Soviet republics in the embassies of Germany instead of establishing completely independent representation.

Mr. Goodlad: British diplomatic representation is collocated with the German embassies in Kazakhstan, Almaty, and Belarus, Minsk. The fact of being collocated with another embassy does not circumscribe the independence of our missions.

In Almaty, the United Kingdom pays £35,000 per annum rent and our share of refurbishment costs will be around £55,000. If we had occupied separate accommodation, rental costs would have been up to £80,000 per annum excluding refurbishment costs, which would have been considerable.

In Minsk, our collocation in the existing accommodation is on a temporary basis as both embassies require additional space. A FCO estate surveyor is currently in Minsk and will assess the options. Savings cannot yet be estimated.

In addition to savings on rent, there should be further savings arising from collocation from the sharing of support staff and maintenance costs.

Subsidiarity

Mr. Jenkin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the EC directives that the Government believe should be *(a)* amended or *(b)* repealed as a result of the application of subsidiarity.

Mr. Goodlad: It is not our intention to publish such a list. We have, however, fed ideas into the Commission at several stages as a contribution to the report that it is preparing on subsidiarity for the Brussels European Council in December. The Commission report will, of course, be published.

Iraq

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many missions to Iraq have now been conducted by the United Nations Special Commission, pursuant to United Nations Security Council resolution; if he will place in the Library copies of the published reports of the UNSCOM visits; and if he will make a statement on progress made during the most recent visit to Iraq.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The United Nations Special Commission on Iraq has completed 62 missions to Iraq. The 63rd is at present in Iraq. Detailed reports of individual UNSCOM missions are not published. However, general accounts of progress on the location and elimination of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction are published by the United Nations every six months. The last of these (S/25977) was issued on 27 June. In addition, ad hoc reports are issued throughout the year covering significant developments, for example S/26571 on Ambassador Ekeus' recent trip to Baghdad. The same applied to reports of the IAEA, eg S/26584 on Iraqi obligations in the nuclear field. All these documents have been placed in the Library of the House.

The present mission to Iraq, UNSCOM 63, is proceeding so far without hindrance. Iraq however has still to satisfy the Security Council that it has provided

"full, final and complete disclosure of all aspects of its programme to develop weapons of mass destruction"

as required by United Nations resolutions.

Dr. John Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action he has taken in the light of reports of recent chemical attacks by the Government of Iraq on its own population.

Mr. Hurd: We are trying to establish whether reports of the use of chemical weapons in Iraq are true.

Dr. John Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will raise in the United Nations Security Council the question of recent chemical attacks by the Government of Iraq on its own population.

Mr. Hurd: We are investigating reports that Iraq has used chemical weapons. We would raise in the Security Council any evidence of actions in contravention of Security Council resolution 687.

Dr. John Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what evidence he has received in respect of recent chemical attacks by the Government of Iraq on its own population.

Mr. Hurd: An Iraqi opposition group, the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) has told us that the Iraqi army has attacked villages in southern Iraq using chemical weapons. We as yet have no firm evidence of such attacks.

EDUCATION

Ethnic Minorities

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assessment he has carried out of the educational implications in London of reductions in section 11 funding.

Mr. Robin Squire: Provision for the education of pupils from ethnic groups in London is primarily a matter for schools and local education authorities. Section 11

funding supports existing projects in the 1993-94 financial year at the grant rate of 75 per cent. of salary costs. For the subsequent two years, section 11 grant is available to support existing projects and posts at the reduced rates of 57 per cent. and 50 per cent. respectively. The Department is aware of the valuable contribution which section 11 grant makes to meeting the particular needs of ethnic minority pupils in London and will monitor the effects of the reduction in the rate of support for future years using the services of Ofsted.

Training

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations he has had from the chairman of the Manchester training and enterprise council in regard to the future of work-based training for 16 to 19-year-olds; what reply he is sending; what action he is taking; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Boswell: The chairman of the Manchester TEC wrote about these matters on 4 October and I have already replied to him. The Government are committed to increasing the participation and attainment of young people in both education and training. That will be achieved through a combination of GCE/GCSE qualifications, national vocational qualifications and general NVQs, including the new vocational A-level. The Government want school, college or work-based routes to be available to young people so that individuals can choose the best route for them.

Dearing Report

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will give details of the representations he has had from teachers' unions regarding the Dearing report; and if he will list the unions which have declared a refusal to carry out the revised tests.

Mr. Robin Squire: My right hon. Friend has recently met representatives of the teachers' unions to discuss the Dearing report. While the declared policy of the National Union of Teachers, the National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers and the Association of Teachers and Lecturers is that a boycott is still in place, the unions have indicated that they wish to consider their position in the light of the sample tests and other guidance that have been sent to schools by the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority this month.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many grant-maintained schools he expects to be operating by April 1994.

Mr. Robin Squire: We have never set targets for numbers of grant-maintained schools, nor do we intend to. Seeking self-governing status is a matter for parents at individual schools, and statutory proposals to my right hon. Friend are decided on their merits.

There are currently 693 self-governing schools, and an additional 63 have been approved for incorporation by April 1994. A further 221 schools have applications in the pipeline, and a significant number of others may be expected to arrange ballots between now and April.

Further Education Colleges

Mr. Bill Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) to what extent the 1993-94 budget of each of the further education colleges with in excess of 4,000 full-time equivalent students, has been adversely affected by changes in local education authority policy on the level of funds devoted to discretionary awards;

(2) to what extent Sheffield college's 1993-94 gross budget has been affected by Sheffield city council's decision to cease paying the course fees of adult disadvantaged students; and if he will take steps to ensure that the college's 1993-94 gross budget is protected against the consequences of Sheffield city council's decision.

Mr. Boswell: The allocation of funding to colleges in the FE sector is a matter for the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC). The council's aim in its allocations for 1993-94 is to secure stability of funding for colleges by comparison with their 1992-93 net budgets and to provide the opportunity for growth in student numbers in line with my right hon. Friend's initiative to encourage 25 per cent. growth in the further education sector over the three year period to 1995-96. The FEFC's allocations to individual colleges will not be affected one way or the other by local education authorities' decisions on discretionary awards.

Mr. Bill Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) what was the proportion of students in receipt of discretionary local education authority funded fee remission at each of the further education colleges with in excess of 4,000 full-time equivalent students, for the academic year 1992-93; and whether discretionary awards were included in the college's delegated budget or treated as income in each case;

(2) how he intends to ensure that students enrolled on further education courses are not adversely affected by local education authorities' decisions to reduce their expenditure on discretionary awards.

Mr. Boswell: The information requested for 1992-93 is not collected centrally. Tuition fees paid by LEAs as part of discretionary awards would normally have been treated as college income. The provision of discretionary awards is a matter for local education authorities. The early results of a national survey of LEA discretionary awards—supported by the Department, and yet to be completed—show total numbers of awards continuing to rise: both numbers and total spending are above the levels of three years ago. Within that overall picture, some LEAs may be reducing their provision or altering their priorities: that is a matter for them.

Funding Agency for Schools

Mr. Don Foster: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement on the procedure adopted in the appointment of the head of the Funding Agency for Schools and the timetable for further appointments to the agency.

Mr. Robin Squire: The Education Act 1993 provides for the chairman of the Funding Agency for Schools (FAS) to be appointed by the Secretary of State. My right hon. Friend appointed Sir Christopher Benson, chairman-designate of the FAS on 14 October.

The post of chief executive was widely advertised nationally and a formal interview panel has met to consider

short-listed candidates. My right hon. Friend expects to announce an appointment soon. He also expects to announce the full membership of the agency in the new year.

EMPLOYMENT

Commissioner for the Rights of Trade Union Members

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was *(a)* the total cost of the office of the Commissioner for the Rights of Trade Union Members, *(b)* the numbers of staff employed, *(c)* the number of cases investigated during the past 12 months and *(d)* the cost per case investigated.

Miss Widdecombe: In the 12 months to 31 March 1993, the total net cost of all the commissioner's activities was £433,142. She employed five staff, whose costs are included within that figure. The commissioner has no powers to investigate cases, but deals with applications for financial assistance with certain court proceedings. During the 1992-93 year, the commissioner's office dealt with nearly 500 inquiries, and 50 formal applications for her assistance.

HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION

Parliamentary Works

Mr. Steen: To ask the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission what has been the change in members of staff in the Parliamentary Works Directorate since January.

Mr. Beith: Since January there has been no net change in the number of staff in post in the Parliamentary Works Directorate, although a temporary chartered building surveyor has been brought in to cover for a member of staff on long-term sick leave.

Mr. Steen: To ask the Chairman of the Accommodation and Works Commission if he will list the works started or completed during the summer recess in *(a)* the Palace of Westminster and *(b)* the parliamentary outbuildings together with the cost, or estimated cost of each item; and if he will list the programme of works for the next six months.

Mr. Ray Powell: This is a matter for the Director of Works and I have asked him to write to the hon. Member.

Asbestos

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission if he will make a statement on the discovery and programme of removal of asbestos in the main Library during the summer recess; on how many occasions asbestos contamination has been identified in the Palace of Westminster; and what risks to the health of the people working in the Palace are posed by asbestos.

Mr. Beith: Like most older buildings, the Palace of Westminster contains asbestos, which was used for insulation purposes. Since it became known that exposure to asbestos dust can be dangerous the Parliamentary Works Directorate, and its predecessors, have sought to follow strictly the guidelines and procedures laid down by the Health and Safety Executive. An asbestos register is maintained recording the locations both where asbestos is known to remain—usually because it is inaccessible—and from which it has been removed; only firms on the approved list are used for asbestos removal work and the work is carried out in the approved manner.

It is the practice, whenever possible, to remove asbestos found when undertaking maintenance and other works services. As a result, the ceiling voids and floor spaces used for cables and other services are now clear of asbestos. The work carried out this summer, in connection with POLIS 3, was in areas which had not been cabled previously to any significant extent. Hence the discovery of a considerable amount of asbestos. The professional assessment is that the asbestos had not been disturbed for some considerable time, but should not therefore have presented any risks in the past or present any for the future. However, a full record has been made of the discoveries and will be kept on the register.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Invalidity Benefit

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people in Blyth Valley were receiving invalidity benefit in *(a)* 1991, *(b)* 1992 and *(c)* 1993; and if he will break down the figures by sex and standard age range.

Mr. Scott: The administration of invalidity benefit is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available, a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Mr. Michael Bichard to Mr. Ronnie Campbell, dated 26 October 1993:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency it is my responsibility to answer questions raised about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security, asking how many people in Blyth Valley were receiving Invalidity Benefit (IVB) in *(a)* 1991, *(b)* 1992 and *(c)* 1993; and if he will break down the figures by sex and standard age range.

The information you require is not available in the format requested. This is because statistics are not maintained by District/Benefit Offices for recipients of IVB broken down by sex and age range.

However, it is possible to state the number of claimants to IVB at the last working day of April 1991, April 1992 and April 1993 in the Blyth Benefit Office, which deals with Blyth Valley.

You should note that although I have provided statistics for the Blyth Valley Benefit Office, that office's boundaries do not correspond with county or borough boundaries and the figures provided include some customers living in areas other than Blyth Valley.

(a) At the last working day of April 1991, there were a total of 4,106 people claiming IVB.

(b) At the last working day of April 1992, there were a total of 4,194 people claiming IVB.

(c) At the last working day of April 1993, there were a total of 4,740 people claiming IVB.

I should explain that these figures include a small minority of customers who have claimed but are not receiving IVB. For

instance, where customers have an underlying entitlement to IVB which has been extinguished by the payment of a higher overlapping benefit.

These figures were obtained from a 100 per cent. clerical count of cases in the Benefit office.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the *Official Report* and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Mrs. S. E. Green

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the case of Mrs. S. E. Green, national insurance No. TW 44 81 53 C; and for what reasons she was not informed in time of the possibility of making additional contributions.

Mr. Hague: The administration of retirement pension is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Mr. Michael Bichard to Dr. Lynne Jones, dated 26 October 1993:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency it is my responsibility to answer questions raised about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security, asking for what reasons Mrs. S. E. Green, National Insurance No. TW 44 81 53 C, was not informed in time of the possibility of making additional contributions.

I can confirm that Mrs. Green did not meet the minimum qualification for Retirement Pension. On 21 May 1951 she exercised here right as a married woman to pay reduced rate National Insurance contributions and she reaffirmed this choice on 22 August 1960 and 12 April 1962. Each time Mrs. Green notified the Department of her choice she would have completed form CF9 and signed the declaration that she had read leaflet NI1 or had had the contents explained to her. This leaflet sets out the position of married women with regard to National Insurance and explains the effect non payment of contributions has on title to benefit.

I should explain that whilst an election not to pay contributions is in force the woman has no right to pay any Class 3 contributions to improve her pension entitlement.

It is, of course, open to a woman to cancel her choice at any time, although having done so, she cannot later return to paying reduced rate contributions. An application to cancel a choice must be made in writing in advance of the date the change is to take place.

As Mrs. Green attained age 60 on 12 September 1987/the last date for which contributions would count for pension purposes in her case was 5 April 1987. She would therefore have had to cancel her contribution choice before that date to allow any subsequent voluntary contributions to count towards her pension. However, the Department's records show that Mrs. Green did not make an enquiry until August 1987 at which time it was too late to change her choice of contribution.

The Department does all it can to ensure that contributors are aware of their responsibilities and pension rights through its leaflets, public notices, local radio, the press and the freephone advice line. However, the onus is on the individual to make sure that they have the information they need about the scheme to maintain their contribution records, protect their benefit rights and claim benefit at the proper time.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the Official Report and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Benefits

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people in Blyth Valley are receiving income support, family credit and housing benefit; and what percentage of the Blyth Valley population this represents.

Mr. Burt: The administration of income support is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member with such information as is available and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Mr. Michael Bichard to Mr. Ronnie Campbell, dated 26 October 1993:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking how many people in Blyth Valley are receiving Income Support, Family Credit and Housing Benefit; and what percentage of the population this represents.

The information you require is not available in the format requested and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost. This is because statistics relating to Family Credit and Income Support are collected by Benefits Agency Branch Office and for Housing Benefit by Local Authority, whose boundaries do not correspond exactly with those of parliamentary constituencies, as requested. To obtain all the relevant information it would be necessary to examine all records in the offices covering the Blyth Valley constituency.

However, I can tell you that, as at 31 August 1993, there were 10,309 recipients of income support and, as at 1 October 1993, 1,246 recipients of Family Credit in the area covered by the Benefits Agency's Blyth Branch Office.

The Blyth Valley constituency is served by Blyth Valley and Wansbeck Local Authorities. For 1992 the average number of Housing Benefits recipients for Blyth Valley was 7,177 and for Wansbeck 6,302. The figures quoted are averages of the quarterly counts of Housing Benefits cases. It is not possible however to state what percentage of the Blyth Valley population this represents as the Office of Population and Censuses have advised that population estimates are not made by parliamentary constituency. The official census of 1991 showed that there were 79,584 people living in the county district of Blyth Valley.

The information has been obtained from the Family Credit Unit, the Analytical Services Division and the Income Support Management Information Statistics.

I hope this information is helpful. A copy will appear in the Official Report and a copy will also be placed in the Library.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Close Companies

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of cost to the Exchequer in terms of national insurance not paid because of the establishment of close companies following the abolition of the investment income surcharge in 1984 and in each year since 1984.

Mr. Dorrell: No such estimates have been made.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many close companies paid advance corporation tax in *(a)* 1985 and *(b)* 1992.

Mr. Dorrell: I regret that close companies cannot be identified separately in payment records of advance corporation tax.

Tax Avoidance

Mr. Mandelson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps he has taken, or proposes to take, to withhold Government business and contracts from financial, legal and accounting bodies involved in advising or creating offshore vehicles for the avoidance of United Kingdom taxation.

Sir John Cope: The grounds on which Departments decide to do business with any firm will depend upon the individual circumstances of each appointment.

In general, Departments seek to ensure that there are no matters which could reduce a firm's effectiveness in performing the services for which it is to be appointed and that there are no matters which make it inappropriate for Government to have business dealings with the firm.

Jet Engine Fuel

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what research has been undertaken by his Department on the treatment of jet engine fuel for taxation purposes within other EC countries; and what information he has on the revenue accrued from this form of taxation.

Sir John Cope: The treatment of jet engine fuel for taxation purposes within the EC is set out in relevant EC directives, particularly in article 8(1) of EC directive 92/81/EEC which provides for the exemption from excise duty of such fuel for the purposes of air navigation other than private pleasure flying.

Under article 8(4), which permits further exemptions or reductions, Belgium, Denmark, France, Ireland, Italy and Portugal are authorised to apply air navigation concessions.

The EC sixth VAT directive restricts VAT relief for the supply of aviation fuel to commercial aircraft operating on international routes.

No revenue accrues in the United Kingdom from excise duty on jet fuel. We have no information on such revenue accrued in other member states.

Tobacco and Alcohol Imports

Mr. Mills: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what action he is taking with Her Majesty's Customs to monitor vehicles making frequent trips to France to import tobacco products and alcohol for personal use.

Sir John Cope: With the advent of the single market, Customs no longer carry out routine fiscal checks at intra-EC borders and do not routinely monitor the movement of private vehicles between the United Kingdom and France. Customs are, however, taking measures to combat the importation of goods ostensibly for personal consumption but intended for sale without payment of United Kingdom duty. They are gathering intelligence information which can be rapidly disseminated to support their efforts to seek out and prosecute those who sell excisable goods here without paying United Kingdom duty.

Personal Taxation

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms Harman) on 27 May, *Official Report*, column *666*, what is his estimate for the number of people taxed on *(a)* PAYE, *(b)* schedule D and *(c)* schedule E basis and of the tax yield for each category in 1993-94.

Mr. Dorrell: Available estimates for 1993-94 are as follows:

Source of income	*Number of individual taxpayers*[1] *(million)*	*Tax yield*[2] *(£ billion)*
PAYE and other Schedule E	23·1	51·4
Schedule D[3]	3·4	9·1

[1] A taxpayer with both a Schedule E and Schedule D source of income is included in both rows of the table.
[2] The tax yield represents the tax liability on each type of income where that income is regarded as the top slice of a person's income.
[3] Excluding interest taxed at source.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what would be the effect on the number of higher rate taxpayers in the financial year 1994-95 of *(a)* indexation, *(b)* freezing the main personal allowances, *(c)* freezing personal allowances and the higher rate threshold, *(d)* raising personal allowances by 5 per cent. more than indexation and *(e)* raising personal allowances by 10 per cent. more than indexation, giving figures separately for each main allowance and a total for main allowances;

(2) what would be the effect on the number of taxpayers in the financial year 1994-95 of *(a)* indexation of the main personal allowances, *(b)* freezing the main personal allowances, *(c)* increasing allowances by 5 per cent. more than indexation and *(d)* increasing allowances by 10 per cent. more than indexation, giving figures separately for each main personal allowance and a total for all main allowances.

Mr. Dorrell: Latest estimates for 1994-95 are shown in the table.

Millions

		Taxpayers *Number*	*Of which liable at higher rate*
(i)	Indexation	25·0	2·3
(ii)	Freezing the personal allowance	25·2	2·3
(iii)	Freezing the married couple's allowance[1]	25·1	2·3
(iv)	Freezing all main allowances	25·2	2·3
(v)	Freezing all main allowances and the basic rate limit	25·2	2·4
(vi)	Raising the personal allowance by 5 per cent. more than indexation	24·6	2·2
(vii)	Raising the married couple's allowance by 5 per cent. more than indexation	25·0	2·3
(viii)	Raising all allowances by 5 per cent. more than indexation	24·5	2·2
(ix)	Raising the personal allowance by 10 per cent. more than indexation	24·2	2·2
(x)	Raising the married couple's allowance by 10 per cent. more than indexation	24·9	2·3
(xi)	Raising all allowances by 10 per cent. more than indexation	24·1	2·2

[1] References to the married couple's allowance include the effect of changing the additional personal allowance and the widow's bereavement allowance.

Self-employment

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate for 1992-93 the number of self-employed who will pay no income tax, giving figures separately for those with gross incomes *(a)* under £5,000 a year, *(b)* between £5,000 and £10,000 a year, *(c)* between £10,000 and £15,000 a year, *(d)* between £15,000 and £20,000 a year and *(e)* over £20,000 a year.

Mr. Dorrell: There are about 870,000 self employed with no income tax liability in 1992-93. Of these, 720,000 have gross income of under £5,000, 150,000 have gross income between £5,000 and £10,000 and 3,000 have gross income of over £10,000.

The estimates are based on the projection of the latest annual survey of personal incomes and are provisional. The number with gross income above £10,000 is too small to allow any further breakdown.

Taxpayers

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) pursuant to his answers of 2 April, *Official Report*, column *477*, what is his most recent estimate of the number of taxpayers paying tax at the 20 per cent. rate;

(2) pursuant to his answer of 2 April, *Official Report*, column *475*, what is his most recent estimate of the number of taxpayers.

Mr. Dorrell: Latest estimates for 1993-94 based on projection from the 1991-92 survey of personal incomes are given in the table. All taxpayers pay some tax at the 20 per cent. rate.

1993-94 Taxpayers

Thousands

	Male				*Female*				
	Single		*Married*		*Single*		*Married*		
	Aged under 65	*Aged 65 and over*	*Aged under 65*	*Aged 65 and over*	*Aged under 65*	*Aged 65 and over*	*Aged under 65*	*Aged 65 and over*	*All taxpayers*
Lower rate taxpayers	780	200	480	360	870	520	1,400	260	4,900
Basic rate taxpayers	4,200	260	6,300	560	2,800	440	3,200	230	18,000
Higher rate taxpayers	330	30	1,100	70	100	30	140	10	1,800
All taxpayers	5,300	490	7,900	990	3,800	980	4,800	490	24,800

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 2 April, *Official Report*, column *477*, what is his most recent estimate of the number of taxpayers and non-taxpayers, including a breakdown for *(a)* lone parent families and *(b)* (i) working and (ii) non-working people.

Mr. Dorrell: The latest estimates of the numbers of taxpayers and non-taxpayers for 1993-94 are as follows:

	Taxpayers (millions)	*Non-taxpayers (millions)*
Working[1]	21·6	3·9
Non-working	3·2	17·4
Total	24·8	21·3
Of which lone parents	0·6	0·7

[1] Employees and self-employed.

Actors

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy to restore schedule D status for actors working in theatres.

Mr. Dorrell: Employment status for tax purposes of all individuals, including actors, is determined by general law and the facts of their individual circumstances. We have no plans to change this.

Residual Holdings and Debt

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what new expenditure has been incurred recently in order to finance the disposal of residual holdings and debt; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dorrell: New expenditure has been incurred to cover:

(i) the costs of advisers, estimated at £5,000, in connection with the placing of Her Majesty's Treasury's Rights Issue Shares in the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company plc (MDHC);

(ii) minor residual expenditure, estimated at £14,000, in connection with the Treasury's 1992 sale of privatised companies' debt.

Parliamentary approval of this new expenditure will be sought in a winter supplementary estimate for Her Majesty's Treasury's sale of shares in British Telecommunications plc vote (class XVII, vote 17).

Pending that approval, repayable advances from the Contingencies Fund were sought to meet urgent expenditure estimated at £19,000.

Child Benefit

Sir Ralph Howell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the net saving which would be made by the abolition of child benefit after taking account of the extent to which those families in real need would have their income support increased by the same amount.

Mr. Burt: I have been asked to reply.

It is estimated that the saving arising from the abolition of child benefit net of income support, housing and council tax benefit offsets would be £4·25 billion in 1993-94.

VAT

Mr. Cormack: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the yield from VAT on domestic fuel at *(a)* 17½ per cent., *(b)* 8 per cent. and *(c)* 5 per cent.

Sir John Cope *[holding answer 26 October 1993]:* The Financial Statement and Budget Report gives an estimate of £930 million for the yield of 8 per cent. VAT on domestic fuel and power applied in 1994-95. The first full year of revenue at 17½ per cent. is 1996-97 when the

revenue is estimated to be £2,850 million. Table 9 of the publication, "Tax Ready Reckoner and Tax Reliefs", implies that the revenue from 5 per cent. VAT on domestic fuel and power in 1993-94 would be £700 million though this estimate makes no allowance for behavioural changes.

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of the likely revenue income from imposition of VAT on books, newspapers and other publications; what calculation he has made of the possible effect upon employment in the printing, publishing and allied industries as a result of imposition of VAT on those items; and what estimate he has made of the cost to the Exchequer of such job losses in terms of benefits payable, loss of pay-as-you-earn and national insurance contributions and Government contributions to redundancy payments.

Sir John Cope *[holding answer 26 October 1993]:* Table 9 of the Treasury's "Tax Ready Reckoner and Tax Reliefs" provides an estimate of £1,100 million as the cost of zero-rating books, newspapers and magazines in 1993-94. This estimate makes no allowance for the likely behavioural response to applying the standard rate of VAT to these items. The consquences for employment and second order effects are difficult to estimate with accuracy.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Moated Sites

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what action his Department is currently taking to record and preserve moated sites of archaeological interest; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: There are no confirmed moated sites in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list *(a)* the surveys and *(b)* excavations that are currently being carried out of moated sites of archaeological interest.

Mr. Atkins: No surveys or excavations of moated sites are in progress.

Sour Gas

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the power stations which have been authorised to use sour gas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: No power station in Northern Ireland has been authorised to use sour gas.

Royal Ulster Constabulary

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, pursuant to his answer of 14 July, *Official Report*, column *579*, when he hopes to make a report in respect of the result of the review being carried out by the Royal Ulster Constabulary into its guidelines concerning informants and agents; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: Consideration of the relevant issues is still continuing.

Nurses

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what surveys he has carried out to determine the number of nurses working in Northern Ireland who were born in the Irish Republic; and what percentage this represents of the total.

Mr. Ancram: No such surveys have been carried out.

Potatoes

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is now his estimate of the tonnage of *(a)* seed potatoes of each variety and *(b)* ware potatoes by market description, grown in Northern Ireland in 1992; what tonnages of each were sold for the home and foreign seed and for human consumption by category; and what are the differences between the present estimates and 1992's forecasts made at various dates by his Department.

Mr. Ancram: The final estimate of marketable potatoes produced in Northern Ireland in 1992 is 282,000 tonnes. As regards the production of seed potatoes by variety I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer given him on 2 April at column *447*. The estimated use of ware potatoes produced in Northern Ireland in 1992 is given in the following table:

	Tonnes ('000)
Human consumption	111
Internal processing	24
Sales outside Northern Ireland	31
Used for planting	15

Note: The information cannot be disaggregated further as requested.

Utilisation of the 1992 crop of seed potatoes is as follows:

	Tonnes ('000s)
Certified seed for planting in Northern Ireland	20
Certified seed sold to Great Britain	8
Certified seed sold outside the United Kingdom	20

Disaggregation by variety of sales (in tonnes) to Great Britain and outside the United Kingdom is provided in the following table:

Variety	*Great Britain*	*Outside the United Kingdom*
Arran Banner	—	3,514
Desiree	380	7,318
Home Guard	553	786
Kerr's Pink	—	1,508
King Edward	152	1,942
Pentland Dell	1,363	681
Record	33	447
Others, including protected varieties	5,493	3,396
TOTAL	7,974	19,592

The final estimates differ from earlier estimates in two respects—namely the total marketable yield and the area planted were adjusted downwards. The initial estimate of total marketable yield of 343,000 tonnes was reduced to 304,000 tonnes to take account of estimated harvesting

losses. The total area was reduced from 11,500 to 10,800 hectares as a result of revised census methodology. The latter change resulted in the estimated total marketable yield being further reduced to 282,000 tonnes.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many farmers received sums under the potato aid scheme for 1992's crop; what tonnage was *(a)* accepted and *(b)* had aid paid on them under that scheme; and what was the total sum expended.

Mr. Ancram: Payments were made to 523 growers; 41,793 tonnes were provisionally accepted under the scheme and 39,476 tonnes were purchased. Expenditure totalled £1,660,968.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is his estimate of the tonnage of *(a)* seed and *(b)* ware potatoes grown in Northern Ireland in the current year.

Mr. Ancram: This information will not be available until mid-December.

Overseas Students

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is his estimate of the number of students from Northern Ireland who are presently attending courses of third-level education in Great Britain.

Mr. Ancram: The figure is 11,500.

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is his estimate of the number of students from Northern Ireland who are presently attending courses of third-level education in each EC country; and what was the cost of such students to his Department and to education and library boards in each of the last three years.

Mr. Ancram: Information on the numbers of Northern Ireland students attending courses of third level education in each EC country is available only in respect of those students who are in receipt of publicly funded awards. The following tables show the number of such students and an estimate of associated costs.

Number of students

	1991-92	*1992-93*	*1993-94*
Belgium (postgraduate)	1	1	1
Italy (postgraduate)	1	1	1
Republic of Ireland (postgraduate)	10	13	15
Republic of Ireland (undergraduate)	424	686	887

Costs (£'000)

	1991-92	*1992-93*	*1993-94*
Department of Education (postgraduate)	77	100	119
Education and Library Boards (undergraduate)	1,630	2,714	3,541

Labour Statistics

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is his estimate of the number of persons from each EC country presently employed in Northern Ireland; and what statistics as to such numbers are collected by his Department or are available from the records of the Fair Employment Agency.

Mr. Atkins: Comprehensive information on the number of persons from each EC country presently employed in Northern Ireland is not available. The latest available information is that obtained from the Northern Ireland 1991 census of population. This relates to the country of birth of those in employment usually resident in Northern Ireland on 21 April 1991 and is as follows:

Country of birth	*[1]Persons in employment*
Belgium	34
Denmark	21
France	161
Germany	864
Greece	12
Italy	76
Luxembourg	2
Netherlands	96
Portugal	23
Republic of Ireland	12,007
Spain	42

[1] These figures include persons on government training and employment schemes.

Catering College, Portrush

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many students from *(a)* Northern Ireland, *(b)* Great Britain and *(c)* each other EC country are presently attending the hotel and catering college at Portrush.

Mr. Ancram: The information is as follows:

Country of domicile	*Number enrolled*
Northern Ireland	276
Great Britain	3
Republic of Ireland	146
Other EC countries	0

Education

Rev. William McCrea: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) if he will give the names of those who advise the Department of Education about the national curriculum and associated matters and in each case the body which they represent;

(2) how many people drawn from the primary school sector of education are on the Department's advisory team.

Mr. Ancram: The Northern Ireland Curriculum Council, whose function is to advise the Department on all matters connected with the Northern Ireland curriculum, consists of a chairman and 17 members. Their names, and the bodies and companies to which they belong (if any) are listed below. The members do not serve in a representative capacity—rather, all are selected for their individual knowledge and experience in the educational field. Members marked with an asterisk were chosen for their expertise in the primary school sector.

Professor D. McCloy (Chairman)
Director, Belfast Institute, Further and Higher Education

Mr. D. F. Adair
Head of Group Personnel, Ulster Bank Ltd.

Mr. A. Bremner
Controller of Programming, Ulster Television plc

Mrs. M. Breslin
Partner, Total Engineering, Londonderry

Mr. S. Costello
Manager, Marks and Spencer plc, Sprucefield

Mrs. D. A. Frazer
Vice-Principal, Fermanagh College of Education, Enniskillen

Professor J. S. Fulton
Director, School of Education, Queen's University, Belfast

Mr. E. Gamble
Principal, Beechlawn Special School, Hillsborough

Sr. Genevieve O'Farrell
Retired Principal, St. Louise's Comprehensive College, Belfast

Miss A. Graham
Principal, Cambridge House Girls', Ballymena

*Mr. D. E. McElroy**
Governor Training Officer, Southern Education and Library Board

*Mr. N. McLaughlin**
Principal, St. Anne's Primary School, Londonderry

Mrs. F. McMahon
Principal, St. Mary's High School, Newry

Mr. T. Nolan
Chief Executive, South-Eastern Education and Library Board

Dr. R. J. Rodgers
Retired Principal, Stranmillis College, Belfast

Mrs. J. E. Ruddock
Managing Director, Education Company Ltd., Belfast

Mr. J. Thompson
Governor Training Officer, Western Education and Library Board

Mr. J. Young
Principal, Sullivan Upper Grammar School, Holywood.

Inspectors

Rev. William McCrea: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many inspectors are currently employed by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, Northern Ireland and how many were employed five years ago.

Mr. Ancram: There were 682 inspectors employed in 1988 and 490 in 1993. This includes a small number of officers who would not be regarded as wholly carrying out inspection duties.

Terrorist Suspects

Mr. Jim Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he expects the statutory codes of practice in respect of terrorist suspects to come into operation.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I have today laid before Parliament the draft codes of practice for the detention, treatment, questioning and identification of terrorist suspects in Northern Ireland, as I am required to do by section 61(3) of the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1991. I intend to make an order which will bring the codes into opertion from midnight on 31 December 1993. This short delay is to enable the RUC to ensure that all officers are fully conversant with the new codes of practice before they come into operation.

The codes, which will replace part IV of the non-statutory "Guides to the Emergency Powers", have been based heavily on the Police and Criminal Evidence (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 (PACE) codes of practice which apply to non-terrorist suspects. Adjustments have been made where necessary to reflect the relevant emergency legislation.

The purpose of the codes is to enhance still further the already extensive safeguards available to those detained under the terrorism provisions and to provide clear and workable guidelines for the police.

SCOTLAND

Local Government

8. **Mr. McAvoy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many representations he has had regarding the proposed local government boundaries published in his White Paper.

31. **Sir David Steel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received following publication of proposals for changes in local government boundaries.

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many letters he has received from the general public about his proposals for the reform of local government.

Mr. Lang: Since the publication of the White Paper, "Shaping the Future—The New Councils" in July, about 1,300 individual letters commenting on the reorganisation proposals have been received. In addition, about 25,000 post cards, pro forma letters and petition signatures have been submitted.

14. **Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he is taking to improve the quality of local government in Scotland.

Mr. Lang: The creation of single-tier local government, changes to the internal management arrangements of authorities, the extension of compulsory competitive tendering and a range of other Government intiatives are all expected to improve the quality of local government in Scotland.

Edinburgh Royal Infirmary

15. **Dr. Strang:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the proposed new Edinburgh royal infirmary.

Mr. Stewart: I understand that Lothian health board has almost completed consideration of its strategy for the provision of acute services and will submit its proposals to public consultation shortly. My right hon. Friend looks forward to seeing the proposals but cannot comment on them in detail until public consultation is complete and the board's proposals are formally submitted to him for approval.

Scottish Enterprise

16. **Mr. Ernie Ross:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last met Scottish Enterprise to discuss its training budget.

Mr. Stewart: My right hon. Friend and I met regularly with the chairman and chief executive of Scottish Enterprise, where training budgets is one of a number of issues discussed.

"A Partnership for Good"

17. **Mr. Canavan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he has taken to assess public opinion on the White Paper, "Scotland in the Union: A Partnership for Good"; and what action he intends to take.

Mr. Lang: Responses to the White Paper, "Scotland in the Union: A Partnership for Good" have been generally very favourable. Many of the proposals in the White Paper have already been implemented and most will come into operation within the next few months.

Super-quarries

18. **Mr. Devlin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the environmental impact of super-quarries being sited in the highlands and islands.

Sir Hector Monro: Under the EC directive on the environment it is likely that all super-quarry proposals will require a formal environmental assessment. This must be carried out and considered by the planning authority before it reaches a view on any application.

Western General Hospital

19. **Mr. Chisholm:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the public response to the consultation exercise on the proposal that the Western general hospital become a trust.

Mr. Stewart: The majority of individuals and organisations who responded to the public consultation on the trust proposals for Lothian did so on a general rather than hospital specific basis. These responses, totalling 121, were carefully considered by my right hon. Friend before reaching his decisions on the applications.

Greenwich Mean Time

21. **Mr. Peter Bottomley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will estimate the total extra numbers of children and adults who have been injured or killed as a consequence of the use of Greenwich mean time for part of the year.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: It is estimated that total road casualties in Scotland might be reduced by just over 1 per cent. by the adoption of central European time, though the benefits would not be evenly spread with a possible increase in fatal and serious casualties in the northern half of the country.

Forestry

22. **Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to make an announcement about the future management of forestry woodlands.

Sir Hector Monro: Any announcement about the future management of Forestry Commission woodland would follow the conclusion of the work of the forestry review group, which is expected early next year. After receiving the group's advice, Ministers will need some time to consider it and decide what action, if any, should be taken.

27. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to conclude his inquiry into the Forestry Commission.

Sir Hector Monro: The forestry review group is still continuing its work, and expects to present its advice in the new year. Thereafter, Ministers will need some time to consider the advice, and decide what action, if any, should be taken.

New Towns

23. **Mr. Donohoe:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he will next meet the new towns development corporation boards to discuss the future of new towns.

Mr. Stewart: In the period between 1 June and 14 September this year I met with each corporation board. My right hon. Friend and I are due to meet the chairmen and senior officials of the five new town development corporations before the end of the year.

26. **Mr. Norman Hogg:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what progress has been made with the wind-up of the Scottish new town development corporations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: Since the orders providing for their wind-up were made on 24 February 1992, East Kilbride and Glenrothes development corporations have made significant progress in winding-up their affairs. Full details of progress to 31 March 1993 are contained in reports on wind-up which were published by the corporations in July along with their annual reports for that year. Significant further progress has been made since 1 April and will be published in the reports to 31 March 1994.

The three other new towns are also progressing successfully towards maturity, as a direct result of the major investments by the public and private sectors in commercial and industrial development, infrastructure and housing; and investment will continue.

Scottish Enterprise and the local enterprise companies have matured rapidly since their establishment in 1991, and are now ready to undertake the leading economic development role for all areas within their boundaries, including the New Towns.

Indeed, the process of transferring from New Towns to Scottish Enterprise strategic sites and premises for inward investment is already under way. Development corporations, in consultation with Locate in Scotland and the local enterprise companies, are taking active steps to ensure the continuity of provision of inward investment services and the retention, in either the public or private sector, of the expertise of new towns personnel in these areas.

In order to maintain continuity and an orderly transition of responsibility, as well as maintaining Scotland's ability to compete for inward investment, Locate in Scotland will assume, with effect from 1 April 1994, overall responsibility for the marketing, publicity and promotion

of the new town areas as locations for inward investment. SEN and LIS will be responsible for ensuring the continuing provision of a supply of suitable property for inward investors in the new town areas. The Government's objective remains that the private sector should play a much more active part than hitherto in the process of property development for industrial and commercial purposes, and SEN with LIS will therefore liaise closely with the private sector to ensure a balanced, complementary and rational approach to industrial property provision across Scotland. In the interim, SEN will adopt the practice of the new towns to undertake a limited and controlled programme of building modern, high quality advance factory premises in order to meet the needs of inward investors.

I shall shortly be bringing forward a Bill to create a new structure for local government in Scotland from 1 April 1996. I believe it is desirable that the new unitary authorities should have, so far as possible, the full range of their responsibilities from the outset of their existence. The responsibilities which Cumbernauld, Livingston and Irvine currently hold for planning and owning and maintaining certain community and environmental assets will be transferred, along with appropriate resources, to the new unitary authorities from 1 April 1996.

The corporations are actively pursuing the Government's policy of housing tenure diversification and this will continue until wind-up. I remain committed to giving tenants the right to choose their successor landlord and ballots will take place in each of the towns during 1996 with transfers to the new landlords completed by 31 December 1996.

It is now quite clear that preparations for wind-up in the new towns are well advanced—much more so than could have been envisaged four years ago, even on the most ambitious timetable. As a result, I am today initiating formal consultation on my proposal that the wind-up periods for Cumbernauld, Livingston and Irvine should be 1 January 1994 to 31 December 1966. The proposed wind-up timetable for Cumbernauld is as set out in the 1989 White Paper, 'The Scottish New Towns—The Way Ahead' (CM 711); while my proposal accelerates by two and three years respectively the provisional timetable for Livingston and Irvine set out in the White Paper. A further period of three months to March 1997 is envisaged for final dissolution of the three corporations as legal entities.

As well as making good sense in practical terms, the accelerated timetable will preclude the need to spend significant additional resources on maintaining the original wind-up timetable. Agreed plans for infrastructure and other developments will be resourced. The rationalisation of inward investment-related activities, outlined above, also allows some scope for efficiency savings.

The new town development corporations have an impressive track record achieved by the commitment of their corporation boards, and the skill, energy and dedication of their staff. I believe that by their wind-up dates all of the corporations will have provided successful and mature towns, capable of further growth and development within the broader framework for local government and economic development. I look to the corporations and their staff to adapt their customary commitment and skills to ensure that the wind-up process is completed smoothly and on time.

In order to ensure the widest possible understanding of what the wind-up will mean in practical terms, a leaflet will be distributed to every household and business in each of the new towns.

Sunday Trading

24. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received about the Sunday trading law.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Since November 1992 my right hon. Friend has received nine representations, including two letters from one individual, supporting the recent Shops (Amendment) Bill; one letter against and one seeking assurance that the Government's Sunday trading proposals for England and Wales will not affect Scotland.

Environmental Objectives

25. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are his environmental objectives for Scotland during the coming year.

Sir Hector Monro: The environmental objectives for the Scottish Office are set out in the Scottish Office publication, "Serving Scotland's Needs", published in February 1993. They cover action to protect and enhance the environment of Scotland for current and future generations.

Drug Education

28. **Mr. Rathbone:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what action he plans to improve drug education in Scottish schools following the latest report on this subject from the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: We are studying the Council's report and the Government will be responding to it in due course. Meanwhile we have arranged for a copy of the report to be sent to every school in Scotland.

The drugs task force, established under the chairmanship of my noble and learned Friend the Minister of State will also be reviewing drug prevention and education activities in Scotland. As part of that review, the task force will be examining the current arrangements for drug education in schools and considering what further practical measures might be taken.

Home Insulation Grants

29. **Mr. Robert Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his policy on home insulation grants.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The home energy efficiency scheme provides grants for loft, tank and pipe insulation, draughtproofing and energy advice to low income households in receipt of certain social security benefits. Housing authorities have powers to give improvement and repairs grants to householders, which can include works for energy efficiency measures. Scottish Homes can also provide grants in certain designated areas.

Open Government

30. **Dr. Godman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what progress has been made to date under the terms of the open government initiative; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: My Department is taking steps to implement the proposals set out in the Government's recent White Paper, "Open Government" (Cm 2290). In particular, consideration is being given to the arrangements which will be needed to comply with the principles of the code of practice on access to Government information which comes into effect on 4 April 1994.

Meanwhile, thought is being given to the possible early release of blocks of records less than 30 years old; and a review of previously withheld material over 30 years old is being undertaken.

Regional Development Fund

32. **Sir David Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the total value of grants that Scotland has received from the European regional development fund since its inception.

Mr. Stewart: Since the inception of the European regional development fund in 1975, Scotland has benefited from awards totalling almost £1·2 billion.

A77

33. **Mr. McKelvey:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will report progress on upgrading the A77 between Kilmarnock and the M8.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Scottish Office and Strathclyde regional council are examining whether the planned new section of motorway from the existing link to the M8 in Glasgow to the south of Newton Mearns can be undertaken as a single joint contract. If this proves feasible and funds are available, tenders for this scheme could then be sought.

South of this, preparation work is underway for extending the motorway between Newton Mearns and Kilmarnock and it is hoped that draft statutory procedures will be published early next year.

House Condition Survey

34. **Mr. McAllion:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what discussions he has had with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities relating to the recent publication of the Scottish house condition survey.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: COSLA was represented on the survey steering group.

Services Provision

35. **Mr. McMaster:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next plans to meet representatives of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities to discuss the provision of services.

Mr. Stewart: My right hon. Friend and I will be meeting representatives of COSLA on Friday of this week as part of the normal consultation on local government finance matters.

Economy, Lanarkshire

36. **Dr. Reid:** To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received on the Lanarkshire economy.

Mr. Stewart: My right hon. Friend has received no recent representations regarding the Lanarkshire economy.

Trust Hospitals

Sir Russell Johnston: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the current situation as regards NHS trust hospitals in Scotland.

Mr. Stewart: Seventeen NHS trusts are currently operational in Scotland. Most of these have been in existence for only six months but evidence is already emerging to confirm the experience of Aberdeen Royal hospitals and South Ayrshire trusts who in their first year treated more patients then ever before, improved facilities, and provided services more suited to patient needs.

European Transport Links

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the Government's response to the main conclusions and recommendations contained in the Scottish Affairs Committee's first report of 1992-93, on the future of Scotland's transport links with Europe.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. Friend has today published "The Future of Scotland's Transport Links with Europe: Government Response" (Cm 2335). The Government have welcomed the consideration given by the Committee to this important subject. The Government's response reflects the very careful attention which has been paid to the Committee's recommendations. We have assured the Committee that its views will be taken fully into account by the Government in addressing future transport priorities.

Workplace Nurseries

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many workplace nursery facilities have been financially assisted from Government resources; and if he will list where each is located.

Mr. Stewart: The provision of welfare benefits at the workplace is a matter for the employer concerned. However, in the 1990 Budget we introduced tax relief under the normal business tax rules for an employer's day-to-day expenditure on child care provision for employees' children. This was a carefully targeted measure, aimed at encouraging employers to increase the supply of good quality nursery care and to help them meet expected changes in workforce patterns over the 1990s.

In Glasgow, Scottish Enterprise has provided £440,000 for the Glasgow development agency to establish The Partnership Nurseries Company which aims to provide additional nursery places in and around the city centre. Sixty-four such places will be provided initially when the company starts operations.

Private Rented Accommodation

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his estimate of the number of *(a)* young single people, *(b)* other single people, *(c)* couples and *(d)* couples with children who are looking for privately rented accommodation.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This information is not available.

NHS Trusts

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will place in the Library copies of the comments received on each application for NHS trust status;

(2) if he will list all those who have responded to each trust application, and give the number of responses in favour and against in each case.

Mr. Stewart: Copies of all comments received in response to the public consultations on the third wave NHS trust applications have been retained by the relevant health board and are available for inspection. In due course copies will also be available for inspection in the library of the Scottish Office at New St. Andrew's house, Edinburgh. Three hundred and eighty responses were made to the trust applications covered by the announcement by my noble and learned Friend the Minister of State on 15 October. The numbers expressing explicit support or opposition or offering comments are shown in the table.

Third wave NHS trust applicants (batch 1)—Public consultation responses

Trust applicant	*For*	*Against*	*Comments*
Dumfries and Galloway Acute and Maternity Services	9	7	8
Dundee Healthcare	6	7	10
East and Midlothian Edinburgh Child Health Edinburgh Priority Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh Western General	[1]17	[1]47	[1]57
Falkirk Royal Infirmary	8	5	41
Forth Valley Healthcare	6	5	18
Fife Healthcare	2	6	9
Greater Glasgow Community and Mental Health	6	9	29
Hairmyres and Stonehouse	3	10	7
Law	3	7	9
Perth and Kinross	7	7	9

[1] Responses cover all five Lothian applications.

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many representations he received *(a)* supporting and *(b)* opposing the applications for the establishment of an NHS trust for Mid and East Lothian.

Mr. Stewart: The public consultation covering the five Lothian trust applications attracted 121 responses. Most were general rather than hospital specific but 54 referred to the East and Mid Lothian application. Ten expressed explicit support, 26 opposition and 18 offered comments.

Farming

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will make a statement on the reason for, and consequences of, the discrepancy between the arable base area declared by his Department to the European Commission, and the actual area revealed through the integrated administration and control system on non-less favoured area farms in Scotland;

(2) what representations he has made to the European Commission about the impact of penalties to be imposed on arable farming businesses in the non-less favoured area of Scotland as a consequence of the failure of his Department to give accurate information about arable areas before 1993; and if he will make a statement on the outcome of such representations.

Sir Hector Monro: The original base areas provided on 16 September 1992 for the arable area payments scheme (AAPS) introduced this year were based on agricultural census data. In the light of information subsequently available from claims submitted under the AAPS as part of the integrated administration and control system it became apparent that these data understated the amount of land on which non-less favoured area rates of subsidy were payable.

As soon as it became apparent that an adjustment to the base area figures originally submitted to the Commission was necessary, my right hon. Friend personally pressed the Commission to agree to a technical adjustment of the Scottish base areas. The Commission has now agreed to the necessary technical adjustment of the less favoured area and the non-less favoured area elements within Scotland's total base area; this adjustment has not altered the total base area originally provided. My right hon. Friend and I are most grateful to the Commission for agreeing to that readjustment.

There remains an overshoot in the non-LFA area which reflects an increase in cropping in that area. The EC regulations governing the arable area payments scheme stipulate that the effect of this overshoot is to reduce arable aid payments within the non-LFA area proportionately in the current year and to increase the set-aside requirement in the coming year by the percentage by which the regional base has been exceeded, that increase being uncompensated.

My right hon. Friend and I fully recognise that any penalty will be unwelcome to arable farmers. We cannot however vary the total Scottish base area, which reflects data already formally submitted to the Commission; nor can we adjust the area base control regime in mid-stream. The scheme is designed to penalise areas in excess of base areas on which aid is claimed; and we cannot simply ignore the problem of over-cropping and the resultant penalty and additional one-year set-aside requirement.

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the basis for the non-less favoured area arable acreage declared by his Department to the European Commission; what was the difference between that figure and the actual figure in 1993; and what assessment he has made of his Department's analysis of figures provided by farmers in agricultural returns before 1993.

Sir Hector Monro: The non-less favoured area arable areas declared to the Commission for the purposes of the arable area payments scheme were based on those declared in the annual agricultural census averaged over the three years 1989 to 1991, adjusted to take account of the difference between the statistical basis of the census and the subsidy basis of the arable area payments scheme. The difference between the area claimed in 1993 and the area declared is 23,247 hectares. The arable area payments scheme regulations specify the basis on which declared areas had to be determined.

Lead Pipes

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects lead piping to have been removed from all domestic premises.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Private owners must decide for themselves if and when to replace lead plumbing within their homes. Grant assistance, at a preferential rate, may be available from the local authorities for such work. Availability is dependent on the priority the local authorities attach and the resources available to them and is also subject to the applicant's means. Local authorities determine their own priorities for their stock and the rate of removal depends on the priority they attach and the resources available to them.

Accommodation Agencies

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will make it his policy to license accommodation agencies.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: No.

Balerno Corridor

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has had from people in West Lothian, Midlothian, Prestonpans and Musselburgh about the Balerno corridor.

Mr. Stewart: We have received about 60 individual letters and around 400 postcards and petition signatures from these areas specifically about the proposed Lothians authority.

Learning Disabilities

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people with learning disabilities who need residential care are living at home with carers over 60 years old in each health board area.

Mr. Stewart: This information is not held centrally.

Scottish Enterprise Network

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many women have *(a)* entered newly-created jobs and *(b)* entered training for non-traditional jobs in the past year as a result of Scottish Enterprise Network's activities.

Mr. Stewart: The information requested is not available.

Inward Investment

Mr. Riddick: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what measures he is taking to encourage further inward investment into Scotland.

Mr. Stewart: The Scottish Office Industry Department is continually, through the work of Locate in Scotland, promoting Scotland as a location for inward investment. Also, earlier this month my right hon. Friend visited the far east and I myself visited the United States where discussions were held with existing and potential investors.

Smoke Alarms

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish statistics relating to the number of injuries or deaths resulting from fires in the home in each of the last five years; what estimate he has made of the number of such instances in which injury or death might have been avoided had a smoke alarm been installed; what information is available regarding the number of hearing impaired people involved in such incidents; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 25 October 1993]:* The annual Home Office publication "Fire Statistics United Kingdom", copies of which are held in the Library, includes numbers of fatalities and non-fatal casualties in Scotland arising from fires in occupied buildings including dwellings. No information is available on the number of hearing impaired people involved in such incidents.

In his annual report for 1992, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Fire Services for Scotland recorded the view of fire brigade officers that in 63 of the 92 dwelling fires involving fatalities which occurred in Scotland in 1992 the installation of a properly maintained smoke alarm system could have given an early warning of the outbreak of fire to which the occupants could have responded.

In the same report Her Majesty's chief inspector estimated that some 60 per cent. of Scottish dwellings are fitted with smoke alarms. The Scottish Building Regulations require the installation of a hard wire smoke alarm system in the construction of all new houses. The Government, recognising that the cost of a smoke alarm is small compared with the benefits offered in providing early warning of the outbreak of fire, continue to promote and encourage the installtion and maintenance of smoke alarms in homes throughout Scotland.

HEALTH

Private Hospitals

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health under which provision of the NHS Acts the removal of patients from London to private hospitals in Northumbria and York is permitted.

Mr. Bowis: Decisions on where a patient should be treated are the responsibility of the purchasing authority. The transfer of detained patients from one hospital to another is authorised by section 19 of the Mental Health Act 1983.

Older Patients

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what efforts are currently undertaken by her Department to monitor the effect of NHS purchasing agreements upon older patients.

Mr. Sackville: The responsibility for assessing the health care needs of local populations, including those of older patients, and for placing and monitoring contracts which secure good quality, value for money services to meet those needs, lies with purchasers locally.

Weil's Disease

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what recommendations she is issuing to stop people drinking direct from bottles of *(a)* beer, *(b)* lager, *(c)* mineral water and *(d)* milk in case they become infected with Weil's disease; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: None.

Mouthwashes

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what plans she has to require manufacturers of mouthwashes which contain ethanol to provide warnings on product labels to the effect that the liquid could be carcinogenic;

(2) if she will make it a requirement on mouthwash manufacturers to specify clearly on the product label the percentage volume of the liquid comprising ethanol;

(3) if she will initiate a publicity campaign on the link between mouthwashes containing ethanol and the incidence of oral cancer.

Mr. Sackville: The Department of Health considers that there is insufficient and conflicting evidence in relation to a link between ethanol and oral cancer and therefore does not intend to initiate a publicity campaign on this matter or introduce warnings on licensed products containing ethanol.

Ethanol is an excipient in a number of mouthwashes licensed as medicines in the United Kingdom. Regulations taking effect from 1 January 1994 will require all excipients in medicines to be declared in any package leaflet and the presence of ethanol will also have to be shown on the packaging.

Dental Handpieces (Sterilisation)

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made as to the effectiveness of the sterilisation of dental handpieces by autoclaving according to manufacturer's instructions.

Dr. Mawhinney: The effectiveness of sterilisation was referred to the Microbiology Advisory Committee which advises the Department on sterilisation practice applicable to the health service. In May 1993 the committee recommended that dental handpieces should be cleaned in accordance with the manufacturers' instructions and then subjected to steam sterilisation.

Diabetics

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made as to the suitability of insulin pens for delivering animal insulin to diabetics; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: Cartridges containing animal insulins for use with insulin pens are not available. No assessments have therefore been made as to the suitability of insulin pens for delivering animal insulin to diabetics.

NHS Contractors

Dame Jill Knight: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the increases in remuneration of all contractors within the national health service for the year 1993-94, indicating any increases in pay and expenses in money and percentage terms.

Dr. Mawhinney: The increases in remuneration of national health service contractors in 1993-94 are as follows:

General Medical Practitioners: The intended average net income of general practitioners increased by £600 or 1·5 per cent. In addition, the level of practice expenses incorporated into fees and allowances increased by £2,190 or 11 per cent. Fees and allowances payable to GPs increased by an average of 3·3 per cent. as a result of these changes.

General Dental Practitioners: The target net income of general dental practitioners increased by £537 or 1·5 per cent. In addition the practice expense of GDPs increased by £1,481 or 3·0 per cent. The average increase in pay and allowances payable to GDPs was 2·42 per cent.

Pharmacists: Pharmacists' remuneration is contained within a global sum out of which all fees and allowances are paid. There is no separate element for expenses. In 1993-94, the global sum for England was increased by 1·5 per cent. to £596 million.

Ophthalmic Medical Practitioners: The NHS sight test fee paid to OMPs increased to £10·15. This included an increase of 11 pence or 1·5 per cent. in the pay element and 7 pence or 2·75 per cent. in the expenses element of the fee.

Optometrists: No agreement has yet been reached with representatives of the optometric profession about the level of sight test fee for 1993-94.

Bed-and-breakfast Accommodation

Ms Gordon: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish tables 3 and 5 from the 1991 census local base statistics 100 per cent., showing group 15.1 which includes bed-and-breakfast accommodation for homeless families separately by *(a)* parliamentary constituencies in Britain and *(b)* local authority districts in Britain.

Mr. Sackville: Tables 3 and 5 in the 1991 census English county and Scottish region reports give figures for each local authority district for group 15, "Other miscellaneous establishments". To produce separate figures for the two constituent sub-groups (15.1 "Miscellaneous family establishments" and 15.2 "Others") for local areas at this stage would incur disproportionate costs and delay other census output. Even if the statistics were to be produced, the numbers would be very small for some areas, and some of the statistics might need to be withheld or combined to preserve confidentiality. Copies of the reports are available in the Library.

Smoking

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the percentage of regular smokers among 11 to 15-year-olds in boys and girls in 1990 and 1992; and what is the target for this age group in "The Health of the Nation".

Mr. Sackville: The Office of Population Censuses and Surveys reports of smoking among secondary schoolchildren in 1990 and 1992 provide the following information about smoking prevalence among 11 to 15-year-olds. Copies of both reports are available in the Library.

Regular smokers among boys and girls aged 11 to 15 years: England, 1990 to 1992

Per cent.

	Boys	*Girls*	*Total*
1990	9	11	10
1992	9	10	10

Source: OPCS.

The "Health of the Nation" target for 11 to 15-year-olds is to reduce smoking by at least 33 per cent. by 1994 (from about 8 per cent. in 1988 to less than 6 per cent.).

Pharmaceutical Prices

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she plans to announce a new pharmaceutical price regulation scheme agreement.

Mr. Sackville: After several months of negotiation, the Department of Health and the Association of the British

Pharmaceutical Society agreed the terms of a draft agreement on 10 August 1993. The draft agreement was then circulated for consultation to all companies selling branded prescription medicines to the national health service, and, with their consent, the Association of British Pharmaceutical Industries endorsed the agreement on 26 August.

The agreement came into force on 1 October 1993 and is intended to run for five years. Copies will be placed in the Library.

Details of the draft agreement and of its endorsement were announced in press releases from the Department on 10 August and 26 August. Copies of these press releases, H93/909 and H93/933, are available in the Library.

Primary Care Workers

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to attract primary care workers to inner London.

Dr. Mawhinney: In 1993-94, £40 million extra has been made available for investment in primary care within the London initiative zone. It is for national health service management to decide how best to use these resources, in accordance with local needs, including, where it is considered appropriate, for primary care staff.

GP Fund Holders

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what evidence she has on the extent to which fund-holding patients are being seen ahead of non-fund-holding patients who have greater clinical need.

Dr. Mawhinney: Departmental guidance EL(91)84 is clear. There are common waiting lists for all urgent cases. It is clinicians who decide clinical priority. Copies of the guidance are available in the Library.

General Practitioners

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the average net remuneration for general practitioners in inner London family health service authority areas; and what is the national average.

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave her on 22 July at column *290*. More recent data suggest that payments for achieving higher levels of coverage for childhood immunisations and cervical cytology screening and for administering Hib meningitis vaccine added an estimated £2,790 to the average general practitioner's net remuneration in 1992-93.

Rubella Vaccination

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to include rubella vaccinations in the targets for general practitioners.

Mr. Sackville: Rubella vaccination has been part of general practitioners' targets for childhood immunisations since April 1990 when the target payments scheme started.

Consultants' Merit Awards

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the cost of the consultants merit award system in each of the last five years; and what plans she has to change the system.

Dr. Mawhinney: In 1990-91, financial returns showed a total of £41,370,322 paid in distinction awards to consultants in the national health service in England. The further information requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

The arrangements for distinction awards are regularly kept under review.

National Health Service Management Executive

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to review the costs of the NHS management executive headquarters in Leeds.

Dr. Mawhinney: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's statement on 21 October about the management of the health service in England, explained the intention to streamline the central management of the national health service, including the headquarters of the NHS management executive in Leeds. The functions carried out by the NHS management executive headquarters will be reviewed and management cost targets set in the light of this process. Further information about the proposed changes is provided in a background document "Managing the new NHS", copies of which are available in the Library.

Services (Purchasing)

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health on how many occasions on which a clinician's choice of provider has been judged as unwarranted in 1991-92 by the purchasing authority; and what that figure represents as a percentage of all extra-contractual referees.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally. The grounds on which an extra-contractual referral can be refused are clearly laid out in "Guidance on Extra Contractual Referrals" (EL(92)60), copies of which are available in the Library.

MHS Policy Board

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what criteria she will use to select the eight additional non-executive members on the NHS Policy Board drawn from the new regions.

Dr. Mawhinney: It is proposed that these non-executive members of the policy board will be appointed as chairmen of the eight interim regional health authorities, and they will need the same qualities as their forerunners. There are many suitable candidates known to us both in national health service bodies and from outside the NHS who will be considered for these posts.

Cervical Cancer

Ms Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what progress her Department is making in arrangements for a final clinical trial of the HDA test for cervical cancer;

(2) which regional health authority was requested by her Department to fund the final clinical trials into the HDA test for cervical cancer.

Mr. Sackville: The Department is not involved in making arrangements for a clinical trial into the HDA test, and has not requested any regional health authority to fund the trial.

Any evaluation of the test would be between Quest and the medical scientific community to arrange. Decisions on the use of regional research and development resources is for local determination.

Statistics

Mrs. Peacock: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys' policy on the release of statistics.

Mr. Sackville: Subject to the overriding requirement of confidentiality, the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys' (OPCS) policy on the release of statistics is based on the principles of availability, openness, quality, timeliness, pre-announced timetable, simultaneity, and independence. A full statement of its policy is available from OPCS, and I have arranged for a copy to be placed in the Library. The key points are as follows:

OPCS is committed to maintaining the confidentiality of the data which it collects about individual people and groups of people such as families, households, and organisations.

OPCS makes information available from all the statistical data which it collects on its own behalf, in as convenient a form as possible.

OPCS is open about its sources and methods.

OPCS is committed to the provision of good quality statistics.

Statistics are made available as early as practicable.

Statistics are released to a pre-announced timetable.

OPCS's statistics are made available to all users from the same time, with limited specified exceptions on a strict need-to-know basis.

The Registrar General for England and Wales is solely responsible for the content and timing of OPCS's statistical publications and press releases.

Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease

Mr. Burns: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease arising as a result of medical intervention.

Mr. Sackville: There is no evidence that Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (CJD) has been transmitted in the United Kingdom through any human organs or tissues other than pituitary gland extracts or dura mater.

There has been one reported case, in the United States of America in 1974, in which a patient who had previously received a corneal transplant subsequently developed CJD, and another possible case related to the transplantation of heart membrane tissue.

Cases of CJD in the United Kingdom continue to be monitored, and particular attention paid to factors in the patient's medical history that could possibly have caused CJD.

We are satisfied that existing controls protect the public from transmission of CJD through medical interventions. However, the Department will urgently assess any new evidence which suggests a need to review these controls, and will provide further guidance as necessary.

A document summarising the situation has been placed in the Library.

Dentistry

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many dentists, who have not given notice to leave the dental list, have given written notice to each family health service authority to terminate or de-register some or all of their capitation arrangements for child patients each month since July 1992.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 21 October 1993]:* Tables will be placed in the Library showing, for each month, the number of dentists in contract with each family health services authority who have de-registered child patients since July 1992. Where dentists hold contracts with more than one FHSA, the number of dentists quoted could include duplications. The information provided by FHSAs weekly since July 1992 shows that in the period up to 15 October 1993, 239 dentists gave written notification to de-register some child patients. This represents 1·37 per cent. of the number of dentists, 17,400, in contract with FHSAs at 30 June 1992.

The number of children de-registered was 1,734. At 31 August 1993 child registrations were 8 per cent. higher than at 1 July 1992.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many dentists who have not given notice to leave the dental list have given written notice to each family health service authority to de-register some or all of their continuing care arrangements for adult patients in each month since July 1992; how many dentists have de-registered patients; and how many patients have been de-registered.

Dr. Mawhinney *[holding answer 21 October 1993]:* Tables will be placed in the Library showing for each month, the number of dentists in contract with each family health services authority who have de-registered adult patients and the total number of adult patients de-registered since July 1992. Where dentists hold contracts with more than one family health service authority, the numbers of dentists quoted could include duplications. The information provided weekly by family health service authorities since July 1992 shows that in the period up to 15 October 1993, 2,222 dentists gave written notification to de-register 556,204 adult patients.

Despite these notified de-registrations, the total number of adult patients registered with a dentist in England increased by over 0·884 million (4·3 per cent.) from 20·580 million to 21·465 million over the period 1 July 1992 to 31 August 1993.

DEFENCE

Low Flying

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what response was given by the officer commanding Royal Air Force unit Goose bay to the letter from the commander of No. 5 wing, Canadian forces, dated 11 June, requesting assurances that Royal Air Force units visiting Goose bay are notified of the importance of complying with Canadian national and local flying orders.

Mr. Hanley: Following the letter from the commander of No. 5 wing, Canadian forces, officer commanding RAF Goose bay wrote to officers commanding of all Tornado GR1 squadrons which deploy to Goose bay on a regular basis stressing the importance of adhering to the Canadian national and Goose bay local flying orders during deployments to Goose bay. Moreover, commanding officers were reminded that these procedures would be covered as part of the brief given on arrival at Goose bay. Similar advice will be given to any other squadrons planning to deploy to Goose bay in the future.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on future plans for Royal Air Force training at Canadian forces base Goose bay beyond the expiry of the current multinational memorandum of understanding.

Mr. Hanley: The current multinational memorandum of understanding on the use of Canadian forces base Goose bay expires on 31 March 1996. The Canadian authorities are carrying out an environmental review of the effect of military activity in the area. Continued use of Goose bay by the Royal Air Force will depend on decisions taken by the Canadian Government in the light of this review, and on any subsequent negotiations with the Canadian Government.

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if RAF aircrew planning low-level training flights over Germany are required to supply details of their intended route to the authorities responsible for the German low-flying management system.

Mr. Hanley: Royal Air Force aircrew planning to fly at low level over Germany during daylight hours are not required to supply details of their intended route to the authorities responsible for the German low-flying management system. The German night low-flying system is one of fixed routes and RAF aircrew planning to fly at low level at night are required to notify which route they intend to fly.

Corporal Haymand (Spectacle Repairs)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the cost of flying Corporal Martin Haymand serving with the Royal Regiment of Wales in the Falkland Islands, the round trip to Bristol to have his spectacles repaired; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: Corporal Hayman required spectacles for carrying out his normal duties. While an optician visits the Falkland Islands each year the next visit is scheduled for July 1994. On medical advice, corporal Hayman was advised to return to the United Kingdom to obtain replacement spectacles after his own were broken. He occupied a spare seat on a regular RAF flight, returning to the Falkland Islands four days later taking the next available free seat. These seats would have been unoccupied if corporal Hayman had not used them and therefore there was no extra cost to the taxpayer.

Nuclear Testing

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list by year since 1965 the number of nuclear bomb tests that have been carried out by his Department.

Mr. Aitken: The United Kingdom has conducted the following numbers of nuclear tests since 1965:

	Number
1965	1
1966	0
1967	0
1968	0
1969	0
1970	0
1971	0
1972	0
1973	0
1974	1
1975	0
1976	1
1977	0
1978	2
1979	1
1980	3
1981	1
1982	1
1983	1
1984	2
1985	1
1986	1
1987	1
1988	0
1989	1
1990	1
1991	1
1992	0
1993	0

Mine Counter-Measures

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list by year for the last four years, the number of new mine counter-measures vehicles his Department has purchased; what is the estimate for the current financial year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: There have been no purchases of mine counter-measures vessels in the last four years. The last batch ordered was for four single role minehunters (SRMH) in 1987. The first of this batch, HMS Inverness, was accepted from the shipyard, Vosper Thornycroft Ltd, in February 1991 and the last of the batch, HMS Bridport, was accepted in June 1993. We hope to make an announcement on single role minehunters before the end of the year.

International Atomic Energy Agency (Inspectors)

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make it his policy to allow the International Atomic Energy Agency to conduct special inspections at undeclared sites in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Aitken: The powers of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to make special inspections at declared sites in the United Kingdom are defined in article 73 of the United Kingdom/Euratom/IAEA agreement on the application of safeguards in the United Kingdom (Cmnd. 6730). Because the United Kingdom is a nuclear weapon state under the terms of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, the question of special inspections at undeclared sites does not arise.

Defence Diversification

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the Government's policy on defence diversification.

Mr. Aitken: The Government's policy is that decisions on how to adapt to changing market circumstances, and what products to make, are for the commercial judgment of companies.

The Department of Trade and Industry provides advice and assistance to companies who may be considering diversification, including a recently published handbook called "Changing Tack". That Department, together with the Department of Employment, also administers the United Kingdom participation in the EC KONVER programme, which is designed to assist regions affected by the decline in the armaments industry and the closure of military bases.

Housing

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many married quarters in the United Kingdom have been transferred to local housing authorities; and what is their total value for the last 10 years.

Mr. Hanley: Over the last 10 years at least, 1,918 surplus married quarters have been sold to housing associations or local authorities at a value of over £55 million. Because records for the earlier years are not maintained in a way which allows such sales to be easily identified, these figures may underestimate the true position. In addition a substantial programme of leasing has been carried on throughout the period and we currently have 1,057 properties on lease to these organisations and others.

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the names of those estate agents and other specialists called in to advise the Defence Land Agent on the disposal of MOD property.

Mr. Hanley: My noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Defence will write to the hon. Member once such a list has been compiled.

Mr. Colvin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the total value of sales of MOD land and buildings sold by the Defence Land Agent over the last 10 years.

Mr. Hanley: The value of land and buildings sold by my Department in each of the last 10 years expressed in millions of pounds is as follows:

	£ million
1983-84	42·0
1984-85	27·7
1985-86	60·2
1986-87	75·6
1987-88	77·8
1988-89	149·6
1989-90	74·0
1990-91	81·6
1991-92	102·2
1992-93	68·0
Total	758·7

Tornado

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what analysis has been conducted of the reasons for the improvement in the Tornado GR1 major accident rate since 1991; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: A number of factors has been identified as possible reasons for an improvement. Given such a short statistical period however it has not been possible to conclude whether these are significant.

Depleted Uranium Ammunition

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the storage sites and operational bases which have been authorised for storage or handling of depleted uranium ammunition.

Mr. Hanley: Depleted uranium ammunition is stored in a small number of military munitions depots in the United Kingdom. It is not the Department's practice to disclose the locations where specific types of ammunition are stored.

RAF Upper Heyford

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the future use of RAF Upper Heyford.

Mr. Hanley: Since the United States Department of Defense announced that it would be returning RAF Upper Heyford to MOD control by the end of September 1994 we have been investigating alternative defence uses for the airfield thereafter; this work continues. On a contingency basis my officials have been participating in working party discussions with the local authorities to consider the options for the long-term redevelopment of the airfield should no alternative defence use be identified.

Jaguar and Harrier

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the differences in role, mission assignment and capability between the Jaguar and Harrier in Royal Air Force service.

Mr. Hanley: The Jaguar and new Harrier GR7 fulfil similar roles. Both aircraft have a long range air-interdiction capability; they are capable of all offensive support missions and are assigned to NATO in that role. While the Jaguar is currently more capable in the tactical reconnaissance role, the Harrier possesses a longer range, greater weapons carriage capability and a modern avionics suite with an operational under-the-weather night capability. Also the Harrier has unique ship-borne operational capability.

Goose Bay

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what requirements have been notified to the Canadian authorities by his Department, for additional facilities in the low-level training areas around Canadian forces base, Goose bay for *(a)* weapons training, *(b)* electronic threat simulation and *(c)* air combat manoeuvring instrumentation, for use by Royal Air Force aircraft.

Mr. Hanley: Requests for additional facilities at Goose bay are not made in isolation by any one nation, but are progressed with the Canadian authorities on a multi-national basis, once the requirement has been agreed between user nations. User nations have recently expressed a desire to construct another practice weapons training range with a laser target marking facility, and provide electronic threat simulators. We are not aware of any plans to suggest a requirement for air combat manoeuvring instrumentation facilities.

Land, Blyth Valley

Mr. Ronnie Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much land his Department owns in Blyth valley; and how much of that land is unused.

Mr. Hanley: The MOD owns three married quarters at Stakeford (total area 0·097 hectares). The MOD also leases land at Cramlington, on which five married quarters (total area 0·121 hectares) are situated, and the Royal Naval Auxiliary Service (RNXS) training centre at North Harbour in Blyth—total area 0·012 hectares. All the married quarters and the training centre are currently occupied.

Corporal Jake Malcolm

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what action his Department is taking following the award of £6,500 to corporal Jake Malcolm following racial discrimination shown to him while serving in the United Kingdom armed forces; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: It has been made clear throughout the services that racial discrimination, harassment or abuse will not be tolerated. Since the case of corporal Malcolm, the Army has issued a letter to commands reminding them of the armed forces' policy on race relations. To reinforce this policy, a code of practice on race relations will be published shortly for dissemination throughout the services.

Nuclear Deterrent

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proportion of gross domestic product was committed to Britain's nuclear deterrent in each year since 1988.

Mr. Hanley: Figures for the years in question are available only for the strategic nuclear deterrent. Those relating to the years up to and including 1991-92 are derived from tables published in the statistical volume of the annual "Statement on the Defence Estimates" prior to 1992. The figures for 1992-93 and 1993-94 are based on ad hoc exercises to identify the capital and operating costs associated directly with the strategic deterrent.

Year	*Expenditure on strategic nuclear force (£ million)*[1]	*Percentage of gross domestic product*
1988-89	1,072	0·23
1989-90	1,158	0·22
1990-91	1,480	0·27
1991-92	1,445	0·25
1992-93	1,245	0·21
1993-94	1,177	0·19

[1] Outturn prices.

Nuclear Weapons Transport

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will carry out a full public consultation on the policy of transporting nuclear weapons by road; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: No. A Ministry of Defence guidance document, on the actions to be taken in the event of an accident involving a nuclear weapon was however issued to all civil emergency services and local authorities in England, Scotland and Wales in December 1992 and their comments have been invited.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will fully consult chief police officers, chief fire officers and local authority emergency planning officers on the movement of nuclear weapons by road through heavily populated areas.

Mr. Hanley: The views of individual officers from the civil emergency services and local authorities are already invited during MOD training courses. Additionally an MOD guidance document, on the actions to be taken in the event of an accident involving a nuclear weapon was issued to all civil emergency services and local authorities in England, Scotland and Wales in December 1992 and their comments have been invited.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will allow local authority emergency planning officers to attend Ministry of Defence training programmes for nuclear weapons transportation accident contingency plans.

Mr. Hanley: Emergency planning officers can already attend the MOD nuclear weapon accident training course.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the level of risk of a nuclear accident arising as a result of the transportation of nuclear weapons by road.

Mr. Hanley: Our nuclear weapons are always transported in containers which are designed and tested to keep the warheads safe from the effects of severe impacts and prolonged fires, and the vehicles in which they are transported by road provide a further substantial level of protection. Because of multiple layers of protection and the intrinsic safety of the weapons themselves there is no plausible road accident involving the transport of a nuclear weapon which could result in a radiological hazard to the public.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what emergency framework is available to respond to a nuclear incident resulting from road transport of nuclear weapons.

Mr. Hanley: The planning for the response to a nuclear accident is described in the document entitled, "Local Authority and Emergency Service Information on Nuclear Weapon Transport Contingency Plans", a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

Pregnant Service Women

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will estimate the costs to his Department occasioned by industrial tribunal cases concerning allegations of unfair dismissal by service women dismissed from the services on the ground of pregnancy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: It is not possible to estimate what the cost will be to the Ministry of Defence of sex discrimination cases referred to industrial tribunals by service women dismissed on grounds of pregnancy between August 1978,

when the EC equal treatment directive came into force, and August 1990, when the policy of compulsorily discharging pregnant service women was discontinued. Those service women eligible for compensation who are dissatisfied with the amount offered by the Department are entitled to apply to industrial tribunals for determination of their claims.

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will estimate the number of service women dismissed by the services on the ground of pregnancy in *(a)* the Royal Navy, *(b)* the Army and *(c)* the Royal Air Force in each of the past 20 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: The numbers of women dismissed from the services on the ground of pregnancy since April 1973, the earliest date for which the information is available, are as follows. The numbers of female officers leaving on pregnancy can be provided only at disproportionate cost. The figures given are estimates based on the percentage of non-commissioned females leaving each year due to pregnancy:

Financial year	*Female officers*			*Non-commissioned females*			Total
	Royal Navy	Army	Royal Air Force	Royal Navy	Army	Royal Air Force	
1973-74	5	9	11	129	287	260	701
1974-75	7	6	12	92	222	214	553
1975-76	6	11	11	91	202	186	507
1976-77	7	10	9	111	222	145	504
1977-78	5	10	4	85	187	121	412
1978-79	3	10	7	37	173	136	366
1979-80	4	13	7	55	174	162	415
1980-81	6	13	13	72	185	179	468
1981-82	11	21	23	84	250	186	575
1982-83	8	15	16	95	208	186	528
1983-84	5	9	12	103	179	161	469
1984-85	6	14	12	113	195	175	515
1985-86	6	13	15	100	226	156	516
1986-87	6	10	18	104	176	151	465
1987-88	7	15	16	125	205	186	554
1988-89	3	12	18	86	143	160	422
1989-90	4	14	15	84	157	157	431
1990-91[1]	1	7	5	25	69	51	158

[1]Figures for 1990-91 reflect the introduction of maternity leave in August 1990.

The Ministry of Defence is offering compensation to women dismissed from the services on pregnancy following an agreed order of the High Court applying EC Directive 76/207—the equal treatment directive. Those eligible to claim compensation were dismissed between August 1978, when the equal treatment directive came into force, and August 1990, when the policy of compulsorily discharging pregnant service women was discontinued. The total number of potential claimants is estimated at 5,700.

Depleted Uranium Swarf

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the minimum distance from a public footpath or other publicly accessible place permitted by regulations for the storage of depleted uranium swarf at his Department's establishments.

Mr. Aitken: All storage of radioactive material by my Department is in accordance with the statutory requirements of the Ionising Radiation Regulations 1985 and the associated approved codes of practice issued by the Health and Safety Commission. Account is also taken of the most recent guidance issued by the National Radiological Protection board on radiation exposure of the public. There is no statutory regulation or guidance pertaining to the minimum distance referred to by the hon. Member.

Military Exports

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the contribution made by his Department to the restricted enforcement unit's work overseeing arms and military equipment exports.

Mr. Aitken: The Ministry of Defence participates fully in the restricted enforcement unit by contributing to the information exchange.

Uranium-tipped Shells

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish details, for each year since 1979, of the cost of his Department's programme of test-firing depleted uranium-tipped shells; and if he will provide a breakdown of how the costs are distributed between different departmental test ranges *(a)* in the United Kingdom and *(b)* abroad.

Mr. Aitken: Our records are not kept in a form which would enable us to answer these questions.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 28 October 1993

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Parish Funding

Mr. Roger Evans: To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, representing the Church Commissioners, if he will make a statement on the Church Commissioners' proposals to reduce the funding support for parishes over the next five years.

Mr. Alison: The Commissioners are currently discussing with dioceses what action will be needed over the next few years to correct the over-distribution of Commissioners' funds in previous years and to bring their income and expenditure into balance. This is likely to involve a mixture of reductions in allocations and the transfer to dioceses of responsibility for some categories of expenditure. The mission and ministry of the Church will depend increasingly on the giving of church members.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

War Crimes

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Attorney-General how many cases are actively under consideration for possible prosecution under the War Crimes Act 1991; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The Metropolitan police war crimes unit has submitted interim reports to the DPP in 10 cases. Inquiries into those 10 cases are still being actively pursued. The inquiries are not yet complete and the question of a possible prosecution cannot be considered until they are concluded.

Siemion Serafimowicz

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Attorney-General what consideration has been given to the case of Siemion Serafimowicz by the Director of Public Prosecutions; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The police are actively inquiring into allegations against Siemion Serafimowicz and as soon as those inquiries are completed, the question of any possible prosecution will be considered by the Director of Public Prosecutions.

Mrs. Lubov Voronovich

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Attorney-General what consideration is being given to launching a prosecution in respect of the murder of members of the family of Mrs. Lubov Voronovich; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The Metropolitan police war crimes unit is actively pursuing inquiries in respect of this and a number of other allegations. When those inquiries are complete, the Director of Public Prosecutions will consider whether prosecutions should follow.

Treason Allegation

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Attorney-General when he expects the Director of Public Prosecutions to make a decision in respect of the complaint of alleged treason by Mr. Rodney Atkinson; how long the DPP has now been considering the complaint; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: Complaints of alleged treason made by Mr. Rodney Atkinson and Mr. Norris McWhirter were referred to the Crown Prosecution Service by the clerk to the justices at Hexham, Northumberland, on 9 September 1993. The Crown Prosecution Service wrote to the clerk to the justices on 22 October 1993 stating that, although it was entirely appropriate for the clerk to have referred the matter to the Crown Prosecution Service, the complaints themselves were misconceived and totally without foundation.

Racial Hatred Incitement

Mr. Shore: To ask the Attorney-General how many prosecutions for incitement to racial hatred under the Public Order Act 1986 he has authorised in each year since 1987; and on how many occasions the prosecution was successful.

The Attorney-General: Since 1987, the Law Officers have consented to the prosecution of offences contrary to part III of the Public Order Act 1986 in respect of the following numbers of persons:

Year	*Number*
1987	0
1988	2
1989	1
1990	2
1991	3
1992	3
1993	2

Seven cases resulted in a finding of guilty and one of acquittal. In addition, one defendant was bound over; one died before trial and one case was discontinued by the Crown Prosecution Service. Prosecutions have been started, but have not been concluded, in two cases.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Rape

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consideration has been given to ending the right to anonymity of victims in rape trials; what current provisions govern this right; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Maclean: Anonymity for complainants in rape trials is governed by the Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act 1976.

The Government are committed to ensuring that victims of all sexual offences are encouraged to report these crimes and are well treated by the criminal justice system when they do so. In 1992, the Government supported private Member's legislation—now the Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act 1992—which extended the right to anonymity to victims of all sexual offences.

However, the Government recognise that difficult questions can arise when a defendant is acquitted and there has been substantial publicity surrounding the case. My right hon. and learned Friend has recently indicated his intention to review the arguments for and against the current anonymity provisions as they relate both to complainants and defendants.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many people have been tried on charges of *(a)* rape and *(b)* attempted rape (i) in the current year using the most recent statistics and (ii) for each preceding year from 1985, inclusive;

(2) how many people have been found guilty of *(a)* rape and *(b)* attempted rape (i) in the current year, using the most recent available statistics and (ii) for each preceding year from 1985, inclusive.

Mr. Mclean: Information from 1985 to 1992—which is provisional—is given in the table. The 1993 data will not be available until the autumn of 1994.

Males tried at the Crown Court and found guilty at all courts of rape offences by type of offence and type of court 1985 to 1992[1] England and Wales

Class	Year/Description	Act and section	Tried at the Crown Court	Found guilty		
				Magistrates' courts	Crown Court	All courts
	1985					
19.02	Man having unlawful sexual intercourse with a woman who is a defective	Sexual Offences Act 1956 section 7 as amended by Mental Health Act 1959 section 127	4	—	4	4
19.03	Male member of staff of hospital or mental nursing home having unlawful sexual intercourse with a female patient	Mental Health Act 1959 section 128(1)(a)	—	—	—	—
19.04	Man having unlawful sexual intercourse with mentally disordered female patient who is subject to his care	Mental Health Act 1959 section 128(1)(b)	1	—	1	1
19.05	Rape	Sexual Offences Act 1956 section 1	474	1	338	339
19.06	Attempted rape	Sexual Offences Act 1956 section 1	86	7	75	82
	Total		565	8	418	426
	1986					
19.02	Man having unlawful sexual intercourse with a woman who is a defective	Sexual Offences Act 1956 section 7 as amended by Mental Health Act 1959 section 127	7	—	6	6
19.03	Male member of staff of hospital or mental nursing home having unlawful sexual intercourse with a female patient	Mental Health Act 1959 section 128(1)(a)	—	—	—	—
19.04	Man having unlawful sexual intercourse with mentally disordered female patient who is subject to his care	Mental Health Act 1959 section 128(1)(b)	—	—	—	—
19.05	Rape	Sexual Offences Act 1956 section 1	503	—	329	329
19.06	Attempted rape	Sexual Offences Act 1956 section 1	80	2	63	65
	Total		590	2	398	400
	1987					
19.02	Man having unlawful sexual intercourse with a woman who is a defective	Sexual Offences Act 1956 section 7 as amended by Mental Health Act 1959 section 127	5	—	5	5
19.03	Male member of staff of hospital or mental nursing home having unlawful sexual intercourse with a female patient	Mental Health Act 1959 section 128(1)(a)	—	—	—	—
19.04	Man having unlawful sexual intercourse with mentally disordered female patient who is subject to his care	Mental Health Act 1959 section 128(1)(b)	1	—	1	1
19.05	Rape	Sexual Offences Act 1956 section 1	551	2	347	349
19.06	Attempted rape	Sexual Offences Act 1956 section 1	89	—	70	70
	Total		646	2	423	425
	1988					
19.02	Man having unlawful sexual intercourse with a woman who is a defective	Sexual Offences Act 1956 section 7 as amended by Mental Health Act 1959 section 127	7	—	6	6

Class	Year/Description	Act and section	Tried at the Crown Court	Found guilty: Magistrates' courts	Found guilty: Crown Court	Found guilty: All courts
19.03	Male member of staff of hospital or mental nursing home having unlawful sexual intercourse with a female patient	Mental Health Act 1959 section 128(1)(a)	1	—	1	1
19.04	Man having unlawful sexual intercourse with mentally disordered female patient who is subject to his care	Mental Health Act 1959 section 128(1)(b)	—	—	—	—
19.05	Rape	Sexual Offences Act 1956 section 1	670	2	411	413
19.06	Attempted rape	Sexual Offences Act 1956 section 1	114	—	79	79
	Total		792	2	497	499
	1989					
19.02	Man having unlawful sexual intercourse with a woman who is a defective	Sexual Offences Act 1956 section 7 as amended by Mental Health Act 1959 section 127	6	—	4	4
19.03	Male member of staff of hospital or mental nursing home having unlawful sexual intercourse with a female patient	Mental Health Act 1959 section 128(1)(a)	1	—	1	1
19.04	Man having unlawful sexual intercourse with mentally disordered female patient who is subject to his care	Mental Health Act 1959 section 128(1)(b)	1	—	1	1
19.05	Rape	Sexual Offences Act 1956 section 1	777	3	468	471
19.06	Attempted rape	Sexual Offences Act 1956 section 1	139	1	110	111
	Total		924	4	584	588
	1990					
19.02	Man having unlawful sexual intercourse with a woman who is a defective	Sexual Offences Act 1956 section 7 as amended by Mental Health Act 1959 section 127	8	—	7	7
19.03	Male member of staff of hospital or mental nursing home having unlawful sexual intercourse with a female patient	Mental Health Act 1959 section 128(1)(a)	1	—	1	1
19.04	Man having unlawful sexual intercourse with mentally disordered female patient who is subject to his care	Mental Health Act 1959 section 128(1)(b)	—	—	—	—
19.05	Rape	Sexual Offences Act 1956 section 1	799	1	454	455
19.06	Attempted rape	Sexual Offences Act 1956 section 1	103	2	76	78
	Total		911	3	538	541
	1991					
19.02	Man having unlawful sexual intercourse with a woman who is a defective	Sexual Offences Act 1956 section 7 as amended by Mental Health Act 1959 section 127	8	—	5	5
19.03	Male member of staff of hospital or mental nursing home having unlawful sexual intercourse with a female patient	Mental Health Act 1959 section 128(1)(a)	2	—	2	2
19.04	Man having unlawful sexual intercourse with mentally disordered female patient who is subject to his care	Mental Health Act 1959 section 128(1)(b)	—	—	—	—
19.05	Rape	Sexual Offences Act 1956 section 1	842	1	465	466
19.06	Attempted rape	Sexual Offences Act 1956 section 1	102	—	64	64
	Total		954	1	536	537
	1992[1]					
19.02	Man having unlawful sexual intercourse with a woman who is a defective	Sexual Offences Act 1956 section 7 as amended by Mental Health Act 1959 section 127	6	—	4	4
19.03	Male member of staff of hospital or mental nursing home having unlawful sexual intercourse with a female patient	Mental Health Act 1959 section 128(1)(a)	1	—	1	1

Class	Year/Description	Act and section	Tried at the Crown Court	Found guilty: Magistrates' courts	Found guilty: Crown Court	All courts
19.04	Man having unlawful sexual intercourse with mentally disordered female patient who is subject to his care	Mental Health Act 1959 section 128(1)(b)	1	—	1	1
19.05	Rape	Sexual Offences Act 1956 section 1	827	1	424	425
19.06	Attempted rape	Sexual Offences Act 1956 section 1	96	—	61	61
	Other[2]		—	1	—	1
	Total		931	2	491	493

[1] Provisional.
[2] Details of offence not known.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many cases of *(a)* rape and *(b)* attempted rape are recorded in (i) the most recent crime statistics for the current year and (ii) for each preceding year from 1985, inclusive.

Mr. Maclean: Figures for attempted rape are included in the rape offence classification and are not separately available. There were 4,142 recorded rapes in England and Wales in 1992. Figures for 1985-91 are published in table 2.16 of "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales, 1991", a copy of which is available in the Library.

Bosnian Refugees

Dr. Twinn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will name each voluntary organisation which assisted in the reception of Bosnian refugees in 1992; and how much grant each received.

Mr. Charles Wardle: In 1992, the Home Office funded the Refugee Council and the British Red Cross to provide reception arrangements for ex-detainees and other humanitarian cases, and their dependants, whom the Government brought here from the former Yugoslavia at the request of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. In 1992-93, grants of £476,000 and £86,000 were paid to the Refugee Council and British Red Cross, respectively for this purpose.

A full list of organisations making their own arrangements to assist individuals from Bosnia is not available.

Ethnic Minorities

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consultation took place with representatives of the ethnic minority communities in *(a)* Lancashire, *(b)* the north-west and *(c)* England before the Government decided to reduce the share of section 11 funding for projects funded jointly with local authorities from 75 to 57 per cent.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Decisions made in the public expenditure round reflect the general economic situation and consultation with particular interest groups would not be practicable in the course of that process. However, we have subsequently sought the views of all interested parties on how the available funding should be used in order to achieve maximum benefit for members of ethnic minorities.

National Identity Card

Mr. Batiste: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what discussions he has had with the banks about the viability of smart card technology as a basis for a national identity card system.

Mr. Charles Wardle: My right hon. and learned Friend has had no such discussions with banks.

Young People (Custody)

Ms Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* 15 and 16-year-olds and *(b)* 17 to 21-year-olds were held under sentence or remand in gaols in England and Wales at the latest date available; and what were the corresponding numbers during each of the preceding 12 months.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. J. Butler to Ms Jean Corston, dated 28 October 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Question asking how many *(a)* 15 and 16 year olds and *(b)* 17 to 21 year olds were held under sentence or remand in jails in England and Wales at the latest date available; and what the corresponding numbers were during each of the preceding twelve months.

The information you have requested is only available for 30 June 1992 and 30 June 1993. I enclose a table detailing the population aged 15 to 20, by type of custody in Prison Service establishments in England and Wales on those dates.

Population[1] aged under 21 by type of custody in Prison Service establishments in England and Wales on 30 June 1993

Age	Untried	Convicted unsentenced	Sentenced[2]
15-16	85	36	308
17-20	1,890	784	4,773
TOTAL	1,975	820	5,081

[1] Provisional data.
[2] Includes those sentenced for non payment of a fine.

Population[1] aged under 21 by type of custody in Prison Service establishments in England and Wales on 30 June 1992[2]

Age	Untried	Convicted unsentenced	Sentenced[3]
15-16	77	20	261
17-20	1,881	746	5,296
TOTAL	1,958	766	5,557

[1] Provisional data.
[2] Excludes those held in police cells (140 untried, 2 convicted unsentenced and 32 sentenced on 30 June 1992).
[3] Includes those sentenced for non payment of a fine.

European Police Information Centre

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how much it has cost to set up the European police information centre; and what is the annual running cost.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Total capital costs have been £68,000. Running costs are expected to be £2,000 per annum.

Police (Protective Clothing)

Mr. Austin Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what investigations have been carried out to ascertain the effectiveness of issuing the Metropolitan police and other forces with protective clothing.

Mr. Charles Wardle: The operational use of protective clothing is primarily a matter for chief officers of police. So far as I am aware no investigations into its effectiveness have been carried out by police forces. The police scientific development branch offers advice to chief constables on protective clothing which is based on trials. It has also partly completed a project to assemble information about public order injuries from which it will be possible to assess the effectiveness of protective equipment.

Siemion Serafimowicz

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will withdraw the passport of Siemion Serafimowicz.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Records relating to the issue and possession of a British passport are confidential. It would not be appropriate for me to comment on this particular case.

Blakenhurst Prison

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will give details of all complaints made by persons at Blakenhurst prison during the disturbances at that prison on 9 October;

(2) what reports he has received concerning assaults on prisoners by prison officers in the segregation unit of Blakenhurst prison.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. J. Butler to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 28 October 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Questions about assaults on prisoners by prison officers in the segregation unit, and about complaints of assaults made by persons during the disturbances on 9 October, at Blakenhurst prison.

Six prisoners at HMP Blakenhurst have made complaints of assault allegedly committed by prisoner custody officers on 9 October. These are being investigated by the Controller as required by Section 85(4)(b) of the Criminal Justice Act 1991.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what legal action is pending by prisoners at Blakenhurst prison against prison officers.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. J. Butler to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 28 October 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Question about what legal action is pending by prisoners at Blakenhurst prison agaisnt prison officers.

I am not aware of any such action.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to ask Her Majesty's chief inspectors of prisons to visit Blakenhurst prison and to report on the running of the prison.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: Unless otherwise directed by the Secretary of State, it is for Her Majesty's chief inspector of prisons to decide when he wishes to visit and report to the Secretary of State on the running of any prison.

Each prison should be inspected about every five years.

Aero-engines

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pusuant to his reply of 21 October, *Official Report*, column *271-72*, if he will specify the animals used to test impact consequences on aero-engines.

Mr. Charles Wardle: Ducks.

Racial Incidents

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list by police force area in England and Wales, reported racial incidents so far in 1993.

Mr. Maclean: The information requested is not yet available. It is collated centrally on an annual basis and will be made available for the whole of 1993. All available earlier data have already been provided for years up to 1992.

Data Protection

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he is taking to implement the improvements to the administration and enforcement of the Data Protection Act 1984 recommended by the National Audit Office report on data protection controls and safeguards.

Mr. Peter Lloyd: The recommendations in the National Audit Office report are primarily directed to the Data Protection Registrar. I understand that he is considering the implications of the report for the work of his office.

Racist Attacks

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many men and how many women have been killed as a result of racist attacks in England and Wales in each year since 1988.

Mr. Maclean: The information requested is not available. The police are required to make returns of each known homicide to the Home Office, but are not specifically requested to note whether they consider the attack was a racist one.

Young Offenders

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many 15-year-olds categorised as a suicide risk were placed in a strip cell *(a)* 1992 and *(b)* 1993 to date;

(2) how many 15-year-old inmates were categorised as a suicide risk in *(a)* 1992 and *(b)* 1993 to the latest available date;

(3) how many reported instances of self-injury there were in prisons and young offender institutions involving 15-year-olds *(a)* remanded into custody and *(b)* sentenced to custody in (i) 1992 and (ii) 1993 to the latest available date.

Mr. Peter Lloyd *[holding answers 19 October 1993]:* Responsibility for these matters has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. J. Butler to Ms Joan Ruddock, dated 28 October 1993:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General, to reply to your recent Parliamentary Questions about 15 year olds in prison custody who have self injured, been categorised as a suicide risk or placed in strip cells.

The number of incidents of self injury by 15 year olds in Prison Service custody in 1992 and 1993 is as follows:

	1992	*[1]1993*
Remand	1	2
Sentenced	19	32
TOTAL	20	34

[1] To 30 September.

There has been no self-inflicted death by a 15 year old prisoner in 1992 or 1993.

Information about the number of 15 year old prisoners who have been categorised as a suicide risk, and about the number of such prisoners placed in unfurnished or protective accommodation, is not available.

ENVIRONMENT

Standard Spending Assessments

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many representations he has received from local authorities concerning his review of standard spending assessments.

Mr. Baldry: A total of 197 local authorities have responded to our invitation to make representations on the review of standard spending assessments for 1994-95.

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the extent to which the current differential in grant and standard spending assessments between different authorities for primary and secondary education *(a)* are excessive or *(b)* relate accurately to the different needs of pupils in different authorities.

Mr. Baldry: The standard spending assessment element for education is based on detailed research and analysis fully discussed with the local authority associations. Both the primary and secondary education assessments incorporate an index of additional educational need which is based on indicators reflecting the social and economic characteristics of the population of each authority.

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the reasons underlying the range of standard spending assessments for other district level services.

Mr. Baldry: The standard spending assessments of individual authorities for other district level services are based on the formula set out in the Local Government Finance Report for 1993-94, which was approved by the House in February. The formula reflects those social and demographic characteristics of each area considered to be relevant in the provision of this group of services.

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the current timetable for the review of standard spending assessments.

Mr. Baldry: Work on the review of standard spending assessments for 1994-95 has now finished. My right hon. Friend will announce the outcome of the review later in the autumn as part of his proposals for revenue support grant for 1994-95. There will then be a period of consultation on those proposals, as in previous years.

Sheltered Housing

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received concerning the private ownership of occupied sheltered housing; what help is available to those living in non-regulated/non-registered accommodation; and if he will set up an ombudsman scheme.

Sir George Young: The Department has received written representations from elderly leaseholders—directly or through their residents' asociations and via hon. Members.

All leaseholders are protected by the contractual terms of their lease which setout the rights and duties of landlords and tenants and the basis of the service charges. In addition, the existing legislation in the Landlord and Tenant Acts of 1985 and 1987 gives leaseholders additional statutory rights.

This protection will be augmented by new provisions in the Leasehold Reform, Housing and Urban Development Act 1993. Qualifying tenants may jointly purchase the freehold of their flats. It also enables the Secretary of State to approve codes of management practice governing

property management and gives tenants the right to a management audit of their landlord by an independent accountant or surveyor.

The Government are not persuaded of the case for an ombudsman scheme for privately owned sheltered housing, nor of the practicality of that approach.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what was the regional total of capital expenditure by the local authorities in England for *(a)* 1979-80, *(b)* 1982-83, *(c)* 1985-86 and *(d)* each year since 1988-89 for each standard English region;

(2) what was the capital allocation for each local authority in England for *(a)* 1979-80, *(b)* 1982-83, *(c)* 1985-86 and *(d)* each year since 1988-89;

(3) what was the national total of capital allocations for other services to local authorities in England for *(a)* 1979-80, *(b)* 1982-83, *(c)* 1985-86 and *(d)* each year since 1988-89; and if he will give the breakdown of the total between (i) non-metropolitan district councils, (ii) county councils, (iii) metropolitan district councils, (iv) London boroughs and (v) the City of London;

(4) what was the regional total of capital expenditure on other services by the local authorities in England for *(a)* 1979-80, *(b)* 1982-83, *(c)* 1985-86 and *(d)* each year since 1988-89 for each standard English region;

(5) what was the capital expenditure on other services by each local authority in England for *(a)* 1979-80, *(b)* 1982-83, *(c)* 1985-86 and *(d)* each year since 1988-89;

(6) what was the national total of capital expenditure by local authorities in England for *(a)* 1979-80, *(b)* 1982-83, *(c)* 1985-86 and *(d)* each year since 1988-89; and if he will give the breakdown of the total between (i) non-metropolitan district councils, (ii) county councils, (iii) metropolitan district councils, (iv) London boroughs and (v) the City of London;

(7) what was the regional total of capital allocations for other services to the local authorities in England for *(a)* 1979-80, *(b)* 1982-83, *(c)* 1985-86 and *(d)* each year since 1988-89 for each standard English region;

(8) what was the capital expenditure by each local authority in England for *(a)* 1979-80, *(b)* 1982-83, *(c)* 1985-86 and *(d)* each year since 1988-89;

(9) what was the national total of capital expenditure on other services by local authorities in England for *(a)* 1979-80, *(b)* 1982-83, *(c)* 1985-86 and *(d)* each year since 1988-89; and if he will give the breakdown of the total between (i) non-metropolitan district councils, (ii) county councils, (iii) metropolitan district councils, (iv) London boroughs and (v) the City of London;

(10) what was the capital allocation for other services for each local authority in England for *(a)* 1979-80, *(b)* 1982-83, *(c)* 1985-86 and *(d)* each year since 1988-89;

(11) what was the national total of capital allocations to local authorities in England for *(a)* 1979-80, *(b)* 1982-83, *(c)* 1985-86 and *(d)* each year since 1988-89; and if he will give the breakdown of the total between (i) non-metropolitan district councils, (ii) county councils, (iii) metropolitan district councils, (iv) London boroughs and (v) the City of London;

(12) what was the regional total of capital allocations to the local authorities in England for *(a)* 1979-80, *(b)* 1982-83, *(c)* 1985-86 and *(d)* each year since 1988-89 for each standard English region.

Mr. Baldry: I will write to the hon. Member and put the replies in the Library.

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what was the regional total of capital expenditure on housing by the local authorities in England for *(a)* 1979-80, *(b)* 1982-83, *(c)* 1985-86 and *(d)* each year since 1988-89 for each standard English region;

(2) what was the capital expenditure on housing by each local authority in England for *(a)* 1979-80, *(b)* 1982-83, *(c)* 1985-86 and *(d)* each year since 1988-89;

(3) what was the national total of capital expenditure on housing by local authorities in England for *(a)* 1979-80, *(b)* 1982-83, *(c)* 1985-86 and *(d)* each year since 1988-89; and if he will give the breakdown of the total between (i) non-metropolitan district councils, (ii) county councils, (iii) metropolitan district councils, (iv) London boroughs and (v) the City of London.

Sir George Young: I will write to the hon. Member.

Revenue Support Grant

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the revenue support grant given to Barnet and Wandsworth in 1993-94; and what is the amount expressed relative to the respective populations.

Mr. Baldry: The information requested is as follows.

Local authority	*Revenue Support Grant, 1993-94*	
	£ million	*£ per head*
Barnet	93·823	314·93
Wandsworth	160·203	619·18

Government Car Service

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many cars there are in the Government car service; and how many *(a)* use lead free petrol, *(b)* are fitted with catalytic converters and *(c)* are electric powered.

Mr. Baldry: There are currently 193 cars in the Government car service fleet; 181 use lead-free petrol and 144 are equipped with catalytic converters. With the exception of some vehicles which cannot be readily replaced, the entire GCS fleet will use unleaded petrol with catalytic converters by 1 April 1994.

No electric-powered vehicles are currently in use by the GCS. Electric-powered vehicles were trialled, but were not found to be capable of the required operating range.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what quantities of plutonium-contaminated radioactive waste material is currently stored at the Drigg site; and what plans there are to remove this material to Sellafield.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much plutonium-contaminated material is currently being stored at Drigg low-level waste dump; whether this material is intended to be moved to Sellafield; and to what extent the containers currently intended to be used for these transports comply with IAEA regulations.

Mr. Eggar: I have been asked to reply.

The Drigg site is owned and operated by British Nuclear Fuels plc and is used for the disposal of solid low-level radioactive waste. It has also been used for the storage of plutonium-contaminated material, a category of intermediate level waste. I understand that the company is planning to move this material to Sellafield for interim storage and pre-disposal treatment. Any such movements are subject to regulation by the Department of Transport as the national competent authority.

Wood Report

Mr. Cormack: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to publish his response to the Wood report.

Mr. Curry *[holding answer 27 October 1993]:* The Government have carefully considered the Wood report on the rating of plant and machinery, and industry's responses to it. The committee has produced a package of measures to update the law, to harmonise the rating systems, and to remove the substantial differences between the rules in the various parts of the United Kingdom.

We have decided that the major recommendations of the report should be implemented throughout Great Britain for the 1995 rating revaluation of all non-domestic property. The main change to the committee's propoals will be to apply these rating rules whatever the valuation technique used.

Implementation of the recommendations will involve replacing secondary legislation in England and Wales, and amending primary legislation in Scotland. The Government will consult interested people shortly on the way in which this will be done.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Reprocessed Uranium

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what quantities of reprocessed uranium have been returned to overseas customers with reprocessing contracts with British Nuclear Fuels plc to date; what quantities remain stored in the United Kingdom and at which locations; and what arrangements have been put in place for the future management of reprocessed uranium arising from foreign contracts.

Mr. Eggar: Except for small quantities which have already been returned, uranium arising from reprocessing to date by British Nuclear Fuels plc of irradiated nuclear fuel on behalf of overseas customers is stored under international safeguards by the company at its various sites.

Plans for the usage of current and future uranium from reprocessing are a commercial matter for British Nuclear Fuels plc and its customers. The new oxide fuels complex at Springfields has the capability to fabricate nuclear fuels using recycled uranium from the thermal oxide reprocessing plant.

Nuclear Safety

Mr. Dafis: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will bring forward proposals to require *(a)* the nuclear installations inspectorate and *(b)* Nuclear Electric to publish data on routine radioactive combination caused by the decommissioning of the Berkeley nuclear power station.

Mr. Eggar: No. Decommissioning of Berkeley nuclear power station is regulated by the Health and Safety Executive's nuclear installations inspectorate by means of conditions attached to the nuclear site licence. These include the need for consideration of a safety case for decommissioning and arrangements for reporting incidents including those involving radioactive contamination. No significant radioactive contamination incidents have arisen during the decommissioning of Berkeley. Routine monitoring for contamination off site is carried out by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, and Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution and the data are published annually.

Disqualified Directors

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps are being taken to ensure that Companies House keeps the register of disqualified directors up to date.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: The register of disqualified directors is maintained and updated by Companies House from information supplied to it on new disqualifications from the various courts throughout the country. The register currently contains the names of all those directors notified to Companies House by the courts.

Companies House is working with the Lord Chancellor's Department to improve reporting by the courts.

Newspapers

Mr. William Ross: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will commission research into the arrangements for the supply and distribution of newspapers in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: No, my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade has no plans to commission research into the arrangements for the supply and distribution of newspapers in Northern Ireland.

On 19 August 1992 the Director General of Fair Trading referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission—MMC—the supply of newspapers from publishers to wholesalers and wholesalers to retailers in England and Wales. The MMC reported to the President of the Board of Trade on 30 July. Its recommendations are still under consideration and until the report is published it would be inappropriate for me to comment further.

The terms of reference of the MMC's inquiry exclude Scotland and Northern Ireland, primarily because newspaper distribution arrangements there are different. However, the Office of Fair Trading continues to keep these markets under review and, when the MMC's report is published, will examine the general principles arising from its conclusions to see whether any action is warranted.

Prescribed Quantities

Mr. Jonathan Evans: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to seek to amend the United Kingdom's national legislation on prescribed

quantities; and what action he proposes to make in relation to current EC legislation on prescribed quantities and unit pricing.

Mr. McLoughlin: Under the existing national legislation certain pre-packed goods, including products such as biscuits, breakfast cereals, pasta and bread, must be produced in specified standard sizes. This restricts choice for the consumer—the standard sizes may not always suit their needs—and can impose an unnecessary burden on business.

Accordingly, the Government are today issuing a consultation document to interested parties about abolishing these requirements where this would not conflict with mandatory EC legislation.

With similar concerns in mind, the Government also propose to discuss with the European Commission ways of reducing the burden of the EC's legislation on standard sizes and on related unit pricing. This requires retailers to display the price per unit of measurement for certain categories of pre-packed goods where they are not made up in standard sizes.

European Regional Aid

Mr. Ian Bruce: To ask the President of the Board of Trade which areas he has proposed to the European Commission should be designated under objectives 2 and 5(b) of the European structural funds.

Mr. Sainsbury: I placed in the Library of the House on 11 October a detailed list of the areas that have been proposed. In summary, the population coverage of the proposals is as follows:

'000s

	Objective 2	*Objective 5(b)*
Scotland and Wales	5,211	1,087
Northern England	9,866	409
English Midlands	4,822	415
Southern England	3,525	909
Gibraltar	30	—

The Government have taken careful account of the many representations received, a list of which I have also placed in the Library. Most of the current objective 2 and 5(b) areas, with the exception of the highlands and islands of Scotland and Merseyside, are included. These two areas, like Northern Ireland, have already been designated as objective 1 areas.

A number of urban areas not previously designated, including parts of London, are included under the objective 2 criteria, which allow for the designation of urban areas with very high unemployment or industrial dereliction.

The areas proposed under objective 5(b) represent a significant increase in the coverage of British rural areas. This is made possible both by the promotion of the highlands and islands to objective 1 and the increase in financial allocations agreed at the Edinburgh Council last December. A number of areas dependent on fishing have also been proposed under both objectives, as specifically provided for in the regulations agreed by the Council in July.

Further detailed information about the extent of the proposed areas may be obtained from Mr. G. Roach in my Department—telephone 071-215 2659 or 2556.

There will now be consultation between the Commission and the Government before the Commission publish its decision probably in early December. The Commission may want to reduce the coverage of the United Kingdom's and other member states' proposals to keep allocations across the Community as a whole to a reasonable limit.

The Government's proposals are however realistic and I look forward to the structural funds continuing to make a significant contribution to the economic development of the United Kingdom's priority industrial, urban and rural areas.

The Government sent their proposals to Brussels on 6 October in order to meet the deadline set by the European Commission.

Beer and Cider

Mr. Riddick: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on his Department's review of policy on section 43 of the Weights and Measures Act 1985 relating to froth on beer or cider.

Mr. McLoughlin: My hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) announced on 29 March, *Official Report*, columns *50-51* that, as part of the Government's deregulation initiative, the Department of Trade and Industry was reassessing the costs and benefits of the implementation of section 43 and that interested parties had been asked to provide information relevant to this reassessment.

We have now completed our reassessment of the commencement order which was made last year and which would bring section 43 into force from next April. After reviewing the costs of complying with the order, and considering the views of consumers, enforcement authorities and business we have concluded that these costs are disproportionate to the consumer benefit. They would include the cost to licensees of replacing brim measure glasses with new lined glasses or installing meters. It was also clear from the consultations that in most cases the costs of extra beer would be passed on to the consumer, with price increases amounting to about 7p a pint in pubs now using brim measures.

Accordingly, I have today revoked the commencement order thus allowing the continuation of the existing case law that a pint of beer may consist of liquid and a reasonable head. We will also bring forward, as soon as parliamentary time permits, legislation to repeal section 43.

I understand that the Brewers' Society is issuing revised guidance to its members on the dispense of draught beer. It will say that a pint of draught beer with a head should contain a minimum of 95 per cent. liquid. This guidance is issued in conjunction with organisations representing licensees. Trading standards officers will be able to refer to the guidance in court cases about short measure and the courts can be expected to attach considerable weight to it.

If customers are unhappy with the amount of liquid beer they have received they are already able to ask for, and should get, a top-up. The Brewers' Society's revised guidance will state that such requests should always be received with good grace.

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what response he has made to the letter sent to him on 4 August by Professor Horlock in his capacity of

chairman of the Advisory Committee on the Safety of Nuclear Installations on nuclear waste management in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 27 October 1993]:* I have sent a copy of Professor Horlock's letter of 4 August, and of my reply, to the hon. Member and have placed a copy of each in the Library of the House.

Insolvency Service

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what percentage of reports from insolvency practitioners were rejected by the Insolvency Service in the latest available year; and if he will provide a breakdown of the numbers and percentages of rejected reports according to each principal reason for rejection.

Mr. Neil Hamilton *[holding answer 27 October 1993]:* The percentage of reports from insolvency practitioners rejected at the vetting stage during the 12 months to 30 September 1993 was 80·3 per cent.—3,345 reports.

Of those reports, 70 per cent. identified elements of unfit conduct, but the case was not considered to be sufficiently serious or evidentially strong enough to justify proceeding in the public interest or there was clear mitigation or some other relevant factor; 24 per cent. were linked with one or more other companies/individuals subject to other insolvency procedures or proceedings; 5 per cent. were submitted with insufficient time remaining to prepare the evidence and with an insufficient basis to seek leave to extend the statutory time limit; and 1 per cent. where the whereabouts of the director were not known and service would be unlikely to be effected.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Overseas Staff and Premises

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the cost for the current financial year of his Department having *(a)* premises and *(b)* personnel overseas; and what were the comparable figures for 12 months ago.

Mr. David Davis: The expenditure by my Department on premises and personnel overseas is as follows:

	Current financial year (estimated) £	*Previous financial year* £
Premises[1]	10,044	7,323
Personnel[2]	1,037,086	956,991

Notes.

[1] These costs relate to HMSO's recently opened European Sales Office in Germany.

[2] These costs include the staffing of HMSO's European Sales Office (an estimated £43,551 in 1993 and £29,654 in 1992). The remainder covers the cost of British civil servants serving with European Community institutions in furtherance of the Government's initiative for wider representation in Europe.

DEFENCE

Low Flying

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what communications have taken place between his Department and the German authorities concerning the German experience of operating a computerised low flying management system.

Mr. Hanley: My Department holds frequent discussions with the German authorities, at all levels. These cover a wide range of topics of mutual interest, and have included the German experience of operating a computerised low flying management system. The system in use in Germany is, however, somewhat different in scope and purpose to the automated low flying, flight planning, inquiry and notification system currently being developed for use in the United Kingdom.

Nuclear Weapons Accidents

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will declassify the RN manual BR4022 and the RAF manual AP 110A-0103-IAI, both relating to accident procedures, and subsequent amendments lists; and if he will make those documents available to civilian emergency services and local authorities with emergency planning responsibility.

Mr. Hanley: No. The documents are already available to students on the relevant MOD training courses. Furthermore, the MOD document for local authorities and emergency services, issued in December 1992, gives appropriate guidance on contingency planning and the countermeasures that should be taken to protect the public.

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will organise a nuclear weapon transport accident exercise in Scotland.

Mr. Hanley: Officers from Scottish emergency services and local authorities already participate in the exercises that are an integral part of the MOD's regular nuclear accident response training courses. The MOD also conducts a programme of other nuclear accident response exercises with relevant authorities throughout the United Kingdom. A variety of scenarios are addressed in such exercises, including nuclear weapon transport accidents. An exercise addressing nuclear weapon contingency planning at Coulport was held earlier this year; a nuclear weapon transport exercise will be held in due course in Scotland.

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will make a statement on liaison arrangements and communications equipment which would be used between the RAF incident team and local civilian services and authorities in the event of a nuclear weapons accident in *(a)* Scotland and *(b)* other parts of the United Kingdom;

(2) if he will make a statement on contingency planning for an accident involving a nuclear weapon transported by air over Scotland; and if such weapons are transported by air over Scotland.

Mr. Hanley: Contingency plans for all forms of nuclear weapon transport are described in the MOD guidance

document for local authorities and emergency services, issued in December 1992. A copy has already been placed in the Library.

It is the long-standing policy of successive Governments to neither confirm nor deny the presence of nuclear weapons at any particular place or time; this applies also to the routes that are used for their transportation.

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the maximum amount of time during which traffic on a public road might have to be stopped in a worst case scenario nuclear weapon transport accident.

Mr. Hanley: The duration of traffic restrictions would clearly be entirely dependent on the specific circumstances of an accident.

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will incorporate his Department's guidance to local authorities on response to nuclear weapon transport accidents into the nuclear accident procedures course.

Mr. Hanley: The guidance document for local authorities and emergency services was issued in December 1992. It has already been incorporated into the nuclear accident procedures course.

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will extend the scope and participation of the nuclear accident procedures course to provide local authority input on the same basis as the special safety study period.

Mr. Hanley: Local authority emergency planning officers already lecture to both courses, and equally organisers of both courses encourage constructive inputs from the officers and officials, whether from local authorities or elsewhere, who attend the courses.

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will provide for participation by health boards and regional health authorities in nuclear accident procedures courses and special safety study periods in future.

Mr. Hanley: Officials from health boards and regional health authorities already attend both courses, and have done so for some years.

5 Airborne Brigade

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 21 October, *Official Report*, column *328*, if he will list the wheeled and tracked transport currently available to 5 Airborne Brigade, showing specifically the number of *(a)* six-wheeled buggies, *(b)* Land-Rovers, *(c)* light-wheeled tractors and *(d)* eager-beavers; if he has any plans to increase the on-ground mobility of the brigade; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hanley: 5 Airborne Brigade's current peacetime establishments for the vehicles listed are:

(a) All Terrain Mobile Platforms ("six wheeled buggies"): although 5 Airborne Brigade has no formal establishment for these vehicles, 39 are currently available for the Brigade's use.
(b) Trucks Utility Light/Medium ("Land Rovers")—663.
(c) Light Wheeled Tractors—13.
(d) Rough Terrain Forklifts (formerly known as "Eager Beavers")—22.

In addition, 5 Airborne Brigade uses the following types of wheeled and tracked vehicles:

Motorcycles
Ambulances
Cars and Vans
Minibuses
Recovery Vehicles
Trucks 1 Tonne, 4 Tonne, 8 Tonne
Trucks Utility Heavy
Demountable Rack Offloading and Pick-Up System (DROPS) Medium Mobility Load Carriers
Trailers
Earth Moving Plant
Barrack Mechanical Handling Equipment

The wheeled and tracked transport currently provided for the brigade is sufficient to meet its training and operational needs.

Normandy Landings

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps he proposes to take to commemorate the 50th anniversary in 1994 of the Normandy landings.

Mr. Hanley: The Ministry of Defence has overall responsibility for organising the Government's participation in commemorative events marking the 50th anniverasary of the D-Day landings. An announcement of our plans will be made shortly.

Battle of Arnhem

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what steps he proposes to take to commemorate the 50th anniversary in 1994 of the battle of Arnhem.

Mr. Hanley: The anniversary of the battle of Arnhem is commemorated each year in the Netherlands. The British Government will be represented at an appropriate level at the 50th anniversary in 1994. In addition, the occasion will be marked by a parachute drop by members of 5 Airborne Brigade.

Armed Services Suppliers

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proportion of ammunition and propellants supplied to the armed services are procured from foreign companies; how many of those foreign companies are incorporated in EC states; and what is the value of these contracts.

Mr. Aitken: Less than 5 per cent. by value of our current contracts for ammunition and propellants have been placed directly with foreign companies. Four companies are involved, three of which are incorporated in EC states. The total value of the overseas contracts is £10 million.

Wartime Command Centre

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what has been the total cost to date of the construction of a wartime command centre underneath the Ministry of Defence building in Whitehall.

Mr. Hanley: The total cost to date of the construction and equipping of the command centre underneath the

Ministry of Defence building in Whitehall is some £126 million, of which £66 million was for construction which has now been completed.

Anti-ballistic Missiles

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his Department's latest assessment of the improvements made to Russian anti-ballistic missile defences around Moscow since 1990 and of whether Russia is still acting in strict compliance with the terms of the 1972 anti-ballistic missile treaty.

Mr. Hanley: The current Moscow ballistic missile defence system, which became operational in 1989, includes the Gazelle short-range and Gorgon long-range interceptors and conforms to the 1972 treaty and its protocols. This is a bilateral agreement between the US and Russia, and we are not aware of any compliance concerns at present.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his Department's assessment of Russia's capability to counter ballistic missile attack in areas of its territory which lie outside the operational range of the anti-ballistic missile defences that it deploys around Moscow.

Mr. Hanley: In accordance with the 1972 ABM treaty, there are no strategic missile defences deployed outside of the Moscow ABM system. Some Russian surface-to-air missiles do however have a capability against short-range tactical ballistic missiles, but these are assessed as ineffective against strategic missiles.

Trident

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if the requirement to test fire the United Kingdom's Trident D5 missiles will be significantly less than that for the Polaris missiles;

(2) if the proportion of spare Trident missiles compared to the overall United Kingdom Trident missile buy will be significantly different from that of the United Kingdom's Polaris missile purchase.

Mr. Aitken: There will be no spare Trident missiles. All will be deployed operationally, test fired or form part of a processing margin. The proportion of missiles in the second and third categories is expected to be significantly less than for Polaris.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if the Trident submarines will be capable of deploying a sub-strategic nuclear capability upon entering operational service.

Mr. Aitken: Trident will be able to contribute to our sub-strategic capability on entering service.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if Her Majesty's Government can deploy the Trident system as an effective minimum nuclear deterrent with the number of Trident D5 missiles that have already been purchased from the United States; and whether there is a continuing requirement to purchase further Trident D5 missiles from the United States.

Mr. Aitken: The United Kingdom's Trident strategic nuclear deterrent is not yet ready for operational deployment. As previously announced, further Trident D5 missiles are planned to be purchased from the United States in due course to meet the overall requirements of the Trident programme.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his oral statement of 18 October, *Official Report,* columnns 34-35, if it is Her Majesty's Government's policy to deploy only Trident D5 missiles in the nuclear role when the WE177 eventually leaves service; and what are the implications of the decision for *(a)* the number of Trident D5 missiles required and *(b)* the overall number of nuclear warheads deployed by the United Kingdom.

Mr. Aitken: On current plans, the Trident D5 missile will be the only United Kingdom nuclear system after the WE177 is eventually withdrawn for service. My right hon. and learned Friend's announcement on 18 October does not alter our previous commitment that each Trident submarine will carry no more than 128 warheads. It is not our practice to comment on future plans for the purchase of missiles.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to place the order for the next batch of Trident D5 missiles from the United States.

Mr. Aitken: It is not our practice to reveal our future missile procurement plans.

Tornado

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proportion of Tornado GR1s are withheld from conventional military duties in order to fulfil the sub-strategic nuclear role.

Mr. Hanley: None. All nuclear capable Tornado GR1s are dual-roled and would undertake conventional military duties in wartime until required to fulfil the sub-strategic nuclear role.

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his Department's latest assessment of *(a)* the nuclear weapon programmes of (i) Iran, (ii) Iraq, (iii) Libya and (iv) Syria and *(b)* the earliest date by which (1) Iran, (2) Libya and (3) Syria could develop a crude nuclear weapon and develop the means of delivering a nuclear warhead on a ballistic missile.

Mr. Hanley: The UN inspection teams found incontrovertible evidence that Iraq was developing a crude nuclear weapon and there is concern that Iraq could reinstate its nuclear weapons programme if current UN sanctions were to be lifted. As states which are parties to the nuclear non-proliferation treaty—NPT—Iran, Libya and Syria have undertaken formal commitments not to acquire nuclear weapons which we expect them to honour in full. The experience with Iraq has demonstrated however that membership of the NPT alone is not a guarantee of non-proliferation. We therefore take every opportunity both bilaterally and in international fora to stress the significance we attach to all states which are parties to the NPT complying fully with their obligations.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his Department's latest assessment of the number of air-launched sub-strategic nuclear weapons currently deployed by Russia.

Mr. Hanley: An assessment of the number of air-launched sub-strategic nuclear weapons currently deployed by Russia is complicated by the fact that many are being withdrawn from service and are earmarked for dismantlement. We estimate that a total of 11,000 to 12,000 sub-strategic warheads of all types remain, but it is likely that some are non-operational.

Defence Research Agency

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many members of staff of the DRA at the Woolwich Arsenal site are on paid leave; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Aitken: This is a matter delegated to the Defence Research Agency under its framework document. I have, therefore, asked the chief executive to reply direct to the hon. Member.

Letter from John Chisholm to Mr. John Austin-Walker, dated 28 October 1993:

In today's written answer the Minister of State for Defence Procurement informed you that I would be replying to your question about DRA staff at the Woolwich Arsenal sites.

In answer to the first part of your question, there are no DRA staff members on special paid leave at the Woolwich Arsenal sites, although 10 MOD staff who were until recently on loan to the DRA but have been returned to MOD are on special paid leave whilst MOD examines their future employment.

You also asked for a statement on the DRA situation at Woolwich. As I explained in my letter to you of 5 August commercial pressures have caused me to accelerate plans for the withdrawal of DRA staff from the Woolwich sites. Steps to achieve this withdrawal are in hand. Those scientific and technical staff from Woolwich for whom the DRA has a continuing requirement have now been transferred to the management of other Sectors within the DRA. The staff for whom we regrettably have no jobs have either been given letters of redundancy or have been informed that they will be returning to MOD. The last DRA staff will have left the Woolwich West site by 31 March 1994; a small number will remain on the East site until the end of March 1995.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Kenya (Refugees)

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the Kenyan Government on the problems now being faced in that country as a result of refugees crossing the border from Somalia to Kenya; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: My right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development discussed this issue recently with the Kenyan Foreign Minister. In 1992-93, we provided over £2·4 million via UN agencies and non-governmental organisations as aid to refugees in northern Kenya, over 85 per cent. of whom were Somalis.

Pergau Hydro-electric Project

Dr. John Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will set out the factors underlying his decision to issue a ministerial directive to the accounting officer in his Department to incur expenditure on the Pergau hydro-electric project.

Mr. Hurd: The accounting officer correctly carried out his responsibilities. I reached my decision against the wider background of Britain's interests in Malaysia. I had to take into account that an undertaking had been given at the highest level, and that we had made a formal offer of aid support for the Pergau project to the Malaysian Government. The Malaysians wanted to proceed. It would have been damaging to British companies and to British exports to Malaysia to renege on our undertaking. Later developments including the rapid expansion of our trade indicate that this was the right decision.

Dr. John Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what considerations underlay his Department's decision to arrange for the loan agreement for the Pergau hydro-electric project to be made directly with Tenaga Nasional; and what consideration was given to arranging it with the Government of Malaysia.

Mr. Hurd: The reasons for the loan agreement in respect of the Pergau project being with Tenaga Nasional rather than the Government of Malaysia are set out fully in paragraphs 40 to 42 of the National Audit Office report on the project, laid before the House on 22 October.

Dr. John Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what options for financing the Pergau dam were considered; what was the cost of each; which was chosen; and what considerations underlay the choice.

Mr. Hurd: I refer the right hon. Member to paragraphs 4, 5, 35-39 and 57 and appendix 2 of the National Audit Office report on the project, laid before the House on 22 October.

Aid and Trade

Dr. John Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list each individual scheme which received financial assistance under aid and trade provision since the programme began, in each case giving *(a)* the sum provided, *(b)* the date of project approval and *(c)* the project's location.

Mr. Hurd: A list has been placed in the Library of the House. Central records on ATP projects include the dates of each formal ATP aid agreement concluded with an overseas government, but not the dates of approval of individual projects.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

India

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the current relations between India and Her Majesty's Government.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Our relations with India are excellent.

Kashmir

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations Her Majesty's Government have made to the Governments of Pakistan and India regarding the situation in Kashmir.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: We have regularly discussed the situation in Kashmir with the Governments of India and Pakistan, most recently at the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in Cyprus. We have encouraged both Governments to resolve their differences through bilateral dialogue.

European Parliament

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the rental of hemicycles rented by the European Parliament in *(a)* Strasbourg, *(b)* Brussels and *(c)* Luxembourg; and how often each building will be used for a plenary session in 1993.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The EP is holding 11 plenary sessions in the hemicycle in Strasbourg in 1993, and has held two mini-plenary sessions in the new hemicycle in Brussels this year. It has held none in Luxembourg since 1981.

The detailed appropriations given in section 1, chapter 20 of the "General Budget of the European Community", published in "Official Journal" No. L31, volume 36 of 8 February 1993, copies of which are available in the House, indicate operating expenditure, including rental of buildings, as follows:

Strasbourg:	Palais de l'Europe: 471,200 ecu (approximately £367,583)
Brussels:	D1: 20,750,000 ecu (approximately £16,187,075)

I will write to my hon. Friend if more precise figures are available from the European Parliament.

Endangered Species

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 20 October, *Official Report*, column *242*, if he will give details of the seizures in Hong Kong restaurants and shops of suspected endangered animals and animal products.

Mr. Goodlad: Seizures by the Hong Kong authorities over the past 12 months—1 August 1992 to 3 July 1993—of suspected endangered animals and animal products from Hong Kong shops and restaurants were as follows:

Endangered Species		
Pangolin	Scale	0·43 kg.
Musk	Pod	4 Nos.
	Grain	8·316 G
Rhinoceros	Medicine	4 small vials
Owl	Live	1 Hd.
Sea-Turtle	Stuffed	1 Hd.
	Scale	1 Pc.
Land-Tortoise	Live	3 Hds.
Giant Salamander	Live	26 Hds.
Asiatic Bony	—	—
Tongue Fish	Live	17 Tails
Arapaima Gigas	Live	3 Tails

Chemical Weapons Convention

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when Her Majesty's Government plans to ratify the chemical weapons convention.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Legislation is necessary to enable the United Kingdom to fulfil its obligations under the convention. We intend to ratify the convention as soon as this legislation is in place. The legislation will be introduced when parliamentary time permits.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which countries in the middle east have not signed the chemical weapons convention.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: One hundred and fifty states, including Bahrain, Iran, Israel, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen, have signed the chemical weapons convention since it opened for signature in January 1993. Of the middle eastern countries, only Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon have failed to sign.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the latest date by which 65 signatories to the chemical weapons convention must have ratified the convention in order that it comes into force in January 1995.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The earliest possible date that the chemical weapons convention can enter into force is 13 January 1995. To achieve this 65 signatories must have ratified the convention by 18 July 1994.

Sudan

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent efforts he has made to encourage a peaceful settlement between the warring factions in the Sudan.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Small Heath (Mr. Godsiff) on 18 October, *Official Report*, column 79.

Test Ban Treaty

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will seek the successful negotiation of a comprehensive test ban treaty by September 1996.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The United Kingdom will be seeking a successful outcome to negotiations for a comprehensive test ban treaty within a reasonable time scale. We do not believe that setting a deadline for the treaty's conclusion will necessarily help the conduct of negotiations.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when direct negotiations towards a comprehensive test ban treaty are expected to resume; and which states are expected to participate.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Negotiations for a comprehensive test ban treaty are likely to begin in early 1994, when the conference on disarmament reconvenes in Geneva. We expect that all states who are members of the conference on disarmament will participate.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the conditions that will have to be met before Her Majesty's Government agree to sign a comprehensive test ban treaty.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The United Kingdom will be seeking a comprehensive test ban treaty which makes a real contribution to non-proliferation. Wide adherence and effective verification measures will be important in this regard, but we do not believe it sensible to set rigid conditions that a CTB treaty must satisfy before treaty negotiations begin.

Overseas Conferences

Mr. Tony Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much has been spent by his Department on sponsoring conferences overseas, either alone or jointly, in each of the last two years.

Mr. Goodlad: I regret that details of expenditure on sponsoring conferences overseas are not recorded separately and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Committee of the Regions

Mr. Jonathan Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the Government intend to nominate the United Kingdom members and alternative members of the Committee of the Regions; and whom they will nominate.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: We have today proposed the following list of nominees for appointment by the Council of Ministers, in accordance with article 198a of the Maastricht treaty:

MEMBERS

England

Councillor Simon Day
Devon County
(Conservative)

Lady Anson, DL JP
Waverley District
(Conservative)

Sir Peter Bowness, CBE
London Borough of Croydon
(Conservative)

Councillor Colin Warbrick
Trafford Metropolitan Borough
(Conservative)

Councillor Christopher Penn
Suffolk County
(Conservative)

Councillor Toby Harris
London Borough of Haringey
(Labour)

Councillor Albert Bore
Birmingham Metropolitan Borough
(Labour)

Councillor Josie Farrington
Lancashire County
(Labour)

Councillor George Gill
Gateshead Metropolitan Borough
(Labour)

Councillor Dennis Pettitt
Nottinghamshire County
(Labour)

Councillor Janet Sillett
Norwich District
(Labour)

Councillor Graham Tope
London Borough of Sutton
(Liberal Democrat)

Councillor David Belotti
East Sussex County
(Liberal Democrat)

Councillor Roy Cross
Richmondshire District
(Independent)

Scotland

Councillor Charles Gray
Strathclyde Region
(Labour)

Councillor Rosemary McKenna
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth
District
(Labour)

Councillor Brian Meek
Edinburgh District
(Conservative)

Councillor Duncan McPherson)
Highland Region
(Independent)

Councillor Daniel Coffey, JP
Kilmarnock and Loudoun District
(SNP)

Wales

Councillor John Evans
Rhmney Valley District Council
(Labour)

Lord Kenyon
Wrexham Borough Council
(Conservative)

Councillor Eurig Wyn
Gwynedd County Council
(Plaid Cymru)

Northern Ireland

Councillor Reg Empey
Lord Mayor of Belfast
(UUP)

Councillor Dennis Haughey
Cookstown Borough Council
(SDLP)

ALTERNATE MEMBERS

England

Councillor John Morgan, OBE
Test Valley District
(Conservative)

Councillor Doreen Fleming
Fenland District
(Conservative)

Councillor Fraser Mitchell
Solihull Metropolitan Borough
(Conservative)

Councillor Elgar Jenkins, OBE
Bath District
(Conservative)

Councillor Paul White
Essex County
(Conservative)

Councillor John Battye
Oldham Metropolitan Borough
(Labour)

Councillor Hadley Salt
Barnsley Metropolitan Borough
(Labour)

Councillor Kenneth Bodfish
East Essex County
(Labour)

Councillor Ian Swithinbank
Northumberland County
(Labour)

Councillor Sally Powell
London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham
(Labour)

Councillor Peter Soulsby
Leicester District
(Labour)

Councillor Peter Cocks, CBE
Cornwall County
(Liberal Democrat)

Councillor Tony Prior
South Somerset District
(Liberal Democrat)

Councillor Milner Whiteman
Bridgnorth District
(Independent)

Scotland
Councillor Keith Geddes
Lothian Region
(Labour)

Councillor Jean McFadden
Glasgow District
(Labour)

Councillor Marcus Humphrey
Grampian Region
(Conservative)

Councillor Peter Peacock
Highland Region
(Independent)

Councillor Clive Sneddon
North East Fife District
(Liberal Democrat)

Wales
Councillor Keith Griffiths
Gwent County Council
(Labour)

Councillor Bill Hughes
Swansea City Council
(Conservative)

Councillor Jill Evans
Rhondda Borough Council
Mid Glamorgan County Council
(Plaid Cymru)

Northern Ireland
Councillor Simpson Gibson
Ards Borough Council
(UDUP)

Alderman Sean Neeson
Mayor of Carrickfergus
(Alliance Party)

EDUCATION

Adult Literacy

Mr. Cormack: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will give details of his Department's planned funding for schemes to improve adult literacy in 1992-93 and 1993-94.

Mr. Boswell: In 1992-93 and 1993-94, the Department for Education has provided £3·751 million and £3·815 million respectively in grant to the adult literacy and basic skills unit for its work on adult literacy and basic skills, including £700,000 in each year for the Basic Skills at Work programme. The Department has also made available a further £250,000 in 1993-94 in support of the new family literacy initiative.

Capital Expenditure

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the capital expenditure on education by each local authority in England for *(a)* 1979-80, *(b)* 1982-83, *(c)* 1985-86 and *(d)* each year since 1988-89.

Mr. Forth: The information requested is in the table.

Local authority capital expenditure on Education

£000s

LEA	*1979-80*	*1982-83*	*1985-86*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*
Barking and Dagenham	1,077	2,952	1,785	2,330	1,765	2,073	7,249
Barnet	1,553	3,499	2,909	5,139	2,343	5,255	2,300
Bexley	1,642	1,192	1,883	3,528	3,870	2,666	2,365
Brent	1,921	1,478	n/a	6,343	10,644	6,447	3,727
Bromley	1,310	1,109	2,949	6,873	6,280	5,527	7,215
Croydon	514	1,168	2,526	6,770	15,947	15,764	8,439
Ealing	2,165	2,270	3,903	2,208	5,947	2,816	1,926
Enfield	1,453	786	2,128	5,287	7,740	20,457	16,146
Haringey	2,782	3,798	5,166	4,443	5,020	1,339	2,047
Harrow	775	1,252	1,343	5,447	5,408	3,057	3,538
Havering	714	580	2,158	3,752	5,398	7,618	4,848
Hillingdon	1,781	1,856	2,025	8,487	15,324	4,958	1,717

LEA	1979-80	1982-83	1985-86	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91	1991-92
Hounslow	1,623	4,891	2,527	5,957	10,260	5,300	5,304
Kingston upon Thames	944	1,616	3,925	9,012	2,973	4,144	4,213
Merton	972	768	n/a	3,286	9,273	10,861	3,955
Newham	3,939	3,684	5,002	7,316	10,188	7,128	10,662
Redbridge	1,689	919	2,027	4,136	5,900	5,842	3,264
Richmond upon Thames	1,323	1,366	869	1,221	2,476	3,010	2,946
Sutton	225	456	1,934	3,389	5,443	7,536	7,292
Waltham Forest	1,780	2,828	2,128	6,477	11,853	6,973	3,441
GLC/ILEA	23,158	19,232	33,174	30,309	50,780	—	—
Corporation of London	—	—	—	—	—	18,181	—
Camden	—	—	—	—	—	1,256	2,819
Westminster	—	—	—	—	—	1,301	1,848
Greenwich	—	—	—	—	—	1,909	1,501
Hackney	—	—	—	—	—	1,492	1,203
Hammersmith & Fulham	—	—	—	—	—	2,169	2,071
Islington	—	—	—	—	—	3,872	1,947
Kensington & Chelsea	—	—	—	—	—	5,046	2,798
Lambeth	—	—	—	—	—	894	1,587
Lewisham	—	—	—	—	—	1,522	1,534
Southwark	—	—	—	—	—	1,088	2,159
Wandsworth	—	—	—	—	—	3,818	4,306
Tower Hamlets	—	—	—	—	—	19,602	17,103
Birmingham	6,033	11,396	9,880	5,511	10,663	14,121	14,507
Coventry	4,403	4,423	8,236	12,852	19,705	11,415	6,877
Dudley	1,695	2,505	4,281	4,230	5,549	4,640	6,667
Sandwell	2,210	2,059	3,013	2,228	5,703	4,352	2,740
Solihull	1,182	810	816	2,691	4,191	3,275	3,389
Walsall	3,834	5,237	2,297	3,181	5,712	2,957	2,447
Wolverhampton	4,933	3,264	2,562	3,907	3,551	2,189	2,631
Knowsley	775	825	2,205	1,562	2,869	2,885	1,297
Liverpool	3,818	5,275	8,697	10,818	4,163	3,371	2,477
St. Helens	2,664	3,063	1,812	2,395	2,244	4,530	7,084
Sefton	1,281	878	1,648	1,909	3,362	4,854	3,636
Wirral	1,478	3,507	2,826	5,285	3,629	4,135	4,630
Bolton	1,552	4,736	1,141	3,403	4,645	3,683	1,530
Bury	3,599	1,214	1,053	1,082	1,832	1,324	1,085
Manchester	3,817	8,417	10,871	12,399	14,385	6,184	6,907
Oldham	1,971	1,997	1,957	2,636	3,932	4,701	10,989
Rochdale	2,709	1,378	1,816	2,784	4,003	4,640	7,362
Salford	3,299	1,882	2,412	4,429	6,579	4,868	3,651
Stockport	1,098	1,808	1,371	3,287	5,464	3,123	2,552
Tameside	2,237	2,090	1,356	2,738	2,591	2,250	1,949
Trafford	728	664	1,739	1,633	6,795	11,207	5,333
Wigan	2,911	5,456	2,021	3,984	2,369	3,980	5,322
Barnsley	2,633	540	1,068	1,940	2,733	2,011	1,910
Doncaster	1,979	1,667	656	1,269	1,651	478	410
Rotherham	2,152	1,803	1,172	3,072	3,020	1,976	1,381
Sheffield	2,528	7,257	9,125	21,767	13,393	2,128	6,302
Bradford	2,306	7,105	10,234	12,074	14,388	10,019	12,505
Calderdale	1,597	1,066	1,134	3,338	4,845	2,149	2,153
Kirklees	5,235	5,902	7,565	5,859	4,752	4,779	4,463
Leeds	6,544	20,039	10,308	19,478	16,468	10,903	20,429
Wakefield	2,443	3,174	2,370	5,918	6,237	4,537	3,299
Gateshead	2,201	2,241	1,721	4,213	5,753	4,384	5,078
Newcastle upon Tyne	2,068	3,602	3,147	8,074	6,086	2,520	3,387
North Tyneside	1,686	968	2,248	3,176	1,783	2,122	1,963
South Tyneside	3,252	3,809	3,887	3,778	5,912	4,650	4,584
Sunderland	4,156	2,922	3,357	7,594	6,512	4,229	4,223
Isles of Scilly	17	2	8	56	143	212	50
Avon	2,879	n/a	6,773	9,682	11,049	10,539	15,323
Bedfordshire	5,207	2,883	3,705	5,460	7,556	3,219	1,872
Berkshire	5,900	8,604	11,932	26,090	20,203	10,662	7,357
Buckinghamshire	5,902	6,335	12,292	8,606	12,274	13,941	13,312
Cambridgeshire	7,980	6,596	9,268	17,128	22,488	16,232	22,713
Cheshire	12,069	8,465	9,434	28,455	24,159	10,778	16,465
Cleveland	5,582	9,463	4,816	6,877	6,812	6,643	4,954
Cornwall	5,646	5,648	3,998	7,386	9,021	12,333	11,435
Cumbria	2,232	2,678	5,152	5,913	9,005	8,306	10,100
Derbyshire	6,194	10,447	9,311	15,341	20,754	16,357	14,459
Devon	8,351	10,560	7,802	13,322	20,154	26,053	32,599
Dorset	4,253	6,464	5,758	6,481	6,547	8,900	13,195
Durham	4,560	3,573	3,503	4,785	6,233	5,822	7,159
East Sussex	3,602	8,136	7,361	13,994	16,542	13,937	17,275
Essex	12,489	9,471	12,760	23,950	26,260	19,713	23,992
Gloucestershire	3,678	3,179	8,963	9,211	10,030	11,956	10,569
Hampshire	15,238	12,018	20,369	34,210	30,552	33,101	25,013
Hereford and Worcester	4,665	4,706	4,441	7,315	9,450	11,919	10,656
Hertfordshire	5,459	6,242	12,587	21,138	14,989	14,040	14,091

LEA	1979-80	1982-83	1985-86	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91	1991-92
Humberside	7,543	9,835	7,537	12,380	11,427	10,291	8,578
Isle of Wight	1,588	931	1,280	2,433	2,021	2,712	3,299
Kent	13,601	8,196	7,786	16,121	19,446	18,956	24,964
Lancashire	8,281	13,081	14,387	17,383	19,272	20,675	20,255
Leicestershire	7,672	9,166	11,948	14,852	12,998	13,282	12,543
Lincolnshire	3,633	6,101	8,078	7,894	7,375	11,667	18,463
Norfolk	5,555	6,707	6,453	8,213	7,982	6,936	6,152
North Yorkshire	6,092	4,290	7,403	9,557	8,193	5,586	5,460
Northamptonshire	5,539	4,883	6,882	5,237	9,484	4,956	10,844
Northumberland	4,254	2,442	1,822	2,410	3,102	2,969	3,966
Nottinghamshire	8,253	6,827	5,640	7,385	8,563	6,294	6,318
Oxfordshire	2,837	4,519	6,946	11,034	11,085	11,583	3,524
Shropshire	4,157	2,889	2,761	5,274	5,565	6,561	7,384
Somerset	4,199	3,950	3,690	5,090	8,970	7,777	5,770
Staffordshire	12,976	11,421	10,905	9,532	11,104	8,949	10,160
Suffolk	5,920	4,161	6,089	11,684	10,511	12,377	11,109
Surrey	6,547	9,281	15,164	24,982	26,536	17,896	17,366
Warwickshire	3,539	1,804	2,945	3,879	5,339	5,618	3,602
West Sussex	3,051	4,310	10,420	9,757	11,882	17,028	14,753
Wiltshire	3,810	n/a	5,782	4,829	7,607	9,483	10,009

Note: Details are taken from the Department of the Environment's Capital Payment Return forms, and cover expenditure on schools, polytechnics, further education, youth, and other educational services.

Capital Expenditure

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the national total of capital expenditure on education by local authorities in England for *(a)* 1979-80, *(b)* 1982-83, *(c)* 1985-86 and *(d)* each year since 1988-89; and if he will give the breakdown of the total between (i) non-metropolitan district councils, (ii) county councils, (iii) metropolitan district councils, (iv) London boroughs and (v) the City of London.

Mr. Forth: The information requested is in the table.

Local authority capital expenditure on education by class of authority:

£000s

	1979-80	1982-83	1985-86	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91	1991-92
(i) Non Metropolitan Districts	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
(ii) County Councils	241,670	240,264	304,151	455,326	492,683	456,259	477,108
(iii) Metropolitan Districts	99,007	134,979	132,002	196,494	217,469	165,569	177,099
(iv) London Boroughs	53,340	57,700	80,361	131,710	194,832	172,740	143,470
(v) City of London	—	—	—	—	—	18,181	—
Total	394,017	432,943	516,514	783,530	904,984	812,749	797,677

Notes:

1. Details are taken from the Department of the Environment's Capital Payment Return forms, and cover expenditure on schools, polytechnics, further education, and other educational services.
2. Figures may not match national totals because of non-returns and later adjustments of local authority figures.

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the regional total of capital expenditure on education by the local authorities in England for *(a)* 1979-80, *(b)* 1982-83, *(c)* 1985-86 and *(d)* each year since 1988-89 for each standard English region.

Mr. Forth: The information requested is in the table.

Local authority capital expenditure on education by economic planning region

£000s

	1979-80	1982-83	1985-86	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91	1991-92
1. South East	134,761	138,626	202,963	329,485	394,178	367,709	310,288
2. South West	32,833	29,803	42,774	56,057	73,521	87,253	98,950
3. East Anglia	19,455	17,464	21,810	37,025	40,981	35,545	39,974
4. West Midlands	49,627	50,514	52,137	60,600	86,532	75,996	71,060
5. East Midlands	32,011	37,424	41,859	50,709	59,174	52,556	62,627
6. North West	54,287	64,736	66,746	106,182	112,293	97,188	102,524
7. Yorkshire and Humberside	41,052	62,678	58,572	96,652	87,107	54,857	66,840
8. Northern	29,991	31,698	29,653	46,820	51,198	41,645	45,414
Total	394,017	432,943	516,514	783,530	904,984	812,749	797,677

Notes:

(1) Details are taken from the Department of the Environment's Capital Payment Return forms, and cover expenditure on schools, polytechnics, further education, and other educational services.

(2) Figures may not match national totals because of non-returns and later adjustments of local authority figures.

Pupil-Teacher Ratios

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the pupil-teacher ratio in secondary grant-maintained schools and local education authority maintained schools in each local education authority in England and Wales.

Mr. Robin Squire: The information requested for schools in England is shown in the table. Information on schools in Wales is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Pupil: teacher ratios in LEA-maintained and self-governing secondary schools in each Local Education in England[1]

LEA	Pupil: teacher ratios in: LEA-maintained schools[2]	Self-governing schools
Corporation of London	—	—
Camden	15·3	16·7
Greenwich	16·3	—
Hackney	15·7	—
Hammersmith	15·5	15·7
Islington	17·6	—
Kensington and Chelsea	13·1	15·1
Lambeth	16·4	16·5
Lewisham	17·2	—
Southwark	17·5	16·6
Tower Hamlets	13·8	16·8
Wandsworth	13·0	15·4
Westminster	14·7	—
Barking	16·3	—
Barnet	15·4	14·8
Bexley	16·7	16·9
Brent	13·9	14·5
Bromley	16·1	16·3
Croydon	16·0	16·4
Ealing	14·8	16·0
Enfield	15·9	16·1
Haringey	14·7	—
Harrow	16·1	14·2
Havering	15·7	16·2
Hillingdon	15·0	16·2
Hounslow	15·9	16·9
Kingston upon Thames	15·0	14·7
Merton	15·6	—
Newham	16·2	14·3
Redbridge	16·9	16·7
Richmond upon Thames	16·6	—
Sutton	15·7	16·2
Waltham Forest	15·0	16·3
Birmingham	16·0	16·4
Coventry	14·5	—
Dudley	15·3	15·6
Sandwell	15·2	14·5
Solihull	15·9	—
Walsall	14·8	16·2
Wolverhampton	13·8	15·4
Knowsley	16·6	14·3
Liverpool	15·4	14·5
St Helens	15·3	—
Sefton	16·0	—
Wirral	15·5	16·0
Bolton	15·0	14·9
Bury	16·3	—
Manchester	14·3	—
Oldham	15·0	—
Rochdale	15·5	15·4
Salford	14·8	—
Stockport	16·0	—
Tameside	16·3	16·6
Trafford	15·3	15·8
Wigan	15·1	—
Barnsley	16·2	—
Doncaster	16·0	—
Rotherham	15·0	—
Sheffield	14·9	16·7
Bradford	16·0	15·6
Calderdale	15·5	16·1
Kirklees	15·4	17·1
Leeds	15·6	16·5
Wakefield	16·0	—
Gateshead	15·3	—
Newcastle upon Tyne	15·1	—
North Tyneside	15·5	—
South Tyneside	16·1	—
Sunderland	15·5	—
Isles of Scilly	8·6	—
Avon	16·2	15·9
Bedfordshire	17·3	16·9
Berkshire	15·9	14·8
Buckinghamshire	16·4	15·8
Cambridgeshire	16·3	17·0
Cheshire	16·4	16·2
Cleveland	15·9	—
Cornwall	16·4	—
Cumbria	15·1	15·2
Derbyshire	15·0	15·6
Devon	16·2	16·3
Dorset	16·8	16·3
Durham	16·2	—
East Sussex	16·0	—
Essex	16·7	17·1
Gloucestershire	16·3	16·4
Hampshire	16·4	16·7
Hereford and Worcester	16·7	18·0
Hertfordshire	15·8	16·0
Humberside	16·2	—
Isle of Wight	16·9	—
Kent	17·0	16·9
Lancashire	16·0	15·7
Leicestershire	15·6	17·3
Lincolnshire	15·8	16·4
Norfolk	15·4	15·5
North Yorkshire	15·6	—
Northamptonshire	16·3	15·6
Northumberland	16·9	14·8
Nottinghamshire	15·3	15·1
Oxfordshire	16·7	—
Shropshire	15·1	15·9
Somerset	16·3	11·5
Staffordshire	16·1	15·7
Suffolk	16·1	—
Surrey	16·1	15·3
Warwickshire	16·2	16·0
West Sussex	16·6	—
Wiltshire	15·8	16·3
England	15·9	16·2

[1] Based on pupil and teacher numbers in schools in January 1992. Pupil: teacher ratios for schools which are now self-governing appear in the self-governing column of the table.
[2] Excluding Sixth Form Colleges.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many representations he has received from hon. Members with regard to the method of auditing of the accounts of grant-maintained schools.

Mr. Robin Squire: We have received six such representations this year, of which five concerned the possibility of a role for the Audit Commission which was considered during the passage of the Education Act 1993.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education whether he will list all grant-maintained schools operating at the end of the last financial year stating in each case the extent of any financial surplus or deficit.

Mr. Robin Squire: This information is available only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what grants, other than specific purpose grants, are available to grant-maintained schools.

Mr. Robin Squire: The grants, other than special purpose grants, that are available to self-governing schools, are annual maintenance grant and capital grant.

In addition, self-governing schools are eligible to receive section 11 grant from the Home Office, on whose behalf the Department for Education oversees payments to qualifying self-governing schools.

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what were the capital allocations to grant-maintained schools in Cumbria in the financial years 1991-92, 1992-93 and 1993-94.

Mr. Robin Squire: The following self-governing schools in Cumbria have received capital allocations.

School	*Amount paid in each financial year*		
	1991-92	*1992-93*	*1993-94*
	£	£	£
Appleby Grammar School			
Formula Allocation	—	—	21,220
Brampton Junior School			
Formula Allocation	—	—	8,925
Cartmel Priory School			
Formula Allocation	—	—	16,740
Dallam School			
Formula Allocation	—	—	23,940
Harraby School			
Formula Allocation	—	—	22,200
Hayton Church of England School			
Formula Allocation	—	11,760	—
Named Projects	—	—	170,000
Kirby Stephen School			
Formula Allocation	—	—	17,820
Kirkbie Kendal School			
Formula Allocation	15,900	27,860	28,860
Named Projects	—	—	950,000
Queen Elizabeth Grammar School			
Formula Allocation	5,900	20,080	21,760
Named Projects	—	102,000	—
Scoiby CE Primary School			
Formula Allocation	—	8,440	—
St. Aidan's County High School			
Formula Allocation	—	19,800	21,420
Named Projects	—	—	150,000
The Queen Katherine School			
Formula Allocation	—	18,380	—
Named Projects	—	—	50,000
Trinty School			
Formula Allocation	—	43,360	—
Named Projects	—	—	150,000
			198,000
Warwick Bridge School			
Formula Allocation	—	—	8,493

Some schools have yet to claim their formula allocation for 1993-94.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what payments have been made from public funds to heads of grant-maintained schools to attend conferences, seminars, workshops or meetings on grant-maintained status.

Mr. Robin Squire: The Department has reimbursed head teachers and governors of grant-maintained schools for expenses they have incurred in connection with their attendance at conferences, seminars, workshops and meetings designed to provide factual information on grant-maintained status.

The total amount of such expenses reimbursed by the Department in financial year 1992-93 was £15,234. The figure for the current financial year up to the end of September is £15,546.

Kirbie Kendal School

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to his answer of 18 October, *Official Report*, column *99*, what was the purpose of the specific purpose grant (emergency) paid to the Kirbie Kendal school in the last financial year.

Mr. Robin Squire: The grant was paid in respect of expenditure incurred by the school in connection with meeting the needs of a number of pupils with statements of their speical educational needs.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what *(a)* contacts his Department has had with and *(b)* payments it has made to firms of consultants or accountants in respect of the organisation of conferences, seminars or workshops on grant-maintained status or the provision of advice thereon.

Mr. Robin Squire: The Department has not to date called in consultants or accountants to assist it in, or provide advice on, the organisation of conferences, seminars or workshops designed to provide factual information on grant-maintained status, and has, therefore, not made payments to any such firms in this respect.

The Department does, however, use the services of a number of outside contractors to provide basic support for these events such as secretariat support, venue booking, a mailing service, and the provision of conference equipment.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Overseas Staff and Premises

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the cost for the current financial year of his Department's having *(a)* premises and *(b)* personnel overseas; and what were the comparable figures for (i) 12, (ii) 24, (iii) 36 and (iv) 48 months ago.

Sir John Cope: There is no cost to the Treasury for premises overseas. The cost of locally engaged staff overseas in the current financial year is estimated at £80,000. The cost in 1992-93 was £48,520, in 1991-92 £73,253, in 1990-91 £73,974, and in 1989-90 the cost was £61,694.

Ministerial Salaries

Mr. Allen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 18 October, *Official Report*, column *14*, concerning ministerial salary payments, if he will list each occasion in the last 10 years when payments have been made, giving the amounts in each instance.

Mr. Dorrell: The Parliamentary Pensions Act 1984 introduced severance payments for Ministers and other

paid office holders in the House of Lords, subject to the conditions set out in the Act. The Ministerial and Other Salaries Order 1991 extended the provision to Commons Ministers and other paid office holders in each House.

Although no composite list is kept, we have identified from our records the following occasions on which severance payments have been authorised since 31 July 1984. In each case, the severance payment would have been equal to three months of the relevant ministerial salary, as provided for by the Act.

SEVERANCE PAYMENTS

Date and Ministerial Post

11 September 1984
Minister of State for the Environment

26 March 1985
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Environment

3 September 1985
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster

11 September 1986
Minister of State, Environment
Minister of State, Scottish Office

15 June 1987
Minister of State, Foreign Office
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Trade and Industry

23 July 1989
Secretary of State, Trade and Industry
Minister of State, Foreign & Commonwealth Office

24 July 1989
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Energy

25 July 1989
Lord in Waiting

26 July 1989
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Northern Ireland Office

22 July 1990
Minister of State, Industry

6 September 1990
Minister of State, Scottish Office

3 December 1990
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Northern Ireland Office

22 May 1991
Chief Whip, House of Lords

31 December 1991
Deputy Chief Whip, House of Lords

11 April 1992
Secretary of State, Defence
Secretary of State, Home Office
Secretary of State, Northern Ireland Office
Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Lords

14 April 1992
Minister of State, Defence
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Education and Science
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Energy
Minister of State, Environment
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Health
Minister of State, Home Office
Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office
Minister for the Arts
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Trade and Industry
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Transport
Financial Secretary to the Treasury
Economic Secretary to the Treasury
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Welsh Office

27 April 1992
Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office

5 May
Chairman of Committees, House of Lords
Principal Deputy Chairman of Committees, House of Lords
Deputy Speaker, House of Commons

25 September 1992
Secretary of State, National Heritage

11 December 1992
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Education

26 May 1993
Chancellor of the Exchequer

27 May 1993
Minister of State, Defence
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Trade and Industry
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Office of Public Service and Science
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Transport

6 June 1993
Minister of State, FCO

24 June 1993
Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office

16 September 1993
Chief Whip, House of Lords

Note: Payments to ex-Ministers are made not less than three weeks after the effective date.

Tobacco

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received regarding the retailing of imported tobacco products on which United Kingdom duty has not been paid; what estimates he has of the extent of this retailing; and what action he proposes to prevent it.

Sir John Cope: Representations expressing concern over the illegal importation of tobacco products have been received from Members of Parliament, tobacco manufacturers and retailers.

There are no reliable estimates of the extent of the retailing of illegally imported tobacco products. During the eight-month period January to August, Customs and Excise recorded 464 offences involving 543,791 cigarettes, 7,565 kg of hand-rolling tobacco and 2,809 cigars obtained in other member states of the EC and alleged to be destined for illicit retail sale.

The Finance (No. 2) Act 1992 introduced new offences to meet the threat of increased smuggling of revenue goods following the completion of the single market. The offences carry penalties of up to seven years' imprisonment. Customs and Excise have also implemented new control procedures to catch and deter bootleggers, including the recruitment and training of excise verification officers for intelligence-based targeting and enhanced checks at likely outlets for smuggled goods; increasing the excise intelligence resources within the customs investigation division; increased mutual assistance with other member states, including the appointment of liaison officers to work in the Netherlands, Belgium and France; prosecuting or compounding, with, people and businesses found stocking, handling or dealing commercially in illicit excise goods.

Customs and Excise will continue to review the situation in the light of experience.

Tobacco and Alcohol Imports

Mr. Mills: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the amount of tobacco products imported from France and Spain since 1 January which are sold in the United Kingdom in markets, car boot sales and clubs; and if he will make a statement.

Sir John Cope: No such estimates are available. However, during the eight-month period January to August, Customs and Excise recorded 464 offences involving 543,791 cigarettes, 7,565kg of hand-rolling tobacco and 2,809 cigars obtained in other member states of the EC and alleged to be destined for illicit retail sale.

Income Tax

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the rates of income tax over 25 per cent., and the bands of income, in local currency terms, to which they apply, for France, Germany, the Netherlands, Italy, the United States of America, Canada, Australia and Japan.

Mr. Dorrell: The information requested is as follows.

France

Rate per cent.	*Band of taxable income (francs)*
28·8	60,690—73,450
33·6	73,450—84,740
38·4	84,740—141,190
43·2	141,190—194,190
49	194,190—229,710
53·9	229,710—261,290
56·8	over 261,290

Note:
The above bands of income apply to a single person; they are increased according to the taxpayer's family circumstances, e.g., x 2 for a married person with no children, and x 3 for a married taxpayer with two children.

Germany

The German tax rates rise gradually from 19 per cent. to 53 per cent. The effective rate rises above 25 per cent. when taxable income reaches 28,349 DM (single taxpayer) and the top rate of 53 per cent. takes effect when income is over 120,041 DM. These two amounts are doubled for a married couple taxed jointly.

Netherlands

Rate Per cent.	*Band of taxable income (guilders)*
50	43,267-86,534
60	over 86,534

Italy

Rate Per cent.	*Band of taxable income (lire)*
27	14,400,000-30,000,000
34	30,000,000-60,000,000
41	60,000,000-150,000,000
46	150,000,000-300,000,000
51	over 300,000,000

USA

Rate Per cent.	*Band of taxable income (dollars) Single taxpayer*	*Married couple*
28	22,101-53,500	36,901-89,150
31	53,501-115,000	89,151-140,000
36	115,001-250,000	140,001-250,000
39·6	over 250,000	over 250,000

Note:
The above federal rates only. Most states also levy income tax at varying rates.

Canada

Rate Per cent.	*Band of taxable income (dollars)*
26	29,591–59,180
29	over 59,180

Notes:
1. The above rates are increased by federal surcharges (maximum: 5 per cent. of tax due);
2. All provinces levy income tax, usually as a percentage of federal tax due. For example, the rate in Ontario is 58 per cent., which effectively increases the 26 per cent. and 29 per cent. rates above to 41 per cent. and 45·8 per cent.

Australia

Rate Per cent.	*Band of taxable income (dollars)*
38	9,543–16,438
46	16,439–22,831
47	over 22,831

Japan

Rate Per cent.	*Band of taxable income (yen)*
30	6,000,000–10,000,000
40	10,000,000–20,000,000
50	over 20,000,000

Notes: Local income taxes (maximum: 15 per cent. are also payable.

Mr. Mandelson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much tax was remitted or written off as irrecoverable in 1992; and how much of this was PAYE contributions.

Mr. Dorrell: The amount of tax remitted or written off as irrecoverable in 1992 was:

	£000s
Year ended 31 October 1992	1,694,246

The amount of PAYE contributions remitted or written off as irrecoverable in 1992 was:

	£000s
Year ended 31 October 1992	381,172

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of the total sum raised from personal taxation has been paid by the top *(a)* 1 per cent., *(b)* 5 per cent. and *(c)* 10 per cent. of taxpayers in each year since 1979.

Mr. Dorrell: The latest estimates are given in the tables. Estimates of income tax liability are based on

information reported to tax offices and collected through annual surveys of personal incomes. For years before 1985-86, estimates exclude some investment income on which tax is deducted at source. For years up to and including 1989-90, married couples are counted as one taxpayer and their incomes are combined. Following the introduction of independent taxation, for 1990-91 onwards, husbands and wives are counted separately. Estimates are based on the surveys of personal incomes for years up to 1991-92 and projections of the 1991-92 survey for subsequent years; the latter are therefore provisional.

Percentage of income tax liabilities

Year	*Top 1 per cent. of taxpayers*[1]	*Top 5 per cent. of taxpayers*[1]	*Top 10 per cent. of taxpayers*[1]
1978-79	11	24	34
1983-84	11	26	36
1984-85	12	26	38
1985-86	13	27	38
1986-87	14	29	39
1987-88	15	30	41
1988-89	15	31	42
1989-90	15	31	42
1990-91	15	31	42
1991-92	16	33	43
1992-93[2]	17	34	45
1993-94[2]	17	34	45

[1] Married couples and single people for years prior to 1990-91.
[2] Provisional.

Value Added Tax

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what additional revenue would be generated by extending VAT to newspapers, books and magazines.

Sir John Cope: The publication "Tax Ready Reckoner and Tax Reliefs" shows the cost of not applying VAT at the standard rate to those goods currently zero-rated. For books, newspapers and magazines the figure for 1993-94 is £1·1 billion. This figure makes no allowance for changes in behaviour.

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much could be raised by putting VAT on *(a)* the clothes and *(b)* the footwear of small people including children.

Sir John Cope *[holding answer 25 October 1993]:* The publication "Tax Ready Reckoner and Tax Reliefs" shows that the estimated cost of not standard rating children's clothing and footwear was £600 million in 1993-94. This figure makes no allowance for changes in behaviour if the tax were imposed.

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what is his estimate of the sum that would be raised in the next financial year by imposing VAT on domestic air fares at the standard rate;

(2) what is his estimate of the sum that would be raised in the next financial year by imposing VAT on bus fares at the standard rate.

Sir John Cope *[holding answer 26 October 1993]:* Table 9 of the publication "Tax Ready Reckoner and Tax Reliefs" published by HM Treasury in July 1993 provides an estimate of £1,150 million for the cost of zero-rating domestic passenger transport in 1993-94. Very roughly, around £450 million of this is in respect of bus fares; around £150 million is in respect of air fares. These figures make no allowance for the likely behavioural response to applying VAT at the standard rate to these items.

End-year Flexibility Schemes

Mr. Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the entitlements for 1993-94 resulting from the carry forward of the capital and running costs underspends allowed under the end-year flexibility schemes.

Mr. Portillo *[pursuant to his reply 14 July, 1993, c. 512-18].* The last entry in the table "Cash limits on Votes" shown in columns 515-16 should have read:

Cash limits on Votes

Class	*Vote*	*Accounting Department*	*Description of expenditures*	*Amount £ thousands*
XIX	1	Cabinet Office	Cabinet Office: Other services	868

SOCIAL SECURITY

Social Security Fraud

Mr. Batiste: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the amount of social security fraud which could be prevented by a national photo identity card using modern technology to prevent forgery.

Mr. Hague: It is not possible to estimate the full impact of identity cards on reducing benefit fraud as many social security frauds arise from misrepresentation of the facts rather than false identity. The issue of national identity cards is a matter for the Home Office.

Child Support Agency

Mr. Kevin Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what steps are taken to ensure that, when a maintenance assessment is calculated, the Child Support Agency takes into full account the settlement of financial affairs made in the courts between former partners.

Mr. Burt: Calculation of maintenance by the Child Support Agency is based on the current needs of children, and the current income and outgoings of their parents. The maintenance formula which the agency uses, while not making any direct allowance for capital or property settlements, does take account of the practical consequences of such agreements, since the current housing costs of absent parents are allowed for in calculating their maintenance liability, and a capital settlement may affect the assessable income both of the absent parent and of the parent with care. In such cases, where the practical

outcome is that the absent parent has higher costs or lower income, his maintenance liability will consequently be less.

Mr. Kevin Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what assessment his Department has made of the performance of the Child Support Agency in the first six months of its operation since April.

Mr. Burt: The Child Support Agency is still a new business. Ministers and officials of the Department meet the chief executive regularly to discuss the agency's performance. The agency has made a determined start on its important task of ensuring that more children receive more maintenance more regularly.

Mr. Kevin Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what number of maintenance assessments his Department has set as a target for the Child Support Agency to handle in the first 12 months of operation; and what other performance targets have been set.

Mr. Burt: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has set a limited range of targets for 1993-94 which are set out in the agency's published business plan. They are:

60 per cent. of people with the care of children making eligible applications to the CSA to have maintenance arranged;

annual benefit savings of £530 million;

to maintain the Agency's resources so as to deliver its Business Plan within a total budget of £115 million;

65 per cent. of clients to regard the service as satisfactory, as measured by an independent national survey;

to meet a set of milestone targets which relate to major initiatives.

Accommodation. Open Child Support Agency Centre at Birkenhead and Plymouth by 31 October 1993.

Recruitment and training. Recruit and train sufficient numbers of staff to begin operations at Birkenhead and Plymouth Centres by 31 October 1993.

Staff resources. Develop further the complementing system in the light of live running to inform proposals for staff in the 1994 Public Expenditure Survey.

Child Support Computer System. Implement by 30 June 1993 Release 1·1 of the Child Support Computer System.

Service planning. Child Support Agency Centres and Divisions to produce service plans in time to inform the 1994 Public Expenditure Survey.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) in how many cases considered by the Child Support Agency at the latest date for which figures are available the parent with care has declined to reveal details of the absent parent or to sign the authorisation; in how many of these the explanation has been accepted by the Child Support Agency and no further proceedings taken; and in how many cases investigations are continuing;

(2) how many cases there have been at the latest available date for which figures are available where the parent with care is a man; and what percentage these represent of the total number of cases dealt with by the Child Support Agency;

(3) how many absent parents have appealed against the sum fixed for maintenance by the Child Support Agency; and what percentage this is of the total number of such assessments issued;

(4) how many and what percentage of the total number of Child Support Agency authorisation forms signed at the latest date for which figures are available have been signed by a parent with care in receipt of income support;

(5) how many completed maintenance assessments and what percentage of the total so completed relate to cases where the parent with care is in receipt of income support at the latest date for which figures are available;

(6) what is the average period between the issue of an inquiry form to a parent with care and the fixing by the Child Support Agency of the sum to be paid in maintenance by an absent parent;

(7) what is his best estimate of the administrative cost of processing an individual case by the Child Support Agency from the initial reference of the parent with care to final assessment of the absent parent's maintenance payment and of the average collection costs in a full year;

(8) what estimate he can give of the administrative costs of the Child Support Agency in the first year of its operation;

(9) how many cases there have been at the latest date for which figures are available in which there has been a deduction from income support because of a refusal by a parent with care to supply information about an absent parent;

(10) in how many cases considered by the Child Support Agency, at the latest date for which information is available, the absent parent has disputed parenthood; and in how many of these cases court proceedings to establish parenthood have been instituted or are pending;

(11) how many maintenance assessments have been issued *(a)* in total and *(b)* in each of the Child Support Agency's regional centres at the latest date for which figures are available;

(12) what estimate he can give of the average sum assessed for maintenance by the Child Support Agency where there is *(a)* one child, *(b)* two children and *(c)* more than two children at the latest date for which such figures are available;

(13) how many authorisation forms have been signed by parents with care *(a)* in total and *(b)* in each of the Child Support Agency's regional centres, respectively, at the latest available date for which figures are available;

(14) how many staff are presently employed by the Child Support Agency *(a)* in total, *(b)* at headquarters and *(c)* at each of the regional centres.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Mr. Donald Dewar, dated 27 October 1993:

As Chief Executive of the Child Support Agency it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to your recent Parliamentary Questions to the Secretary of State for Social Security about various aspects of the work of the Child Support Agency.

I should perhaps first explain that the information refers to the period 5 April to 30 September 1993 except where otherwise indicated, and that the Agency does not distinguish whether a Parent with Care of children or an Absent Parent is male or female.

You ask about cases where the requirement to co-operate has been an issue. The number of such cases to 30 September 1993 is 6,600, and in 4,900 of these the Agency has accepted that the Parent with Care had good cause not to co-operate in pursuing a

maintenance claim. Of those cases in which "good cause" was not accepted, only 22 have been referred to the Benefits Agency for the prescribed benefit reduction.

As regards appeals, at 30 September 1993, 2,825 clients had requested a review of their maintenance assessment, representing 7·7 per cent. of the total number of maintenance assessments in the same period. In addition the Independent Tribunal Service had approached the Agency for a report in 86 appeal cases. The Agency does not distinguish between appeals made by Absent Parents and Parents with Care.

You ask specifically about Income Support claimants. To date, 527,000 Maintenance Application Forms (MAFs) have been issued and of these 385,000 (ie, 73 per cent.) were in respect of parents with care on Income Support, 328,000 MAFs have been returned but the number of these which relate to Income Support clients is not known as this information is not collected. Information on MAFs returned and maintenance assessments completed and broken down by CSA Centre (CSAC) is contained in Annex A.

Information on the time taken to process maintenance applications is not yet available but we anticipate that this will take between 6 and 12 weeks in a straightforward case and longer in more difficult cases.

You ask about the Agency's costs and I should explain that the fees, £44 for the Agency's assessment service and £34 for the collection service, are based on the full economic cost of administering the Agency's services to its clients. The Agency's administrative budget for 1993-94 is £115 million (ie, £95 million in running costs and £7 million in capital costs) and £13 million in other costs. This information was contained in the Agency's Business Plan. No changes have been made to the agreed budget.

With regard to disputed paternity, there have been less than 1,000 cases to date of which fewer than 20 have been referred to the courts to be resolved.

Figures on the average amount of maintenance assessment payments are not yet available. The Child Support Act provides for maintenance to be assessed by means of a standard formula, which will result, on average, in payments of £40-£50 a week. This compares to the £25-£30 a week which was previously the average maintenance payment.

Information on staff employed by the Agency is contained in Annex B.

I hope you will find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the Official Report and a copy will also be placed in the Library.

Maintenance assessments completed

	Year to 30 September 1993
Belfast CSAC	3,862
Birkenhead CSAC	7,582
Dudley CSAC	7,420
Falkirk CSAC	7,074
Hastings CSAC	4,892
Plymouth CSAC	5,780
Total	36,610

Maintenance assessment forms returned

	Year to 1 October 1993
Belfast CSAC	68,100
Birkenhead CSAC	61,100
Dudley CSAC	58,100
Falkirk CSAC	56,700
Hastings CSAC	38,200
Plymouth CSAC	46,500
Total	328,700

Staffing

Staff employed by the Child Support Agency at 1 October 1993

	Number
CSA Total	[1]4,594
Headquarters	231
Birkenhead CSAC	368
Dudley CSAC	512
Falkirk CSAC	439
Hastings CSAC	568
Plymouth CSAC	363
Belfast CSAC[2]	431

[1] This figure includes CSA Local Office and 723 part-time staff.
[2] This figure represents those staff in Belfast who deal with cases from Great Britain. They are Northern Ireland Civil Servant and do not appear in the total Agency figures shown above.

Household Income

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what are the median incomes for the top, ninth, eighth, seventh and sixth deciles, before and after housing costs for the years 1979 and 1990-91, in terms of net equivalised household income.

Mr. Burt: The information is provided in the tables.

Median net equivalised household income of top five deciles
(£ per week—April 1993 prices)

Year	*Decile Group Medians*				
	Decile 6	*Decile 7*	*Decile 8*	*Decile 9*	*Decile 10*
Before housing costs					
1979	180	202	230	226	349
1990-91	229	264	313	381	551
After housing costs					
1979	157	177	201	233	308
1990-91	201	235	277	338	498

Notes:
1. All figures are subject to sampling error.

TRANSPORT

New Rolling Stock

Mr. Gunnell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to come to a consultation on the review of the timing of new rolling stock, pursuant to the West Yorkshire passenger transport authority's letter of 11 October.

Mr. Freeman: My officials will be discussing with the passenger transport executive a number of issues raised in the appraisal. Subject to a satisfactory resolution of those issues, I am hopeful that we will be able to complete our review of the timing of new rolling stock within six weeks.

Vehicle Operator Licensing

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) how many heavy goods vehicles are exempt from goods operator licensing;

(2) if he will list each type of vehicle exempt from goods vehicle operator licensing.

Mr. Key: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Leeds, Central (Mr. Fatchett) on Tuesday 26 October, at columns *539-40*.

HGV Drivers

Mr. Pickthall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will institute a review of the regulations governing licences for heavy goods vehicle drivers with insulin-dependent diabetes.

Mr. Key: Regulations introduced on 1 April 1991 included insulin treated diabetes as a bar to entitlement to drive large lorries and buses for new applicants and those first treated with insulin after this date. The effect of diabetes on driving is kept under constant reassessment by the honorary medical advisory panel on driving and diabetes mellitus.

Bus Services, London

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what reasons underlie his decision to apply different rules for publication of the terms of commercial contracts between tenderers for contracts with public bodies providing urban bus services inside Greater London and those elsewhere in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Norris: Different legislation governs the provision of bus services in London from that in the rest of the country.

Outside London, the rules for publication of information about bus route contracts are laid down by the Transport Act 1985. Inside London, it is London Transport which is responsible for deciding whether to publish the terms of commercial contracts for the provision of tendered bus services.

London Underground (Safety)

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will set out the statistics he has given in response to the figures presented to him by London Underground Ltd. relating to the impact of its plans, entitled "A Decently Modern Metro", of reductions in capital funding for safety and maintenance of this system at levels below those already indicated by Her Majesty's Government.

Mr. Norris: We are still discussing with London Underground Ltd.—LUL—its plans for "A Decently Modern Metro", and I cannot comment on future funding levels in advance of the unified budget. Safety on London Underground remains, of course, a top priority for LUL and Government.

Transport Capital Finance

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what was the national total of capital allocations for transport to local authorities in England for *(a)* 1979-80, *(b)* 1982-83, *(c)* 1985-86 and *(d)* each year since 1988-89; and if he will give the breakdown of the total between (i) non-metropolitan district councils, (ii) county councils, (iii) metropolitan district councils, (iv) London boroughs and (v) the City of London;

(2) what was the capital allocation for transport for each local authority in England for *(a)* 1979-80, *(b)* 1982-83, *(c)* 1985-86 and *(d)* each year since 1988-89;

(3) what was the national total of capital expenditure on transport by local authorities in England for *(a)* 1979-80, *(b)* 1982-83, *(c)* 1985-86 and *(d)* each year since 1988-89; and if he will give the breakdown of the total between (i) non-metropolitan district councils, (ii) county councils, (iii) metropolitan district councils, (iv) London boroughs and (v) the City of London;

(4) what was the regional total of capital allocations for transport to the local authorities in England for *(a)* 1979-80, *(b)* 1982-83, *(c)* 1985-86 and *(d)* each year since 1988-89 for each standard English region;

(5) what was the capital expenditure on transport by each local authority in England for *(a)* 1979-80, *(b)* 1982-83, *(c)* 1985-86 and *(d)* each year since 1988-89;

(6) what was the regional total of capital expenditure on transport by the local authorities in England for *(a)* 1979-80, *(b)* 1982-83, *(c)* 1985-86 and *(d)* each year since 1988-89 for each standard English region.

Mr. MacGregor: This information is collected centrally by the Department of the Environment. I refer the hon. Member to the answer given today by my hon. Friend the Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry), the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment.

Rail Franchising Director

Mr. Colin Shepherd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will publish a draft of the objectives, instructions and guidance which he would intend to set for the Passenger Railway Franchising Director as provided for under clause 5 of the Railways Bill.

Mr. Freeman: I am today placing copies of a draft in the Libraries of both Houses.

HEALTH

Nursing Home Beds

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the number of registered nursing home beds in 1991-92 in each health authority in England.

Mr. Bowis: This information is published in the annual summary "Private Hospitals, Homes and Clinics Registered under Section 23 of the Registered Homes Act 1984" which has been placed in the Library.

Regional Health Authorities

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proposals she has to reduce the number of regional health authorities or change the areas which they cover.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer the hon. Member to the reply my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State gave the hon. Member for Leicester south (Mr. Marshall) on 26 October, at column *675*.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information she has in respect of the number of representations in respect of the recent NHS trusts approved; and how many representations in each consultation were considered *(a)* to favour trust status, *(b)* to oppose trust status and *(c)* to be neutral.

Mr. Sackville: As with all national health service bodies, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has available very wide-ranging information about all key aspects of the running of the NHS trusts in question.

A breakdown of the results of consultation is shown in the table.

	Supportive	Opposed	Neutral
South Western RHA			
Plymouth Hospitals	15	7	8
South East Thames RHA			
The Medway	3	7	17
North Kent Healthcare	4	8	21
Queen Victoria Hospital	987	6	106
Kent Ambulance	7	2	22
South Kent Community Healthcare	0	0	7
South East London Mental Health	6	1	6
Dartford and Gravesham	5	3	7
East Anglian RHA			
Norwich Community Health Partnership	29	60	7
Norfolk Mental Health Care	12	49	4
North East Thames RHA			
Haringey Health Care	9	5	10
New Possibilities	16	1	11
Mid Essex Community and Mental Health	10	1	7
West Midlands RHA			
Hereford Hospitals	6	1	9
The George Eliot Hospital	39	9	6
Northern Birmingham Community Health	11	0	14
Robert Jones and Agnes Hunt Orthopaedic and District Hospital	15	7	9
Royal Shrewsbury Hospitals	7	8	10
South Warwickshire Mental Health Services	8	2	3
The Royal Wolverhampton Hospitals	11	2	6
Worcester Royal Infirmary	21	3	6
Hereford and Worcester Ambulance Service	15	2	7
Warwickshire Ambulance Service	28	11	2
Shropshire Community Health Service	16	6	11
North Staffordshire Combined Healthcare	17	3	6
South Birmingham Community Health	8	6	21
Solihull Healthcare	6	0	11
City Hospitals	8	6	22
Birmingham Women's Health Care	7	6	17
Birmingham Heartlands Hospital	48	0	11
Oxford RHA			
Kettering General Hospital	8	9	13
Rockingham Forest	6	9	15
Northampton Community Healthcare	4	8	11
Northampton General Hospital	8	12	27
Oxfordshire Community Health	10	6	38
Oxford Mental Healthcare	9	7	34
Oxfordshire Ambulance	4	6	14
Churchill John Radcliffe	15	14	29
Stoke Mandeville Hospital	12	4	19
North West Thames RHA			
Riverside Community Health Care	6	–	3
Northern RHA			
Bishop Auckland Hospitals	6	8	6
Carlisle Hospitals	13	8	6
Cheviot and Wansbeck	13	7	4
City Hospitals Sunderland	10	12	4
Darlington Memorial Hospital	4	9	8
North Durham Acute Hospitals	10	13	9
Community Health Care, North Durham	9	11	6
North Lakeland Healthcare	5	7	5
Hartlepool and Peterlee Hospitals	3	8	4
Hartlepool Community Care	2	8	3
North Tyneside Health Care	11	8	5
Northumberland Community Health	9	5	5
Priority Healthcare Wearside	10	35	6
South Durham Health	6	18	5
Trent RHA			
Derbyshire Ambulance Service	10	7	6
The King's Mill Centre for Health Care Services	12	6	9
Leicestershire Ambulance and Paramedic Service	18	7	4
Leicestershire Mental Health Service	13	6	10
Lincoln District Healthcare	19	5	17
Lincoln Hospitals	15	4	14
Louth and District Healthcare	6	7	10
Community Health Care Service (North Derbyshire)	9	8	11
Nottingham Healthcare	16	7	13
Pilgrim Health	18	3	14
Community Health Sheffield	17	17	7
Derbyshire Royal Infirmary	9	7	13
Yorkshire RHA			
Dewsbury Health Care	3	2	4
East Yorkshire Community Healthcare	16	0	8
Hull and Holderness Community Health	18	2	7
North Western RHA			
CommuniCare	10	5	16
Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley Health Care	10	6	15
Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde Community Health Services	11	9	15
Community Healthcare Bolton	8	11	18
Bolton Hospitals	10	23	23
Bury Health Care	37	12	20
Greater Manchester Ambulance Service	9	16	20
Lancashire Ambulance Service	17	11	20
North Manchester Healthcare	16	8	15
Guild Community Healthcare	12	4	6
Preston Acute Hospitals	12	5	16
Mental Health Services of Salford	1	1	0

	Supportive	Opposed	Neutral
Salford Community Health Care	11	5	11
Stockport Healthcare	12	14	22
Stockport Acute Services	14	14	12
Tameside and Glossop Acute Services	11	5	14
Tameside and Glossop Community and Priority Services	11	5	21
Blackpool Victoria Hospital	14	13	15
Mersey RHA			
West Cheshire	9	2	14
Wirral Community Healthcare	11	3	9
Wessex RHA			
East Wiltshire Health Care	6	3	3
Portsmouth Health Care	8	1	6
Salisbury Health Care	11	1	6
Swindon and Marlborough	6	2	5
Winchester and Eastleigh Healthcare	4	1	11
South West Thames RHA			
Chichester Priority Care Services	6	2	6
North Downs Community Health	8	3	7
Kingston and District Community	5	1	6
Worthing and Southlands Hospitals	14	6	9
Wandsworth Community Health	7	2	6

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many trusts have been established; what is their total budget; and what percentage of the NHS total expenditure this accounts for.

Mr. Sackville: The total number of first, second and third wave national health service trusts operational in England in 1993-94 is 292. Trusts do not have specific budgets but obtain much of their income by contracting for patient services. Total forecast income for NHS trusts in 1993-94 is £13·5 billion, representing 44 per cent. of total NHS gross expenditure.

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many health service trusts have provided business plans; and how many of these have been made available to the public or to hon. Members;

(2) what plans she has to give hon. Members a statutory right to have access to the business plans of the health service trusts which serve their constituency; and what existing guidelines there are about making such plans available to *(a)* hon. Members and *(b)* the public.

Dr. Mawhinney: National health service trusts are required to provide the NHS Management Executive with a three-year business plan every year and have done so. They are also expected to make a summary business plan available to the public, including hon. Members, by 31 March each year. The arrangements for making plans available to the public are for individual trusts to determine and no central record of their issue is maintained. There are no plans to give hon. Members statutory rights to access the business plans.

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for Health to whom health service trusts are accountable for their business plans and expenditure outturns; and what plans she has to improve that accountability.

Dr. Mawhinney: National health service trusts are accountable to the NHS Management Executive for both their business plans and their expenditure outturn. These accountability arrangements are effective and we have no current plans to make any changes.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many NHS staff members serve as *(a)* non-executive directors and *(b)* chairs on trust boards in each region.

Dr. Mawhinney: The regulations governing membership of national health service trust boards disqualify NHS employees from serving as chairmen or non-executive directors of NHS trusts, except that a designated teaching trust will have a non-executive director drawn from a university, who may be an employee of a health service body.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 27 July, *Official Report*, column 826, if she will provide a list of fourth-wave trusts which received grants, indicating the value of the grant, by district health authority.

Mr. Sackville: The successful fourth wave national health service trust applicants are listed by regional and district health authority. Unless otherwise stated, allocations totalling £254,000 will have been made in respect of these applicants. These additional moneys have been made available to cover the following: public consultation, conveyancing and expenditure during the trust's "shadow period".

Successful 4th wave NHS Trust applicants listed by regional and district health authority.

WEST MIDLANDS REGIONAL HEALTH AUTHORITY

Herefordshire Health Authority
Hereford Hospitals

Warwickshire Health Authority
The George Eliot Hospital
South Warwickshire Mental Health Services

Wolverhampton Health Authority
The Royal Wolverhampton Hospitals

Worcester and District Health Authority
Hereford and Worcester Ambulance Service
Worcester Royal Infirmary

Warwickshire Health Authority
Warwickshire Ambulance Service

Shropshire Health Authority
Robert Jones and Agnes Hunt Orthopaedic and District Hospital
Shropshire Community Health Service
Royal Shrewsbury Hospitals

North Staffordshire Health Authority
North Staffordshire Combined Healthcare

Solihull Health Authority
Solihull Healthcare

West Birmingham Health Authority
City Hospitals

South Birmingham Health Authority
Birmingham Women's Health Care
South Birmingham Community Health

East Birmingham Health Authority
Northern Birmingham Community Health
Birmingham Heartlands Hospital[1]

OXFORD REGIONAL HEALTH AUTHORITY

Kettering Health Authority
Kettering General Hospital
Rockingham Forest

Northampton Health Authority
Northampton General Hospital
Northampton Community Healthcare

Oxfordshire Health Authority
Churchill John Radcliffe
Oxfordshire Ambulance
Oxfordshire Community Health
Oxfordshire Mental Healthcare

Buckinghamshire Health Authority
Stoke Mandeville Hospital

NORTH WEST THAMES REGIONAL HEALTH AUTHORITY

Ealing Hounslow and Hammersmith Health Agency
Riverside Community Health Care

NORTH EAST THAMES REGIONAL HEALTH AUTHORITY

New River Health Authority
Haringey Health Care

North Essex Health Authority
Mid Essex Community and Mental Health[2]
New Possibilities[2]

EAST ANGLIAN REGIONAL HEALTH AUTHORITY

Norwich Health Authority
Norwich Community Health Partnership
Norfolk Mental Health Care

SOUTH EAST THAMES REGIONAL HEALTH AUTHORITY

Tunbridge Wells Health Authority
Queen Victorial Hospital

Medway Health Authority
Kent Ambulance
The Medway
North Kent Healthcare

South East London Health Authority
South East London Mental Health

South East Kent Health Authority
South Kent Community Healthcare

Dartford and Gravesham Health Authority
Dartford and Gravesham

SOUTH WEST THAMES REGIONAL HEALTH AUTHORITY

Chichester Health Authority
Chichester Priority Care Services

South West Surrey Health Authority
North Downs Community Health

Kingston and Richmond Health Authority
Kingston and District Community

Worthing Health Authority
Worthing and Southlands Hospitals

Wandsworth Health Authority
Wandsworth Community Health

WESSEX REGIONAL HEALTH AUTHORITY

Swindon Health Authority
East Wiltshire Health Care
Swindon and Marlborough

Portsmouth and South East Hampshire Health Authority
Portsmouth Health Care

Salisbury Health Authority
Salisbury Health Care

Winchester Health Authority
Winchester and Eastleigh Healthcare.

SOUTH WESTERN REGIONAL HEALTH AUTHORITY

Plymouth and Torbay Health Authority
Plymouth Hospitals

NORTHERN REGIONAL HEALTH AUTHORITY

South Durham Health Authority
Bishop Auckland Hospitals
Darlington Memorial Hospital
South Durham Healthcare

East Cumbria Health Authority
Carlisle Hospitals
North Lakeland Healthcare

Northumberland Health Authority
Cheviot and Wansbeck
Northumberland Community Health

Sunderland Health Authority
City Hospitals Sunderland
Priority Healthcare Wearside

North Durham Health Authority
North Durham Acute Hospitals
Community Health Care, North Durham

Hartlepool Health Authority
Hartlepool Community Care
Hartlepool and Peterlee Hospitals

North Tyneside Health Authority
North Tyneside Health Care

TRENT REGIONAL HEALTH AUTHORITY

Southern Derbyshire Health Authority
Derbyshire Ambulance Service
Derbyshire Royal Infirmary

North Nottinghamshire Health Authority
The King's Mill Centre for Health Care Services

Leicestershire Health Authority
Leicestershire Ambulance and Paramedic Service
Leicestershire Mental Health Service

North Lincolnshire Health Authority
Lincoln District Healthcare
Lincoln Hospitals
Louth and District Healthcare

North Derbyshire Health Authority
Community Health Care Service (North Derbyshire)

Nottingham Health Authority
Nottingham Healthcare

South Lincolnshire Health Authority
Pilgrim Health

Sheffield Health Authority
Community Health Sheffield

YORKSHIRE REGIONAL HEALTH AUTHORITY

West Yorkshire Health Authority
Dewsbury Health Care

East Riding Health Authority
East Yorkshire Community Healthcare
Hull and Holderness Community Health

NORTH WESTERN REGIONAL HEALTH AUTHORITY

Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley Health Authority
Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley Health Care
CommuniCare

Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde Health Authority
Blackpool, Wyre and Fylde Community Health Services
Blackpool Victoria Hospital

Bolton Health Authority
Community Healthcare Bolton
Bolton Hospitals

Bury Health Authority
Bury Health Care
Greater Manchester Ambulance Service

North Manchester Health Authority
North Manchester Healthcare

Preston Health Authority
Guild Community Healthcare
Preston Acute Hospitals
Lancashire Ambulance Service

Salford Health Authority
Mental Health Services of Salford
Salford Community Health Care

Stockport Health Authority
Stockport Healthcare
Stockport Acute Services

Tameside and Glossop Health Authority
Tameside and Glossop Acute Services
Tameside and Glossop Community and Priority Services

MERSEY REGIONAL HEALTH AUTHORITY

Chester Health Authority
West Cheshire

Wirral Health Authority
Wirral Community Healthcare

[1] Birmingham Heartlands Hospital is to be reconfigured without the requirement to dissolve the existing Trust under guidance issued in TEL(93)1, copies of which are available in Library. Since this is a minor reconfiguration no additional allocations have been made for conveyancing or expenditure incurred during "shadow period". Therefore, an additional allocation of only £13,000 has been made in respect of this Trust to cover the costs of the public consultation exercise.

[2] Both these successful applications are existing trusts reconfiguring with directly managed units. Although the costs of public consultation and conveyancing are covered the applicants are only eligible for half of the allocation made to cover expenditure incurred during the shadow period. Therefore, additional allocations of only £147,000 have been made in respect of these two applications.

Perioperative Deaths

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to conduct an inquiry into the number and causes of perioperative death of patients; if she will estimate the numbers so dying in each of the last five years; and if she will list the numbers preventable in each of the last five years and the broad preventable causes of death.

Mr. Sackville: The Department of Health already supports the national confidential inquiry into perioperative deaths. Information on the number of people who die following surgery is not available centrally. A table on trends in "avoidable" deaths, 1979-92, for a selected number of conditions is contained in "Health and Personal Social Services Statistics 1992", copies of which are available in the Library. While it would not be possible to prevent every death deemed to be "avoidable", it is expected that a substantial proportion could be prevented.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the findings of the NCEPOD report on the confidential inquiry into perioperative death.

Mr. Sackville: The national confidential inquiry into perioperative deaths—NCEPOD—is an important study for patients and the National Health Service. It provides valuable reassurance about the quality of surgical and anaesthetic care. We welcome the inquiry's conclusion that across the range of specialties covered, patients can rely on excellent standards. Some of the problems identified in previous reports, such as the percentage of consultants involved in decisions on patient care, are improving. There is, however, room for further improvement. For example there is scope for clinicians and local managers in some areas to work together to improve operating facilities. The report also identifies issues for the medical profession which can improve standards of professional practice, such as in the prevention of pulmonary embolism and in the control of fluids in elderly patients.

Through careful assessment of clinical standards, this inquiry helps to ensure that the medical profession retains a critical approach to its work. The Government wish to encourage all surgeons and anaesthetists to continue to support NCEPOD, and NHS managers and the profession to act on the results. We expect all doctors to participate in peer review activities, and we provide continuing financial support for medical and clinical audit, as well as for NCEPOD. In these ways, doctors can develop confidence in their clinical performance and identify areas where they can further develop their expertise.

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to require contractors to write into contracts a confidential inquiry into perioperative death data requirement.

Mr. Sackville: It is for individual health authorities to establish local health needs and on that basis determine what they include in their contracts.

Junior Doctors

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to ensure that her targets for the reduction of junior doctors' hours are reached.

Dr. Mawhinney: Our targets for reducing junior doctors' hours are set out in "Junior Doctors: The New Deal", copies of which are available in the Library. It is for local units to develop plans to achieve these targets, but regional task forces support local action, monitor progress and report regularly to the National Health Service Management Executive.

We are also providing an extra £12·2 million from central funds this year to establish a further 125 consultant posts targeted to reduce hours and for other local initiatives to promote the new deal. This is in addition to the £24·8 million we are spending this year to support action begun in the past two years.

Footwear

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidelines she has on healthy footwear in adults and children.

Mr. Sackville: None.

Anti-smoking Patches

Mr. Burden: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her policy regarding the availability of anti-smoking patches on the national health service; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: We have decided that nicotine patches should not be available on national health service prescription. We do not consider their supply to be a priority for the use of the limited resources available to the national health service. Statutory Instrument 2421—the National Health Service (General Medical Services) Amendment (No. 2) Regulations 1993—which was laid before the House on 11 October, adds a number of nicotine patch products to the list of items which cannot be prescribed by general practitioners.

Community Care

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will give greater account in the system for allocating community care resources for 1994-95 to the assessed needs of people in different areas, relative to the amount of historical provision in the independent sector.

Mr. Bowis: Decisions about the distribution of the community care special transitional grant in 1994-95 will be announced in due course. The movement of this year's grant into personal social services standard spending assessments in 1994-95 will, in itself, mean that an increased proportion of the new resources for community care will be distributed according to SSAs.

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps are being taken to co-ordinate the review of the system of allocation of resources for community care for 1994-95 with the review of local authority standard spending assessments.

Mr. Bowis: The standard spending assessment review will be among the factors taken into account when decisions are made about the distribution of the community care special transitional grant in 1994-95.

Sight Tests

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many national health service sight tests paid for by family health service authorities took place in 1992-93 in each regional health authority.

Dr. Mawhinney: The number of national health service sight tests paid for by family health service authorities in 1992-93 is shown in the table.

RHA	*1992-93*
Northern	345,890
Yorkshire	408,800
Trent	528,080
East Anglia	222,090
North West Thames	397,350
North East Thames	494,040
South East Thames	406,730
South West Thames	295,330
Wessex	348,770
Oxford	276,510
South Western	435,370
West Midlands	640,530
Mersey	271,730
North Western	456,360
England[1]	5,527,590

[1]The total may not equal the sum of the components due to rounding.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 14 July, *Official Report*, columns *532-34*, if she can now give the final figures for 1992-93 for sight tests.

Dr. Mawhinney: The figures have been validated, and remain unchanged from those provided in my reply to the hon. Member on 14 July at columns *532-34*.

Personal Social Services

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what was the regional total of capital allocations for personal social services to the local authorities in England for *(a)* 1979-80, *(b)* 1982-83, *(c)* 1985-86 and *(d)* each year since 1988-89 for each standard English region;

(2) what was the capital expenditure on personal social services by each local authority in England for *(a)* 1979-80, *(b)* 1982-83, *(c)* 1985-86 and *(d)* each year since 1988-89;

(3) what was the national total of capital allocations for personal social services to local authorities in England for *(a)* 1979-80, *(b)* 1982-83, *(c)* 1985-86 and *(d)* each year since 1988-89; and if he will give the breakdown of the total between (i) non-metropolitan district councils, (ii) county councils, (iii) metropolitan district councils, (iv) London boroughs and (v) the City of London;

(4) what was the capital allocation for personal social services for each local authority in England for *(a)* 1979-80, *(b)* 1982-83, *(c)* 1985-86 and *(d)* each year since 1988-89;

(5) what was the regional total of capital expenditure on personal social services by the local authorities in England for *(a)* 1979-80, *(b)* 1982-83, *(c)* 1985-86 and *(d)* each year since 1988-89 for each standard English region;

(6) what was the national total of capital expenditure on personal social services by local authorities in England for *(a)* 1979-80, *(b)* 1982-83, *(c)* 1985-86 and *(d)* each year since 1988-89; and if he will give the breakdown of the

total between (i) non-metropolitan district councils, (ii) county councils, (iii) metropolitan district councils, (iv) London boroughs and (v) the City of London.

Mr. Sackville: This information is collected centrally by the Department of the Environment. I refer the hon. Member to the reply given today by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, my hon. Friend the Member for Banbury (Mr. Baldry).

GPs (Misconduct)

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Health in what circumstances under which a general practitioner found guilty of serious professional misconduct by the General Medical Council can be allowed to continue to practise; and what assessment she has made of whether patients are sufficiently protected.

Dr. Mawhinney: It is a matter for the professional conduct committee of the General Medical Council to decide whether a doctor is fit to continue practising after he has been found guilty of serious professional misconduct. Where a finding of serious professional misconduct is made by the professional conduct committee, it may order that the name of the practitioner concerned is erased from the register; that his registration be suspended, or that his continuing registration be dependent upon his compliance with such conditions of practice as the committee may think fit. The professional conduct committee would need to consider each case on its merits having regard to its primary concerns to protect the public and uphold the reputation of the profession.

The Government's aim is to ensure that proper controls exist to protect patients against the risk of deficient conduct and professional regulatory bodies like the GMC have an important role to play in safeguarding standards of medical care. Under the terms of the Medical Act 1983, the disciplinary remit of the GMC covers only those offences amounting to serious professional misconduct.

A family health service authority has a duty to remove from its medical list the name of any general practitioner whose name has been erased from the medical register, or whose registration has been suspended, following disciplinary proceedings by the GMC.

The GMC is proposing to introduce performance procedures which would apply where a doctor's pattern of professional performance was seriously deficient but did not amount to serious professional misconduct. We support the GMC in its aims and will continue to contribute to the discussions about the detail of the proposals.

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Health in what circumstances it is possible for a general practitioner to continue to provide NHS services after a direction has been made by the General Medical Council that his or her name be erased from the register; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: A doctor who is the subject of a decision by the General Medical Council's professional conduct committee to erase his or her name from the register has 28 days in which to appeal against the direction to the judicial committee of the Privy Council. During that period and if there is an appeal, until the appeal is withdrawn or disposed of, the doctor's registration is not affected and he or she is able to continue practising. The professional conduct committee may direct that a doctor's registration should be immediately suspended where it is satisfied that such action is necessary for the protection of members of the public or would be in the best interests of the doctor.

A family health services authority has a duty to remove from its medical list the name of any general practitioner whose name has been erased from the medical register, or whose registration has been suspended, following disciplinary proceedings by the GMC.

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of the speed in dealing with cases of charges of serious professional misconduct at the NHS tribunal and on appeal; and if she will make a statement in relation to a recent case raised with her by the hon. Member for Woolwich.

Dr. Mawhinney: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State looks to the chairman of the National Health Service Tribunal to deal with references made to the tribunal as speedily as possible within the regulations governing its procedure. The outcome of a hearing of the NHS Tribunal may be that a practitioner is no longer included in a family health service authority list or all such lists. That is a serious matter and the parties must have reasonable time to prepare themselves for the hearing. The tribunal chairman is responsible for ensuring that the proceedings of the tribunal are conducted fairly.

The case drawn to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's attention by the hon. Member was originally scheduled for hearing in September. Unfortunately the hearing was delayed because of the resignation of the previous tribunal chairman. The case has been relisted for 15 November when it will be heard by the tribunal under its new chairman, Mr. Adrian Whitfield QC.

Regional Administration Costs

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 14 April, *Official Report*, column *616*, if she will now make available the final regional administrative costs for 1992-93.

Mr. Sackville: The final regional administrative costs for 1991-92 are unchanged from those given in my reply to the hon. Member on 14 April at column *616*.

Information for 1992-93 is contained in the annual accounts for health authorities. We are assembling and summarising these accounts in accordance with statutory deadlines. Comprehensive information will be available at the end of November.

General Practioners (Suspensions)

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what consideration she has given to the need for legislation to provide for the suspension of general practitioners from the provision of NHS services.

Dr. Mawhinney: The Department is currently considering whether there is a need for legislation to provide for the suspension of general medical practioners, in extreme cases, from the provision of national health service services, and the ways in which suspension would be effected.

Sellafield

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what the committed effective dose to children in the terrestrial critical group will be for each year of discharge if the proposed liquid and gaseous radioactive discharges from BNFL's Sellafield installation are granted; and whether any children within that critical group will be exposed to doses exceeding the latest National Radiological Protection board's dose constraints of 0·3 mSv.

Mr. Jack: I have been asked to reply.

The estimated committed effective dose to children in the terrestrial critical group from liquid and gaseous radioactive discharges from Sellafield at the proposed authorised discharge limits is 239 μSv—microsievert—per year. This dose, calculated on the basis of pessimistic assumptions, is below the National Radiological Protection Board's recommended annual dose constraint of 300 μSv in respect of discharges from new plant.

PRIME MINISTER

THORP

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Prime Minister whether he will place the thermal oxide reprocessing plant at Sellafield on the agenda of the European Council special summit in Brussels on 29 October.

The Prime Minister: No.

Engagements

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 28 October.

The Prime Minister: This morning, I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Official Histories

Mr. Gale: To ask the Prime Minister which further official histories of peacetime events have been commissioned.

The Prime Minister: I have appointed Professor Alan Milward, professor of economic history at the university of London, London School of Economics, as an official historian with effect from October 1993 to write the official history of the United Kingdom's accession to the European Community.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Disabled Access

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Chairman of the Accommodation and Works Committee what plans he has to improve access to the House Chamber and Committee rooms for wheelchair bound civil servants.

Mr. Ray Powell: The general question of access to the House for the disabled is to be considered in the near future by my Committee. I anticipate that the specific issue of access to the Chamber and Committee rooms will be included in our deliberations.

EMPLOYMENT

Youth, Birmingham

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people aged 16 to 17 years in Birmingham are not in employment, not on a youth training scheme and not in full-time education; and what proportion of that age group this represents.

Miss Widdecombe: In July 1993, there were 428 unemployed claimants aged 16 to 17 years in the Birmingham travel-to-work area. Information on claimant unemployment by age expressed as a percentage of the workforce in a particular age band, is not available below national level.

All 16 and 17-year-olds are covered by the Government's guarantee of an offer of a youth training place, if they are willing to accept YT as a route into employment.

Ethnic Minorities

Ms Jowell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment why reference to ethnic minorities has been omitted from the draft plan for European social fund objective 3 1994-99; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: It has always been our intention that ethnic minorities should continue to be among the beneficiaries of the European social fund—ESF—supported programmes in the next programming period 1994-99. The draft plan outlines a number of ways in which ethnic minorities may receive help from the ESF.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Sheep Quota

12. **Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations she has received on the regulations dealing with sheep quota.

Mr. Jack: I have received a number of representations about the arrangements for sheep quotas, principally from farmers and landowners.

Minke Whales

13. **Mr. Tony Banks:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations she has made to the Government of Norway about the killing of minke whales in the north Atlantic.

Mr. Jack: The United Kingdom Government have made it clear, at the highest levels, that we deplore the resumption of commercial whaling.

Dairy Sector

14. **Sir David Knox:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when she will next meet the president of the National Farmers Union to discuss the dairy sector.

Mr. Jack: A copy of our consultation document on the England and Wales Milk Marketing Board's reorganisation scheme was sent to the NFU last week. My right hon. Friends look forward to receiving the NFU's views in due course.

Veterinary Products

15. **Ms Lynne:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans she has for the reform of veterinary products licensing.

Mr. Soames: I am adapting the licensing system to take account of Community law requirements, including the future systems package, and the deregulation initiative. The core scientific requirements of safety, quality and efficacy will be retained.

Nitrates

16. **Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to what extent her Department has taken sufficient steps to lessen the amount of nitrates in watercourses and the water table.

Mr. Jack: The Department is playing its full part through the promotion of its nitrate-sensitive area policy in keeping the level of nitrate in water at acceptable levels.

Animal Welfare

17. **Mr. Barnes:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations she has received concerning EC legislation to protect the welfare of live farm animals during transport.

Mr. Soames: During the consultation on proposed new Community rules, many representations have been received pressing the Government to seek high standards to protect animals in transport. This is our intention.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations she has made to the European Council of Ministers concerning the implementation of EC directive 91/628 on the protection of animals during transport.

Mr. Soames: The European Commission has issued proposals for additional rules to protect animals in transport. We are pressing for strong welfare safeguards, based on the high standards which apply in this country.

Tenancy Laws

18. **Mr. Lidington:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps she intends to take concerning reform of the agricultural tenancy laws; and if she will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I have made it clear that we intend to proceed with reform, to the benefit of both landlords and tennants.

Food Processing

19. **Mr. Shersby:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what support her Department is giving to food processing companies.

Mr. Jack: We give help in a number of ways, notably export refunds on manufactured foods, marketing and processing grants, funding of export promotion through Food from Britain, and support to R and D on food processing technology under the Link arrangements.

Farm and Conservation Grant

20. **Sir Anthony Grant:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations she has received concerning the farm and conservation grant scheme; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Jack: We reg. 'arly receive representations about the farm and conservation grant scheme, usually in relation to individual grant cases. Each representation is carefully considered and, where it is both possible and desirable to do so, taken into account when framing adjustments to the conditions of the scheme.

Days-at-sea Regulations

21. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will make a statement on the progress of talks over the implementation of days-at-sea regulations.

Mr. Jack: I have visited a dozen ports in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and met local fishermen and representatives from around 80 organisations associated with fishing. We are now considering the results of these consultations and the results of parallel discussions in Scotland, together with the formal responses we have received from the National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations and from the Scottish Fishermen's Federation, and we shall be announcing our plans soon.

Cattle

22. **Mr. Roger Evans:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what measures are being taken to monitor the causes of infection of cattle by tuberculosis; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Soames: A thorough investigation is carried out following every cattle herd breakdown to attempt to identify the source of the infection and any cattle moved on or off the premises are traced and tested if appropriate.

Wildlife carcases submitted by the public of a range of animals such as deer and badgers are examined for tuberculosis if local staff or the State Veterinary Service believe useful information may be provided.

Badger removal operations are undertaken only where badgers are believed to be involved in the spread of infection to cattle; all badgers killed in these removal operations are examined for tuberculosis.

In support of the bovine tuberculosis programme, the Department is funding a field research programme to provide information on the mode of transmission of bovine tuberculosis from badgers to cattle.

Marketing

23. **Mrs. Browning:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps are being taken to improve the marketing of British horticultural products.

Mr. Jack: In addition to the promotional activities in which I and my colleagues are pleased to assist, my right hon. Friend has asked me to undertake a specific and intensive survey of horticultural marketing.

We are also consulting the industry on our proposals for a new marketing development scheme, and our "continental challenge" initiative with European retailers should open the door to better export performance.

Agricultural Training Board

24. **Mr. Olner:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations she has received concerning the future of the agricultural training board.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my predecessor on 1 April 1993 at column *329* to my hon. Friend the Member for Romsey and Waterside (Mr. Colvin) following the consultation exercise on the future status and operation of the agricultural training board.

Nearly 700 responses were received to the consultation document published on 25 September 1992 from a variety of interested organisations and individuals.

No subsequent representations have been made to this Department on this issue.

Weeds Act 1959

26. **Mr. Brandreth:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations she has received regarding the future of the Weeds Act 1959; and if she will make a statement.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: In response to our consultation on the future of the Weeds Act 1959, some 1,000 representations were received from individuals and bodies, the majority of which were against repeal of the Act.

After careful consideration of these responses by Agricultural Ministers, my noble Friend the Earl Howe announced on 11 October that the Act would be retained. I am pleased that it is perceived as serving a useful purpose.

Potatoes

25. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what alternative proposals she has received to the Potato Marketing Board's plan for the future of potato marketing in the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: I have received alternative proposals for modification of the potato marketing scheme from the National Farmers Union.

I have also received proposals for the abolition of the scheme from the Potato Processors Association.

27. **Mr. Ainger:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the total expenditure *(a)* in 1992 and *(b)* to date in 1993 paid to producers by the potato marketing scheme; and what proportion of that was funded by the levy on producers.

Mr. Jack: For the 1992 crop year—1 July 1992 to 30 June 1993—the total cost of the Potato Marketing Board's —PMB—buying programmes amounted to £20,796,439 of which 92·66 per cent was funded by the levy on producers. For the 1993 crop year commencing on 1 July 1993, the PMB has spent £158,716 to date, all of which has been funded by the levy on producers.

Labour Statistics

28. **Mr. Hardy:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the number of persons employed full time either as farmers or farm workers in England; and what was the figure in 1980.

Mr. Jack: The number of persons employed full-time either as farmers or farm workers in England in 1980 and in 1993 is shown in the table.

Year	*Whole-time principal farmers, partners and directors (doing farm work)*	*Salaried managers*	*Whole-time family workers*	*Whole-time hired workers*	*Total number of whole-time workers*
1980	136·6	6·9	19·5	121·3	284·2
[1]1993	112·9	7·1	16·6	72·1	208·0

[1]Provisional results.

Notes:

Source: June Census of Agriculture and Horticulture each year.

Includes estimates for minor holdings.

Figures exclude:

(i) the wives/husbands of farmers, partners and directors, even though they themselves may be partners or directors.

(ii) seasonal or casual workers.

Coastal Defences

Dr. Howells: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what proportion of coastal defences exhibit some signs of wear or require structural attention.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: In 1992, the National Rivers Authority estimated that in England 2 per cent. of sea defence elements—for example, walls, embankments, groynes—were in need of significant works.

Warble fly

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will list the number of incidents of warble fly in each year since 1989.

Mr. Soames: The number of premises with clinical cases recorded in Great Britain is as follows:

	Number
1989	2
1990	1
1991	0
1992	0
1993	107

All of the cases recorded in 1993 were directly linked to imported cattle. Seventy-one premises have been released from all controls following satisfactory treatment. The remaining 36 premises will be released from controls when compulsory autumn treatment has been completed.

Agricultural Wages Board

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food which International Labour Organisation conventions currently in force relate to the Agricultural Wages Board; when they expire; and what plans she has to renew them.

Mr. Jack: Those International Labour Organisation conventions which are currently in force and relate particularly to the Agricultural Wages Board are convention 99, concerning minimum wage fixing machinery in agriculture, and convention 101, concerning holidays with pay in agriculture. The conventions do not expire, although periodically signatories have the opportunity to reconsider their adherence. Any decision would be for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment.

Broiler Chickens

Mr. Denham: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans she has to improve the welfare of broiler chickens.

Mr. Soames: The Government's response to the Farm Animal Welfare Council's Report on the welfare of broiler chickens was published in April 1993. The Government accepted that the council recommendations should be taken forward on a Community basis or, where appropriate, used as the basis for revision of the Government's welfare code.

Folic Acid

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans she has to ensure that breads, cereals and flours are enriched with folic acid.

Mr. Soames: Many breakfast cereals and a number of breads are already fortified with folic acid. My Department has written to the relevant trade organisations to encourage them to increase the range of produces fortified with folic acid in line with recommendations of the expert advisory group in its report to the Chief Medical Officer, "Folic Acid and the Prevention of Neural Tube Defects". The response has been positive and some new fortified products have appeared on the market already. We shall keep in touch with the industry on developments.

Fish

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what research she has undertaken into the impact of organophosphate exposure upon fish.

Mr. Soames: No research has been carried out by my Department into the impact of organophosphate exposure on fish, although the results of work on the toxicity of dichlorvos to shell fish were reported to the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea in 1990.

Birds

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what research has been conducted by her Department on the effect of the organophosphate Fonofos on the United Kingdom bird population.

Mr. Soames: This Department is currently undertaking research into the effect of seed treatments, including Fonofos, on bird populations as part of its assessment of the environmental hazards of pesticide usage.

Organic Food

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will make a statement on the future of the United Kingdom Register of Organic Food Standards following changes to the structure of Food from Britain.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: For the time being Food From Britain retains its responsibility for the United Kingdom register of organic food standards—UKROFS—but the secretariat is about to be relocated within my Department. I value UKROFS' independence and effectiveness and want to maintain these through the decisions that need to be taken about UKROFS' longer-term future.

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what measures she intends to take to promote organic farming in the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The Government are keen to encourage farmers to meet the growing demand from consumers for organic produce. The United Kingdom register of organic food standards was established by Food From Britain with funding from MAFF in 1987.

On 10 August, I announced proposals for an aid scheme to farmers in England wishing to convert to organic production methods. It is proposed to launch the scheme this winter and expenditure is planned to rise to £1·5 million by 1995-96. Similar schemes were announced by my right hon. Friends the Secretary of State for Scotland and Wales and my noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

The organic sector can benefit from the group marketing grant scheme, and its successor on which we are currently seeking the views of the industry.

In addition to the organic scheme, the broad range of other MAFF support schemes are open to organic farmers. We also spend some £1 million per annum on research and development specifically related to organic agriculture and advice on organic farming from ADAS.

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the value of imported organic food produce in *(a)* real and *(b)* cash terms for each year since 1980.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: This information is not available because import statistics do not distinguish between organic and conventional food.

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what percentage of the consumption of organic produce in each EC member state is met from domestic production.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: This information is not available.

Driftnets

Mr. Simon Hughes: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if she will make a statement regarding the level of compliance with EC

regulation 245/92 by the United Kingdom and other EC vessels in the north-east Atlantic and the Mediterranean; and if she will make a statement on the adequacy of the monitoring and enforcement measures in force;

(2) how she plans to vote on the proposal to extend the deadline for all fishing vessels to comply with EC regulation 245/92, which limits the length of driftnets allowed on one vessel, at the EC Fisheries Council meeting in November;

(3) what plans she has to make represention to the European Commission and the Italian Government on the level of enforcement of EC regulation 245/92 in the Italian swordfish driftnet fishery;

(4) whether she will promote the fair and consistent implementation of EC regulation 245/92 which limits the length of EC driftnets and oppose the extension of the existing derogation which exempts some French vessels from the restriction until 31 December.

Mr. Jack: The EC regulation in question is 345/92 of 27 January 1992.

A small number of United Kingdom-registered vessels take part in the summer drift net fishery for long-finned albacore tuna which occurs in the north-east Atlantic beyond British fishery limits. Responsibility for monitoring and enforcing the present arrangements rests with the member states whose vessels participate in the fishery or in whole waters the fishery occurs. British sea fishery officers make spot inspections from time to time to check that nets taken on board do not exceed 2·5 km. A derogation exists permitting longer nets for vessels who were fishing in the north-east Atlantic tuna fishery for at least two years before the regulation came into force. However, this expires on 31 December 1993 and no proposal for a continuation of the derogation has been received. No United Kingdom vessels fish in the Mediterranean and I have no information concerning the swordfish fishery referred to.

Hill Livestock Compensation Allowance

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many hill farmers in England have not yet received their hill livestock compensation allowance in respect of 1993.

Mr. Jack: Of 14,012 claims so far received in England in respect of the 1993 hill livestock compensatory allowances scheme, 396 are still outstanding. This repreents 2·8 per cent. of claims received. Claims are still being received in respect of 1993, albeit in small numbers.

Food Promotion

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what countries United Kingdom food promotion delegates have visited so far this year.

Mr. Jack: Food From Britain, the United Kingdom's food export promotion organisation, maintains a permanent presence in the key markets of north America, Germany, France, Italy, Netherlands, Spain and Belgium.During the current year, FFB has also promoted British food at exhibitions in Japan and Dubai. In the period, Ministers of this Department have visited Turkey, India, Hungary, Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay with food promotion and other objectives in view.

Apples

Sir Michael Neubert: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what measures she intends to take concerning the promotion of British apples.

Mr. Jack: My ministerial colleaguess and I have been pleased to participate in a number of recent events to promote English apples. On 19 October, I attended the launch of the 1993 main apple season. On Apple Day itself, the Minister was presented with an apple pie and the Parliamentary Secretary in the Commons attended Food From Britain's launch of "Great Food From Britain". On 27 October, the Minister visited the Marden fruit show. In addition, I recently announced my horticultural marketing initiative, one of the key aims of which will be to stimulate United Kingdom consumption of United Kingdom produce—including apples.

Seals

Mr. Jonathan Evans: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what measures are being taken to protect and conserve the seal population from the consequences of salmon farming.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 27 May 1993]:* I have been asked to reply.

Seals continue to have appropriate protection under the Conservation of Seals Act 1970.

WALES

Family Credit

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many families receive family credit in Wales; and what is this figure expressed as a percentage of all those families eligible for family credit in Wales.

Mr. Redwood: At 30 April 1993, there were an estimated 30,000 claimants in receipt of family credit in Wales. No figures are available for the number of families eligible for family credit.

Income Support

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women are at present in receipt of income support in Wales; and what are the figures expressed as percentage of (i) men between 16 and 64 years and (ii) women between 16 and 60 years respectively.

Mr. Redwood: The latest information available is given in the table:

Income support beneficiaries in Wales, November 1992[1]

	Age	*Number (thousands)*	*Per cent. of age group*[2]
Male	16-64	126	14·0
Beneficiaries	65 and over	17	8·3
Total		143	13·0
Female	16-59	135	16·5
Beneficiaries	60 and over	77	20·6
Total		212	17·8

Source: Department of Social Security.

[1] Beneficiaries include partners of recipients. Dependents aged under 19 and still living with the recipient are not included as information on their gender is not available.

[2] Population figures used are for mid-1991.

Welsh Development Agency

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the Welsh Development Agency concerning the implementation of the recommendations of the Committee of Public Accounts in relation to full recovery from employees of costs incurred through excess private mileage.

Mr. Redwood: I take very seriously the criticisms of the Public Accounts Committe. The Goverment's response to its report makes it clear that there should be contributions by individuals to cover the cost of private use. The agency has recognised this and has ensured that the chief executive and other senior executives make appropriate contributions.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the Welsh Development Agency concerning the recommendations in Sir John Caines' report concerning *(a)* common directorships held by board members and *(b)* the apppointment of board members involved in construction and property development; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: I myself have had none. The WDA has received a copy of the Caines report and would have seen my statement to the House on 19 October.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects implementation of the recommendations of the quinquennial financial management and policy review of the Welsh Development Agency 1991-92, that there should be a management statement and new financial guidelines defining delegation of financial authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Redwood: A management statement is in place and the financial guidelines are being revised.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the Welsh Development Agency concerning revisions to the employee handbook *(a)* in respect of procedures for dealing with conflicts of interest involving employees' families and close personal friends and *(b)* other respects; what proposals for such revisions have been submitted to him; and when he expects to complete the approval process of such revisions.

Mr. Redwood: None. I understand that the board of the agency is currently considering the revised employee handbook. I expect to see any proposals for changes to terms and conditions when the board has completed its deliberations.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the Welsh Development Agency in relation to the recommendations in Sir John Caines' report to withdraw the facility for WDA staff to sell their cars into the executive car-leasing scheme.

Mr. Redwood: I myself have had no discussions with the WDA. I refer the hon. Member to the agency's response to Sir John Caines' report, a copy of which has been placed in the Library of the House.

Hill Livestock Allowances

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 25 October about hill livestock compensatory allowances not yet paid, how many field inspections will be carried out in respect of the claims still unpaid in Wales.

Mr. Redwood: This will depend on the number of queries which cannot be resolved by correspondence.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many field inspections have been carried out in respect of hill livestock compensatory allowance applications in Wales in 1993 to date.

Mr. Redwood: Up to 30 September 1993, field inspections had been undertaken to validate 5,590 claims for HLCA from both sheep and cattle producers. The number of actual farm visits will have been substantially less than this because inspections of sheep and cattle claims are often carried out during the same visit.

Sight Tests

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many NHS sight tests took place in each financial year since 1984-85.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The number of NHS sight tests paid for by family health services authorities in each year in Wales was as follows:

	Number
1984-85	570,864
1985-86	600,714
1986-87	626,644
1987-88	697,280
1988-89	733,469
1989-90	292,060
1990-91	271,170
1991-92	332,240
1992-93	372,590

SCOTLAND

Forestry

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations the review group has received on the subject of the privatisation of the Forestry Commission.

Mr. Lang: Many individuals and organisations have written to Ministers and Government Departments and to the secretary and members of the forestry review group giving their views on issues connected with the work of the group.

They did not do so in the knowledge or expectation that their names or their submissions would be published and I therefore do not think it would be right to publish this information.

Most of the representations received have been opposed to the idea of privatisation of the Forestry Commission estate, but the remit of the review group is to look at issues much wider than this.

Ministers have asked the group to review:

the effectiveness of the current incentives for forestry investment, in accordance with the manifesto commitment, and options for the ownership and management of Forestry Commission woodlands,

and to make proposals for changes which would improve the effectiveness of the delivery of the Government's forestry policy objectives, having regard to the Government's other economic and environmental policies.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he now expects to receive the report from the interdepartmental working party on the future of the Forestry Commission.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 26 October 1993]:* Forestry Ministers expect to receive the advice of the forestry review group early next year.

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many submissions have been made to date to the interdepartmental working group on the future of the Forestry Commission; and how many of these have favoured privatisation as an option.

Sir Hector Monro: Over 300 organisations and 1,350 individuals have made submissions or offered comment direct to the forestry review group. Comment has also been addressed to Ministers and officials in the other departments represented on the group. The issues most commonly raised are access to woodlands, security of timber supplies and the environment. In so far as these issues might be affected by privatisation, virtually all commentators are opposed.

Mr. Kynoch: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what progress has been made towards publishing the United Kingdom's national forestry plan.

Sir Hector Monro: The Forestry Commission is co-ordinating the publication and work is well advanced.

The plan will draw together the various strands of the Government's present forestry policy and programmes. Since we would not wish the plan to pre-empt the findings of the forestry review group or to prejudice our decisions on its recommendations, it will not be practical to go beyond that.

We have concluded, therefore, that there would be little benefit in consulting publicly before publishing the plan. Instead, we will be inviting comments on the plan after it has been published.

Information Scheme

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he proposes a redeployment of Scottish Office staff across Scotland in connection with the Government's new scheme of information points.

Mr. Lang: My Department has no plans to redeploy Scottish Office staff across Scotland in connection with the Government's new scheme of information points. The 20 information points already opened are located in existing departmental offices and no additional staff were required.

Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowances

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many hill farmers in Scotland have not yet received their hill livestock compensatory allowance in respect of 1993.

Sir Hector Monro: Of 17,437 claims so far received in Scotland in respect of the 1993 HLCA scheme, 94 claims are still outstanding. This represents 0·5 per cent. of claims received. A small number of claims are still being received in respect of 1993.

Fish Conservation

Mr. Page: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he received the fish conservation report from the Scottish Federation of Fishermen's Organisaations.

Sir Hector Monro: On 30 September 1993.

Smoke Alarms

Mrs. Ewing: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what funding is available to assist those with hearing impairment to purchase special smoke alarms for their homes; and if he will make a statement.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 25 October 1993]:* I refer to the reply I gave to the hon. Member on Tuesday 19 October 1993, *Official Report*, columns *37-38*.

Farming

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many farm holdings in *(a)* Scotland and *(b)* East Lothian, are in the less-favoured area and the non-less-favoured area respectively; and how many holdings include land in both the less-favoured area and non-less-favoured area;

(2) what is the total area of agricultural land in *(a)* Scotland and *(b)* East Lothian inside or outside the less-favoured area, respectively.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 27 October 1993]:* The information requested as it relates to total agricultural areas is currently available only from the agricultural census. The table gives the figures as recorded at the 1992 census:

	Less-favoured area	*Non-less favoured area*
Scotland		
—holdings	23,326	8,251
—agricultural area (hectares)	5,200,279	684,266
East Lothian		
—holdings	47	374
—agricultural area (hectares)	18,819	37,610

The less-favoured area/non-less-favoured area classification is that used for statistical rather than subsidy purposes. On the statistical basis, farms are classified as either within or outside the less-favoured area boundary; no information is, therefore, available from the census on the number of holdings with land in both the less-favoured area and the non-less-favoured area.

Ancient Monuments

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when the first national survey of the scheduled ancient monuments in Scotland was completed; when and in what form it will be published; if he will list the damage identified by the survey to scheduled ancient monuments in Scotland from natural forces, vegetation and animals; and what moneys he has allocated during this financial year to tackle the damage identified in the first national survey of scheduled ancient monuments.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 25 October 1993]:* The subject of the question relates to matters undertaken by Historic Scotland. I have asked its chief executive, Mr. Graeme Munro, to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from G. N. Munro to Mr. Nigel Griffiths, dated 28 October 1993:

Sir Hector Monro MP, the Minister for Agriculture and Environment at The Scottish Office has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question asking when the first national survey of scheduled ancient monuments in Scotland was completed and when and in what form it would be published.

The survey of scheduled ancient monuments is not a "one-off" project with a definite end when a final report can be prepared. Because it involves the continuous monitoring by Historic Scotland's monument wardens on a three to four year cycle of all the scheduled monuments (including the 300 new sites scheduled each year) the results are constantly being updated. The first round of visits by wardens has not yet been completed in three areas—Shetland, Orkney and West Strathclyde (Argyll and Bute).

You also asked the Secretary of State if he would list the damage identified by the survey of scheduled ancient monuments from natural forces, vegetation and animals and what monies he had allocated this financial year to tackle the damage identified.

Analyses of the results of the first round of warden visits are presently being prepared for Highland South and Tayside and Borders Regions for the use of my staff in their conservation work. The publication of summary articles in the professional archaeological press, containing the statistical information you mention, is being considered.

Funds are not specifically allocated for tackling damage to monuments identified by our wardens as being at risk. However monies are available for this sort of work and in financial year 1993-94 these are £14,000 for management agreements under section 17 of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 and £189,000 for grant aid for the repair of monuments under section 24 of the 1979 Act.

Information Directorate

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people are employed in the information directorate of his Department; what was the total cost of the directorate in 1992-93; and if he will give the comparable information for 1978-79.

Mr. Lang: The number of staff employed in the Scottish Office information directorate on 30 September 1993 totalled 51·5. The running cost of the directorate in 1992-93 was £1·9 million. Owing to the introduction of new Scottish Office budgetary arrangements in 1986-86, a directly comparable figure for running costs is not available for 1978-79; and no record has been retained of the total number of people then employed.

Moats

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what action his Department is currently taking to record and preserve moated sites of archaeological interest; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will list *(a)* the surveys and *(b)* the excavations that are currently being carried out of moated sites of archaeological interest.

Sir Hector Monro *[holding answer 27 October 1993]:* The subject of the question relates to matters undertaken by Historic Scotland. I have asked its chief executive, Mr. Graeme Munro, to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from G. N. Munro to Mr. Martin Redmond, dated 28 October 1993:

Sir Hector Monro MP, the Minister for Agriculture and Environment at The Scottish Office has asked me to reply to your two recent Parliamentary Questions about moated sites of archaeological interest.

Firstly, you asked what action was being taken to record and preserve such sites. The recording of sites of archaeological interest in Scotland is the responsibility of the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS), and their preservation through scheduling and management, is the responsibility of Historic Scotland.

Moated sites (which are most frequent in south-west Scotland) are dealt with in exactly the same fashion as all other sites of archaeological interest. They are recorded by written description and by photographic and drawn illustrations and these records are made available either by printed publication or through the National Monuments Record of Scotland, which the Royal Commission maintains. There is no scheduling campaign directed specifically towards moated sites, but their merits are considered along with all other sites when geographical areas are being considered in the agency's rolling scheduling programme.

Secondly, you asked if the Secretary of State would list the surveys and excavations currently being carried out on moated sites of archaeological interest. The RCAHMS is responsible for carrying out such surveys. They inform me that 8 such sites were surveyed in Scotland in the last year—6 in Annandale and 2 in south east Perthshire. I understand the Royal Commission plan to survey 3 sites next year. There are no excavations currently being carried out on such sites.

If you have concerns about specific moated sites in Scotland I would be pleased to hear and to consider them.

NORTHERN IRELAND

EC Students

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are the costs of education in Northern Ireland for EC students met by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* each education and library board; and what are the numbers of such students from each EC country and in each level of institute of education.

Mr. Ancram: The following table shows the numbers and estimated costs of fees—only awards held by EC students at Northern Ireland institutions during the 1992-93 academic year.

	Number of students	*£000*
Department of Education	24	53
Education and Library Boards		
North-Eastern	1,330	3,126
Belfast	495	1,163
Western	101	237
Southern	3	7
South-Eastern	—	—

Information is not available on the numbers of students from each EC country. However, 1,852 of the students are ordinarily resident in the Republic of Ireland and the balance—101—come from elsewhere in the EC.

Residential Care Homes

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps will be taken to ensure that the levels of income support for those currently resident in homes should be set at levels which would ensure a choice of homes within income support limits; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: In setting the income support limits for people in residential care and nursing homes with preserved rights, the Government take account of information on movements in charging patterns in homes as well as on cost factors.

Dwellings and Tourist Development

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) how many planning applications were made for dwellings and tourist developments in the Lecale coast, Mourne and Strangford areas of outstanding natural beauty from 1 April 1983 to 31 March 1993; of these, how many were approved and how many were refused; and what were the general reasons for refusal;

(2) how many planning applications were made for dwellings and tourist developments in the environmentally sensitive areas in the Mournes and Slieve Croob areas from 1 April 1983 to 31 March 1993; of these how many were approved and how many were refused; and what were the general reasons for refusal.

Mr. Atkins: The information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Countryside (Access)

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what grant aid was made available to district councils in order to facilitate access to the countryside from 1 April 1983 to 31 March 1993; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins The information is as follows:

Financial Year	*Provision (£'000s)*
1983/84	10
1984/85	20
1985/86	80
1986/87	90
1987/88	249
1988/89	226
1989/90	275
1990/91	280
1991/92	288
1992/93	295

The Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland gives a high priority to improving access and will continue to grant-aid district councils for all reasonable schemes proposed.

Environmental Protection Agency

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps he will take to establish an environmental protection agency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: In Northern Ireland, most of the intended functions of the proposed agency in England and Wales already lie within central Government, namely in the Environment Service of the Department of the Environment. When final details of the agency are available, I will decide whether or not any proposals for change in Northern Ireland should be made.

Myalgic Encephalomyelitis

Rev. William McCrea: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the current assessment of the number of people in Northern Ireland suffering from myalgic encephalomyelitis.

Mr. Ancram: The information requested is not available centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Local Anthority Debt

Rev. William McCrea To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the current extent of local authority debt in each of the 26 district councils in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Atkins: The total debt outstanding from loans and advances from the Government Loans Fund by district council area at 31 March 1992 is set out as follow:

	£
Antrim Borough Council	2,904,499
Ards Borough Council	3,273,355
Armagh District Council	2,635,445
Ballymena Borough Council	860,584
Ballymoney Borough Council	1,655,184
Banbridge District Council	2,745,515
Belfast City Council	12,289,642
Carrickfergus Borough Council	32,370
Castlereagh Borough Council	5,821,792
Coleraine Borough Council	2,388,273
Cookstown District Council	306,375
Craigavon Borough Council	1,456,472
Derry City Council	6,992,348
Down District Council	5,146,690
Dungannon District Council	1,326,877
Fermanagh District Council	888,196
Larne Borough Council	1,740,599
Limavady Borough Council	1,542,266
Lisburn Borough Council	1,970,384
Magherafelt District Council	1,114,525
Moyle District Council	1,773,441
Newry and Mourne District Council	8,917,629
Newtownabbey District Council	7,115,280
North Down Borough Council	10,471,472
Omagh District Council	3,968,856
Strabane District Council	3,807,291
Total	93,145,360

A district council may also borrow money from other financial institutions. However, this information is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Residential Care Homes

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps will be taken to ensure that the value of the former homes of a person in residential care is disregarded by the health and social services boards where a former carer remains in the property.

Mr. Ancram: A health and social services board, in assessing a resident's ability to pay for residential or nursing home care, can disregard the value of his or her former home if it is also the sole residence of someone who has been caring for the resident. Where a board has decided to disregard the value of the property because a former long-term carer is living there it may review that decision when that person moves out or dies.

Bogland

Rev. William McCrea: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make it his policy to preserve the Curran bog and other areas of bogland left in the Province.

Mr. Atkins: The Government's policy on the conservation of peatland in Northern Ireland is set out in the document "Conserving Peatland in Northern Ireland —a Statement of Policy" issued on 23 June 1993. This states, at paragraph 2.5:—

"It is the Department's intention to declare all remaining areas of intact lowland raised bog as Areas of Special Scientific Interest where they meet the minimum scientific criteria".

In this context, the Department of the Environment is reassessing the scientific interest of a number of lowland bogs that were not in the first round of declarations. Curran bog will be re-evaluated as part of that exercise, and I will write to the hon. Gentleman once that process is complete.

Recycling

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps will be taken to ensure that district councils are allocated sufficient funding to undertake recycling programmes in accordance with Government's guidelines and directives; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Atkins: The Government published a consultation paper in March 1993 entitled, "Future Strategy for Waste Management in Northern Ireland". The paper included new legislative proposals similar to the waste management provisions in the Environmental Protection Act 1990. Under these provisions, district councils will be required to draw up recycling plans for their districts. Should councils wish to undertake capital spending on recycling schemes, the Government will be prepared to consider sympathetically applications for loan sanction for this purpose. The legislation will include provision to allow for savings made by district councils as a result of recycling to be made payable to those promoting recycling, such as voluntary groups.

Litter

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps will be taken to ensure that district councils are allocated sufficient funding in order to undertake new duties and responsibilities as a consequence of the proposed Litter Order.

Mr. Atkins: I am aware that district councils have been seeking additional finance to help them implement the requirements of the proposed litter legislation. This matter is under consideration in the light of the responses to the consultation on the publication of the proposal for a Draft Litter (Northern Ireland) Order. I shall make an announcement in the near future on the results of that consultation process.

Disability Benefits

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people have made applications in respect of *(a)* disability living allowance and *(b)* invalidity benefit from 1 April 1988 to 31 March 1993; of these how many were successful; and what financial amounts were made payable.

Mr. Ancram: Responsibility for the subject in question has been delegated to the Social Security Agency under its chief executive, Mr. Alec Wylie. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. Wylie to Mr. Eddie McGrady, dated 27 October 1993:

As Chief Executive of the Social Security Agency I have been asked to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question on the number of applications received in respect of Disability Living Allowance and Invalidity Benefit from 1 April 1988 to 31 March 1993.

During the period 3 February 1992 to 31 March 1993, 31,981 claims to Disability Living Allowance were received, of these 21,627 were successful. In addition 7,958 claims were received from existing Attendance Allowance/Mobility Allowance beneficiaries and of these 6,923 were also successful. The actual expenditure for 1992-93 is not yet available but the estimated expenditure is £57 million.

Information on the number of applications received in respect of Invalidity Benefit during the period 1 April 1988 to 31 March 1993 and the number who were successful is not available in the form requested. However the number of persons receiving the benefit at April each year from 1988 to 1993 and the yearly benefit expenditure are as follows:

Year	*Number of persons receiving invalidity benefit*	*Benefit expenditure*
		£ million
1988	45,318	130·1
1989	47,735	141·2
1990	50,890	157·3
1991	54,122	182·0
1992	58,197	215·0
1993	62,823	[1]238·4

[1] Estimated.

I hope you will find this reply helpful. Further information on social security claims and expenditure is published in "Expenditure, Plans and Priorities (Northern Ireland)". A copy of this reply will appear in the *Official Report* and copies will be placed in the Library.

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps are taken to ensure that adequate resources are allocated to the disability section of the Department of Health and Social Services in order that staff can deliver a full and effective service.

Mr. Ancram: Responsibility for the subject in question has been delegated to the Social Security Agency under its chief executive Mr. Alec Wylie. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. Wylie to Mr. Eddie McGrady, dated 27 October 1993:

As Chief Executive of the Social Security Agency I have been asked to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question about resources for Disability Living Allowance Branch.

Since Disability Living Allowance was introduced in April 1992, we have been keeping the resource position under close review. Overall the staffing level has risen by around 100 posts in the past 18 months with the complement now standing at 241 posts.

The target of clearing 65% of claims within 30 days has been met from June 1993 and I am satisfied that the Branch is adequately resourced to handle the current intake of claims. I would however assure you that workloads and staffing levels will continue to be closely monitored to ensure that claims from our customers are processed as quickly as possible.

I hope this helps explain the position for you. A copy of this reply will appear in the Offical Report and copies will be placed in the Library.

Social Fund

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people have made applications to the social fund at each of the social security offices in South Down from 1 April 1988 to 31 March 1993; of these how many were successful; and what financial amounts were made payable.

Mr. Ancram: Responsibility for the subject in question has been delegated to the Social Security Agency under its chief executive, Mr. Alec Wylie. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A.Wylie to Mr. Eddie McGrady, dated 27 October 1993:

As Chief Executive of the Social Security Agency I have been asked to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question on the number of people who made applications to the Social Fund at each of the social security offices in South Down from 1 April 1988 to 31 March 1993, the numbers who were successful and the amounts involved.

The information is not held precisely in the form requested but I have set out the available data in the attached table.

As an individual can make more than one application to the Social Fund the figures shown refer to the total number of applications received. As regards details for each Social Security Office in South Down, these can only be supplied for the period 1 April 1988 to 31 March 1991. From April 1991 the Social Fund has been managed on a District basis and I am therefore providing information from that date in respect of Mourne District, comprising Newry, Banbridge, Newcastle and Kilkeel and for Belfast South and Down District which covers Knockbreda, Shaftesbury Square, Downpatrick and Ballynahinch.

You may be interested to know that information about the number of applications processed, the number of awards and the amount paid, is available in the Library under Social Fund Data. The figures are updated on a monthly basis.

I hope you will find this information helpful. A copy of this reply will appear in the Official Report and copies will be placed in the Library.

Residential Care Homes

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps he will take to ensure that all residents in nursing and residential homes receive their personal allowance of £12.65 per week.

Mr. Ancram: The registration and inspection units monitor the extent to which residential and nursing homes help residents to control their own finances, including personal allowances, as part of their inspection process. They also monitor the arrangements in place for handling the finances of those residents who cannot look after their own affairs. The units have the power to cancel the registration of residential and nursing homes where standards are considered to be below an acceptable level.

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps will be taken to increase income support levels for those in receipt of care in residential and nursing homes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: Each year the Government make an assessment of the position and look carefully at the levels of the income support limits as part of the general benefit uprating exercise. This will continue to be the case.

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what reports have been received in respect of residential and nursing homes by the registration and inspection units set up under the Residential Homes Order 1992; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: The Eastern, Northern and Western boards registration and inspection units have each produced two annual reports which detail the work undertaken since their establishment. The Southern board's registration and inspection unit is about to produce its first annual report. The reports are presented to health and social services boards and are available to members of the public on request.

Local Government Reorganisation

Rev. William McCrea: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he has last met representatives of the Association of Local Authorities in Northern Ireland to discuss local government reorganisation.

Mr. Atkins: I have never met representatives of the Association of Local Authorities of Northern Ireland to discuss local government reorganisation, nor have I had any request to do so.

Job Vacancies

Rev. William McCrea: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the number of new vacancies notified to jobcentres in Strabane, Omagh, Cookstown and Magherafelt during the past three years, together with the number of job losses during the same period in each area.

Mr. Atkins: The information on new vacancies notified to local offices of the Training and Employment Agency and jobs lost in each area during the three-year period up to 8 October 1993 is as follows:

	Vacancies notified	*Jobs lost*
Cookstown	1,849	90
Magherafelt	2,496	600
Omagh	3,129	30
Strabane	1,941	237

The figures for jobs lost are based on returns made to the Department of Economic Development.

Government Employees

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many Government employees, including home civil servants, there are in Northern Ireland.

Sir John Wheeler: On 1 April 1993, there were 33,009 whole-time equivalent staff employed in the Departments for which my right hon. and learned Friend has responsibility.

In counting whole-time equivalent staff, part-time employees are counted as halves.

Sight Tests

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many national health service sight tests took place in each financial year since 1984-85.

Mr. Ancram: The numbers of health service sight tests for which payments was made in Northern Ireland in the financial years 1984-85 to 1992-93 were:

Financial year	*Total health service sight tests (Thousands)*
1984-85	207·1
1985-86	221·0
1986-87	231·1
1987-88	254·9
1988-89	284·9
1989-90	143·8
1990-91	119·5
1991-92	142·3
1992-93	159·9

From 1 April 1989 health service sight tests were restricted to certain groups in the population, and there was a substantial increase in demand prior to this restriction. This resulted in a backlog of payments for tests done in 1988-89, which was not cleared until the next financial year.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Crown Court

Mr. John Morris: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many cases were tried in the Crown court in the last available three months; and what were the figures for the equivalent period *(a)* one year ago and *(b)* two years ago.

Mr. John M. Taylor: During the three months July to September 1993, 5,148 cases were disposed of by trial in the Crown court. The corresponding figures for the same period in 1992 and 1991 were 6,719 and 7,271 respectively.

Public Trust Office

Mr. Hawkins: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what plans his Department has to establish the Public Trust Office as a next steps agency.

Mr. John M. Taylor: I am pleased to announce that it is the Lord Chancellor's intention to establish the Public Trust Office as an executive agency in the second half of 1994. As part of the process of establishing the office as an agency, the Lord Chancellor will be examining the services the office provides, defining them clearly and asking the public trustee to draw up a statement of charter standards, setting out the levels of service the office aims to achieve.

Although the agency will initially comprise all the present functions of the office, the Lord Chancellor has asked for further work to be carried out to examine the continuing need for a trustee service provided by the public sector and whether the functions undertaken by the Court Funds Office are necessary.

Snaresbrook Crown Court

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department on how many occasions in 1993 scheduled individual sittings of separate courts within the Snaresbrook Crown court complex have been unable to sit due to the absence of a judge or recorder; what was the specific reason for each such cancellation; what was the date of the maximum number of cancellations occurring on a single day; and what was the estimated cost to public funds on that day, and the total for the year so far.

Mr. John M. Taylor *[holding answer 18 October 1993]:* The information requested is not readily available in the form requested and could be obtained in that form only at disproportionate cost. However, I am in a position to provide the following information on planned and actual sittings for the Crown court at Snaresbrook in the period 22 March 1993 to 11 October 1993.

Week commencing	*Judge days*	
	Planned	*Sat*
22 March 1993	94	96
29 March 1993	96	95
5 April 1993	44	41
14 April 1993	30	30
19 April 1993	93	91
26 April 1993	96	96
4 May 1993	81	74
10 May 1993	95	94
17 May 1993	96	98
24 May 1993	95	95
2 June 1993	59	52
7 June 1993	99	98
14 June 1993	98·5	97
21 June 1993	90·5	94
28 June 1993	91	91
5 July 1993	94	86
12 July 1993	95	95
19 July 1993	100	99
26 July 1993	87	87
2 August 1993	60	61
9 August 1993	59	56
16 August 1993	55	56
23 August 1993	54	54
31 August 1993	42	35
6 September 1993	65	62
13 September 1993	69·5	70
20 September 1993	63	63
27 September 1993	58·5	59
4 October 1993	55	55
11 October 1993	78	79

During the period, there were 44·5 planned sittings cancelled, the largest number being eight during the week of 5 July 1993. However, there were also 11·5 sittings which were not originally scheduled.

Planned sittings are cancelled for a variety of reasons including:—

(a) Judicial sick leave;

(b) Lack of work/lack of suitable work;

(c) Recorder, Assistant Recorder or Deputy Circuit Judge being unable to fulfil their booking at short notice; and

(d) Leave being taken at short notice.

Actual sittings may exceed planned sittings if recorders or assistant recorders unexpectedly become available to sit.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 29 October 1993

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Legal Aid

Mr. Cox: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what has been the number of people who have received legal aid in each of the last three years.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The number of acts of assistance provided under the legal aid scheme between 1990-91 and 1992-93 was 2·6 million, 3 million and 3·3 million respectively.

Land Registry

Sir Anthony Durant: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department for what reason survey work in Her Majesty's Land Registry's current market testing exercise has been awarded to Ordnance Survey; and what consideration was given to private sector bids.

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Ordnance Survey bid for the whole of England and Wales represented the best value for money when compared with any other combination of bids. Her Majesty's Land Registry gave full and proper consideration to all the bids received from the private sector, and the evaluation process observed scrupulously the principles of fair trading and good management practice.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Predatory Birds

Sir Cranley Onslow: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many applications his Department has received in the past six months for licences to control the threat to fisheries from cormorants and similar predatory birds.

Mr. Soames: From 1 April to 30 September 1993, 34 such licence applications were received.

Pesticides

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much has been allocated by her Department in each of the last 10 years for monitoring and inspecting levels of pesticide residue in food.

Mr. Soames: The costs of monitoring for pesticide residues carried out by the Government's working party on pesticide residues over the last 10 years are as follows:

	£ million
1992-93	2·1
1991-92	1·9
1990-91	1·8
1989-90	1·5
1988-89	0·9
1987-88	0·7
1986-87	0·55
1985-86	[1]0·5
1984-85	[1]0·5
1983-84	[1]0·5

[1] Approximately.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will make it her policy to adopt a target for reducing pesticide use in the United Kingdom by 50 per cent. by 2,000.

Mr. Soames: No. Government policy is to ensure that pesticide use is limited to the minimum necessary for the effective control of pests compatible with the protection of human health and the environment. As I informed the hon. Member in my answer of 26 May 1993, columns *597-98*, this policy is pursued through the approvals process and our research programme. The tonnage of pesticide applied in England and Wales between 1980 and 1990 fell by 21 per cent. There is also increasing evidence that users are seeking to use reduced application rates where possible, building on the results of research findings.

Sheep and Cattle Farms

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the net farm income for mainly sheep and sheep and cattle farms in severely disadvantaged areas in England and Wales, in both nominal and real terms for each year since 1978.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The statistical information used in the autumn review of hill livestock compensatory allowances will be placed in the Library of the House when the outcome of the review is announced on 30 November.

Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowances

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many producers in England and Wales are entitled to hill livestock compensatory allowances; and what proportion of those are located in *(a)* severely disadvantaged areas and *(b)* disadvantaged areas.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Some 30,000 producers in England and Wales are currently entitled to claim hill livestock compensatory allowances; of these about 22,000 farm either wholly or in part within the severely disadvantaged area and the remaining 8,000 farm either wholly or in part within the disadvantaged area and land outside the less-favoured area.

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many farmers in England and Wales were in receipt of hill livestock compensatory allowances in the severely disadvantaged areas according to the most recent figures for each year since 1978.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Precise annual figures covering this period are not available but the number of claimants paid each year under the hill livestock compensatory allowances scheme to farmers with holdings located either wholly or partially within the severely

disadvantaged area, or the corresponding area prior to the extension of the less-favoured areas in 1985, has risen slightly from about 20,700 in 1980 to 21,300 in 1992.

Ewe and Cow Premiums

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will give the figures for England and Wales relating to 1993 for the value of the ewe premium and suckler cow premium per head distinguishing the value of any supplements if applicable.

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: The rate of sheep annual premium in England and Wales for the 1993 marketing year is fixed only after the end of the year. To date, Commission regulations provide for payments of two advances totalling £12·55 per eligible ewe and a supplement in less-favoured areas of £5·16 per eligible ewe. The final rate of premium and supplement due in spring 1994 will reflect the level of market prices and green rates operating in each member state throughout the marketing year.

The 1993 suckler cow premium rate per head is £65·73 in England and Wales. In addition a payment of £28·17 per head can be made if the stocking density on a holding is less than 1·4 livestock units per hectare of eligible forage area.

Aujeszky's Disease

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if she will make a statement about the arrangements for the use of the surplus levy funds from the Aujeszky's disease eradication fund.

Mr. Soames: We have held discussions with the Pig Disease Eradication Fund Ltd. and have drawn up an arrangement for the use of the accrued interest on the surplus levy funds. Starting in this financial year, for three years the accrued interest will be used to offset some of the costs of the monitoring work carried out by the state veterinary service to maintain Great Britain's internationally recognised health status. The capital sum will remain untouched by this arrangement. At the end of the three years we will carry out a further review with the Pig Disease Eradication Fund, in the light of the developments regarding pig disease in the United Kingdom and EC. I am pleased that the Pig Disease Eradication Fund Ltd. accepts this arrangement.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Mr. Siemion Serafimowicz

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what inquiries have been received from overseas Governments regarding Siemion Serafimowicz, now living in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Charles Wardle *[holding answer 28 October 1993]:* None.

Immigration

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how long it takes on average for replies to be sent to legal representatives dealing with deportation and immigration cases; and if he will make a statement.

Mr Charles Wardle: The information is not available.

DEFENCE

AWE, Aldermaston

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether red commissioning has commenced on the A90 complex at AWE, Aldermaston.

Mr. Aitken: No.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all modifications made to the liquid and solid waste treatment plants at AWE, Aldermaston, following the publication of the Pochin report.

Mr. Aitken: Details of the large number of modifications carried out for liquid waste treatment are not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate costs. However, significant modifications have been made in the following areas:

Effluent collection system
Effluent treatment
Sludge solidification
Treated effluent discharge
Change room access to plants

Solid waste is not treated on site.

Dangerous Flying

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what sanctions are available to discipline pilots of military aircraft who have been guilty of dangerous flying and who have left the service before the institution of disciplinary proceedings under service regulations.

Mr. Hanley: The disciplinary codes of all three services make provision for court-martial action to be taken against former service pilots who have committed an offence, provided the trial begins within six months of their ceasing to be subject to service discipline. These provisions would cover the offences of dangerous and low flying.

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will introduce legislation to make dangerous flying in military aircraft over the United Kingdom an offence.

Mr. Hanley: Existing legislation deals adequately with occurrences of dangerous flying. I refer the hon. Member to section 20 of the Navy Discipline Act 1957, section 49 of the Army Act 1955 and section 49 of the Air Force Act 1955.

Low Flying

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if the RAF police investigation of the low-flying incident over Gullane on 16 September 1992 included *(a)* an interview with the rear-seat passenger in the Tornado or *(b)* interviews with or attempts to find witnesses on the ground apart from the original complainer.

Mr. Hanley: The RAF police investigation of the low-flying incident over Gullane on 16 September 1992 did not include an interview with the rear seat passenger of the aircraft or interviews with or attempts to find witnesses on the ground other than the original complainant.

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the established procedure to be followed if a Tornado navigator feels unwell during a low-level sortie.

Mr. Hanley: No specific procedures apply if a Tornado navigator feels unwell during a low level sortie. The pilot will decide appropriate action, which may range from carrying on with the original purpose of the flight in the case of a temporary incapacity to terminating the sortie, in the light of the particular circumstances.

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the regulations for low-level familiarisation flights in Tornado aircraft; what are the criteria for weather at base and operating area, and the minimum altitude and maximum speed; whether such flights can include low passes or simulated attacks either on planned targets or targets of opportunity; what are the limits on bank angle and G pull on such flights; what specific manoeuvres are prohibited in such flights; and whether such flights are permitted in operational GRI and GRIA variants.

Mr. Hanley: The weather criteria for a low-level Tornado familiarisation sortie are visibility of 5 km and 1,500 m horizontal and 500 ft vertical separation from cloud. These are the standard criteria for military low flying. The weather at the base airfield must also meet the standard criteria for take off and landing of 800 m visibility and a minimum cloud base of 200 ft. The minimum altitude permitted during the sortie is 250 ft minimum separation distance; and the maximum speed permitted would normally be 480 knots, although an absolute maximum speed overland of 550 knots may be permitted for very short time periods. Low passes and simulated attacks would be permitted. There are no limits placed on the angle of bank, and the maximum G would be dictated by the limits placed on the aircraft unless the passenger's medical clearance specified a lower limit. No specific manoeuvres are prohibited but the involvement of passengers in the operation of weapon release equipment or switches is not permitted. Such sorties may be flown in operational variants of the Tornado GR1 and GR1a. All such sorties must be properly authorised, and the pilot of the aircraft must meet minimum experience and qualification standards before being permitted to fly passengers.

Laser-guided Bombs

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will make a statement on his plans for procuring precision-guided munitions to fulfil staff requirement 1242; and what is the timetable for this procurement;

(2) if it is his intention to exclude non-European participation from competition for SR 1242.

Mr. Aitken: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave my hon. Friend the Member for Worcester (Mr. Luff) on 4 May 1993, columns *18-19*. Twelve companies in the United Kingdom, United States and Europe were invited to tender by 4 August 1993. Three companies responded—one each in the United Kingdom, United States and France. We are currently considering these in detail but I do not expect to be able to announce the results of the competition until the new year.

Military Flights

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on what date the southerly directional flow control was introduced for military flights over the Gullane/ Aberlady area.

Mr. Hanley: The flow controls north of East Fortune airfield were introduced on 1 June 1992.

Nuclear Weapons Accidents

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what is the maximum area that might have to be *(a)* evacuated and *(b)* subjected to restrictions in a worst case scenario nuclear weapons transport accident; and what are the maximum arc and distance that would be involved in the most unfavourable weather conditions;

(2) if he will make a statement on the extent of nuclear weapon plutonium dispersion hazards.

Mr. Hanley: Because of the stringent safety precautions observed, a nuclear weapon transport accident that posed a real hazard to the public would be an extremely unlikely event. The worst scenario would involve the crash of a military aircraft transporting nuclear weapons which then subsequently produced a release of respirable particles of plutonium.

The MOD document for local authorities and emergency services, issued in December 1992, does address this scenario, and gives general guidance on the measures that should be taken promptly to protect the public. A copy of the document is already available in the Library of the House. The document makes clear that further specific advice would be given by the MOD for the particular circumstances of an accident.

Joint Direct Attack Munition

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the decision by the US Defense Department to exclude foreign participation at prime contractor level from the completion for a joint direct attack munition.

Mr. Aitken: Despite representations by the Ministry of Defence, the US Department of Defense has decided to exclude foreign participation at prime contractor level in its joint direct attack munition programme because of US national security constraints. However, foreign firms may participate as sub-contractors and United Kingdom companies will no doubt pursue any opportunities in this area.

Submarine Accidents

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the maximum area and radius which would have to be *(a)* evacuated and *(b)* subjected to restrictions in the worst case scenario of a severely ruptured submarine reactor due to collision or other circumstances in the firth of Forth or the firth of Clyde; and what contingency plans have been made.

Mr. Hanley: The overall probability of any accident resulting in even a small release is very low indeed. Nevertheless it remains prudent to develop contingency plans to respond to the possibility of an accident which

might result in a radioactive hazard. The risk of an accident which would require the application of public protection measures such as shelter, evacuation or taking potassium iodate tablets from any accident location is no more likely than about one in 1 million in any one year, even assuming a reactor is operating continuously at that particular location.

Personnel Statistics

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish a breakdown by section, agency or function of the numbers of civil servants, civilian and non-military personnel employed by his Department.

Mr. Aitken: The information requested is published in Defence Statistics 1993 tables 2.3 and 2.27, a copy of which is held in the House of Commons Library.

Pilot Training

Dr. Berry: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the annual cost of the RAF pilot training operations, Bristol university air squadron and No. 3 Air Experience Flight, at Colerne airfield, Wiltshire.

Mr. Hanley: The Bristol university air squadron and No. 3 Air Experience Flight, which commenced operations at Colerne airfield in April have budget allocations for the current financial year of £758,000 and £329,000 respectively.

Dr. Berry: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many young people are currently being trained to fly at Colerne airfield; and how many of these trainees are expected to join the RAF as pilots.

Mr. Hanley: Forty-three young people are currently being trained to fly at Colerne airfield with the Bristol university air squadron. From experience, we would expect about 70 per cent. to join the RAF as pilots.

Seawolf Missiles

Mr. James Hill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about orders for vertical launch Seawolf missiles.

Mr. Aitken: I am pleased to announce that we have awarded a contract for a second production order of 450 vertical launch Seawolf missiles to British Aerospace Defence Ltd., Dynamics Division. These will provide 24-hour protection for the Royal Navy's type 23 frigates against aircraft and anti-ship missiles.

The value of the order is more than £100 million. Work will be centred at the company's Lostock and Filton sites. It will sustain some 100 jobs within the company, and many more at sub-contractors throughout the country.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Konver Programme

Mr. McCartney: To ask the President of the Board of Trade whether the Commission rules for funding under the Konver programme apply only to small and medium-sized enterprises; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Sainsbury: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Rossendale and Darwen (Ms Anderson) on 27 October, *Official Report*, column *643*.

Methane

Sir Cranley Onslow: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what estimate he has made of the potential contribution of coal-bed methane to United Kingdom energy resources; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Coalbed methane is still in the exploration phase in the United Kingdom, determining if production is viable. No estimate has therefore been made.

Although the coal fields are well defined, it is necessary to find out the parameters that will govern the rate and extent of release of methane from United Kingdom coals and to adapt the production technique for United Kingdom conditions.

Iron and Steel Readaptation Benefit

Mr. Jenkin: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the future of the iron and steel readaptation benefits scheme.

Mr. Sainsbury: The scheme was set up in 1974 since when many improvements have been made to the arrangements for helping unemployed people. ISERBS is not very effective in assisting redundant steel workers to re-enter the labour market and has not proved good value for money. Further large-scale restructuring in the United Kingdom steel industry is no longer anticipated. Redundant steel workers should henceforth be treated in the same way as most other redundant workers. ISERBS will therefore be terminated.

The termination will apply in respect of closures, capacity cuts or changes in activities at steel companies which take place from today. However, it is important that appropriate transitional arrangements are put in place which are as fair as possible. Accordingly I am today also issuing a consulation paper and inviting comments by 10 December 1993 on those arrangements in respect of such events which I am satisfied are imminent.

Eco-management and Audit Regulation

Mr. David Porter: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what has been the result of the consultation exercise in relation to the accreditation arrangements relating to the EC Eco-management and audit regulation and British Standard BS 7750.

Mr. McLoughlin: The consultation exercise showed clear support for the appointment of the National Accreditation Council for Certification Bodies as accreditation body for both the EC regulation and BS7750. NACCB is being asked to start work immediately so that it has the maximum possible time to develop accreditation arrangements which will include the necessary environmental dimension and to streamline procedures so that both regulation and standard may be as accessible as possible, to small firms in particular. We are actively considering the formal separation of NACCB from BSI and a further announcement will be made in due course. A further announcement will also be made in due course on the appointment of a competent body under the terms of the regulation.

Accounts Services Agency

Mr. Heald: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement about the review of options for the future of DTI's Accounts Services Agency.

Mr. Eggar: The Department has received a proposal for a management led employee buy out from members of the agency's management. I very much welcome this initiative.

In view of this proposal and of the very good progress the Accounts Services Agency has made in developing a more commercial approach since it became an agency in October 1991, I have decided to commission a review to consider the options for the future of the agency.

PA Consulting Group has been appointed to assess the commercial position and prospects of the agency; to assess the current and potential developments in the markets in financial and management accounts services, and the opportunities and threats these may present to the agency; and to consider alternative possible forms of ownership and management. The consultants will assess the advantages and disadvantages to the Department, the agency, its customers and staff of all options.

In assessing the options the consultants will need to take account of the requirement to ensure that the Department continues to receive essential accounting services. The Department is reviewing its requirements for these services, and the scope for them to be met from the private sector, in parallel with the review by consultants.

In undertaking their review the consultants will take account of the proposal for a management-led employee buy-out.

EC Trade Mark Office

Mr. Mills: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what recent representations he has received about the economic and employment effect of locating the proposed European Community trade mark office in London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. McLoughlin *[holding answer 28 October 1993]:* The Government have received two letters about the proposed Community trade mark office since January this year.

The location of CTMO has been linked to the question of the seats of other Community bodies. The Government's priority has always been to get the best deal for the United Kingdom. Our bid for the CTMO remains on the table.

Press Advertising

Sir Michael Grylls: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how much Companies House has spent on press advertising in the years 1991-92, 1992-93 and so far in 1993-94.

Mr. Neil Hamilton *[holding answer 27 October 1993]:* Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the chief executive of Companies House Executive Agency for which my Department is responsible. I have therefore asked Mr. David Durham to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from David Durham to Sir Michael Grylls, dated 29 October 1993:

On 21 October you tabled the following Parliamentary Question:—

To ask the President of the Board of Trade, how much Companies House has spent on Press advertising in the years 1991-92, 1992-93 and so far in 1993-94.

Following the answer given by the President of the Board of Trade, I am replying as Chief Executive of Companies House.

In 1991-92 Companies House spent £106,399 on display advertising in national and regional newspapers, trade and professional press. In 1992-93 the figure was £232,744 and in the current financial year Companies House has spent £39,178 with a further £47,476 committed.

These figures exclude VAT. They cover advertising paid for directly by Companies House as well as advertising funded by the Department of Trade and Industry.

I hope this information is helpful to you.

TRANSPORT

Trans-Pennine Study

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to announce the Government's response to the public consultation on the trans-Pennine study.

Mr. Key: I shall make my response when all replies to the public consultation have been fully considered.

Vehicle Operator Licensing

Ms. Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list details of road checks on light goods vehicles and passenger-carrying vehicles carried out by vehicle inspectorate staff during 1992; and how many vehicles were issued with defect notices or prohibition notices.

Mr. Key: The vehicle inspectorate collects information on a financial rather than a calender year basis. The figures below relate to the financial year 1992-93.

	Number
Roadworthiness checks	
LGVs[1]	
Number of vehicles checked	134,382
Number of prohibitions issued	18,786
Number of defect notices issued	18,379
PCVs[2]	
Number of vehicles checked	29,542
Number of prohibitions issued	2,366
Number of defect notices issued	4,275
Vehicles examined	
LGVs	295,124
PCVs	40,508
Vehicles weighed or prohibited	
LGVs	
Number weighed	124,004
Number prohibited	6,987

[1] Large goods vehicle
[2]Passenger carrying vehicle
These figures include 8,012 and 4,647 special partial checks on headlights and exhaust emissions on LGVs and PCVs respectively.
VI issues advisory defect notices only as part of its roadworthiness checks.
Traffic enforcement checks (checking driver hours and operator, vehicle and driver licences)

M20

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was *(a)* the agreed cost, *(b)* the final cost, *(c)* the estimated time for and *(d)* the actual time taken, of the construction and widening of the M20 motorway between junctions 5 and 8.

Mr. Key: *(a)* The accepted tender for widening the M20 between junctions 5 and 8 is £69·5 million.

(b) The final cost is not yet known.

(c) Work started on 29 July 1991. The original contract completion date was 15 February 1993 but extensions of time have been granted under the terms of the contract.

(d) The works are still under construction.

Motorway Network

Mr. Roy Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list those links on the national motorway network which *(a)* are to dual four-lane specification and carry average daily traffic volumes in excess of 120,000 vehicles, *(b)* are to dual four-lane specification and carry average daily traffic volumes between 100,000 and 120,000 vehicles., *(c)* are to dual three-lane specification and carry average daily traffic volumes in excess of 80,000 vehicles, *(d)* are to dual three-lane specification and carry average daily volumes between 65,000 and 80,000 vehicles, *(e)* are to dual two-lane specification and carry average daily traffic volumes in excess of 50,000 vehicles and *(f)* are to dual two-lane specification and carry average daily traffic volumes between 40,000 and 50,000 vehicles.

Mr. Key: This information is not immediately available, but I will write to the hon. Member in due course.

Bicycles

Mr. Gorst: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many accidents were recorded in the last 12 months involving pedestrians and bicycles.

Mr. Key: Latest available data show that there were 24,962 pedestrian accidents and 49,767 bicycle accidents during the 12 months of 1992.

Mr. Gorst: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to introduce regulations making it compulsory for bicycles to carry a warning device to warn pedestrians of their approach.

Mr. Key: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given on 11 May by my hon. Friend the Member for Lincoln (Mr. Carlisle), to a question by my hon. Friend the Member for Monmouth (Mr. Evans), *Official Report*, 12 May 1993, column. *380*.

A38

Mr. Hicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if it is his intention to give further consideration to a route option to the south of Landrake as part of the consultation procedures for the A38 trunk road improvement between Saltash and Trerulefoot; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: We are considering all the responses to the recent public consultation, including suggestions for an alternative to the south of Landrake.

Mr. Hicks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when work will commence on the installation of speed control cameras and the construction of a footbridge over the A38 trunk road at Landrake; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Key: We are arranging for the provision early in the new year of the necessary electrical and other work which will enable the police to install a speed enforcement camera at Landrake on the A38 trunk road.

Construction of a footbridge over the A38 in the village requires the acquistion of privately owned land. We have yet to settle whether this land can be acquired by agreement, permitting construction in 1994-95, or whether compulsory purchase powers will have to be used, which would lead to later construction.

Transport Research Laboratory

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the benefits that have arisen for safety of drivers, passengers, pedestrians and cyclists from the innovations and work of the transport and road research laboratory in the last 10 years; and what plans he has to ensure that further progress in this field is maintained by commercial contact with bodies other than his own Department.

Mr. Key: The Transport Research Laboratory has been responsible for many research projects which have made important contributions to the safety of road users. For example, work on vehicle standards has provided benefits for both vehicle occupants and vulnerable road users, research on urban safety has resulted in the implementation of low cost engineering schemes showing significant casualty reductions and work on skidding accidents has led to a new road surface standard which has again significantly reduced casualties.

The Department intends to continue with a major programme of research in road and vehicle safety at TRL, and expects to place contracts both with TRL and with other researchers. TRL for its part is also seeking work in these fields from bodies other than the Department.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the benefits obtained for his Department and the nation since the Transport Research Laboratory, Crowthorne became an executive agency in April 1992; and if he will list the possible further benefits and disbenefits he expects to raise from its full privatisation

Mr. Key: Benefits have been obtained through the Transport Research Laboratory's good performance against the challenging annual efficiency and quality targets set by my right hon. Friend; and through its high-quality research output, which has informed a range of policy decisions. The possible benefits and disbenefits of transferring the laboratory to the private sector are currently being studied by external consultants.

Union Railways

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to receive a comprehensive report from Union Railways concerning the route of its proposed fast link, its costs, finance, operating capacity, international traffic forecasts, and forecasts of passenger traffic generated from any intermediate station; and when the report will be made available to the public.

Mr. Freeman: I received today a report from Union Railways which, apart from commercially sensitive information, will be published when the Government's decisions are announced.

Office Costs

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the estimated amount to be spent in 1993-94 on rent and other costs associated with the offices of his Department at 2 Marsham street, London.

Mr. Norris: The estimated expenditurre on rent and other associated accommodation costs for the Department's offices at 2 Marsham street, London, is £10,156,641 in 1993-94.

Jubilee Line Extension

Sir Michael Neubert To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the current position on the proposed extension to the Jubilee line to Stratford via Canary Wharf; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: The High Court today discharged the relevant Olympia and York companies from administration; accordingly I shall today be giving the chairman of London Regional Transport my approval for London Underground Ltd. to let contracts for the construction and equipment of the Jubilee line extension. This reflects the fact that, in anticipation of their release from administration, and with the permission of Court, Olympia and York as the developers of Canary Wharf have entered into agreements to make a contribution of some £400 million towards the cost of the extension, a previously envisaged. The first contribution, of some £100 million, will be made forthwith, finance having been made available by the European Investment bank.

London Underground Ltd. will start letting contracts for the extension at once. The total cost of the project is put at £1·9 billion, with the creation of over 22,000 jobs in the United Kingdom. London Underground Ltd. envisage completion of the extension in the first half of 1998. The 10-mile line will have 11 stations, including one at Westminster.

I warmly welcome this successful outcome. The new line, assisted by private sector finance, will be of major benefit to London and its transport system, and in particular to the development of docklands.

Director and Co-ordinator of Transport Security

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, when he will publish the 1992-93 annual report of the Director and Co-ordinator of Transport Security.

Mr. John MacGregor: I am today placing copies of this report in the Library of the House.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Members Dining Room

Sir Cranley Onslow: To ask the Chairman of the Accommodation and Works Committee what plans he has to improve the ventilation in the Members' Dining Room.

Mr. Ray Powell: Although there are no current plans specifically to improve ventilation in the Members' Dining Room, I understand that this matter forms part of the Catering Committee's comprehensive investigations into options for the modernisation of the Refreshment Department.

Chamber (Seating)

Mr. Allen: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will introduce proposals to arrange for the Chamber to be so arranged as to provide seating for every hon. Member; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I have no plans to do so.

University College, Swansea

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Lord President of the Council what plans he has to publish the report carried out by Sir Michael Davies last year in respect of three philosophy lecturers at University college, Swansea; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave the right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) on 6 July 1993, column. *114.*

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Allen: To ask the Lord President of the Council how many parliamentary questions have been answered on or since 18 October with the statement that the answer could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Newton: The number of answers given to parliamentary questions from 18 to 25 October 1993 recorded in the POLIS database as including a reference to part or all of the information being available only at disproportionate cost was 13. The total number of POLIS entries for written answers in that period was 1,374.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

Overseas Aid

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what guidelines are used in evaluating whether or not to grant support for projects under the Overseas Development Administration's aid and trade provision.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The criteria used in evaluating aid and trade provision cases are set out in the ATP "Guidelines for Applicants" booklet, copies of which are in the Libraries of the House. This is currently being revised to take account of the new OECD rules governing tied aid which came into force in 1992 and the revised arrangements for ATP announced by my right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development in another place on 17 June. Copies of the revised guidelines will be placed in the Libraries of the House when available.

Commonwealth Institute

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he received from his Commonwealth counterparts at the Commonwealth conference in Cyprus in regard to the decision to withdraw Government funding for the Commonwealth Institute in London.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The Commonwealth Secretary General reminded my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State of the Secretary-General's statement of 22 September regretting the decision. There were no other representations.

Overseas Aid (Efficiency)

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what criteria the Government use to judge the efficiency of overseas aid; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Ensuring the efficiency and effectiveness of United Kingdom aid has the highest priority. The ODA's departmental report 1993, Cm 2202, sets out the Government's approach to these issues.

Pakistan and India

Mr. Bates: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the amount of British aid given to Pakistan and India in 1992-93.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: The provisional figures for gross bilateral aid to India and Pakistan in 1992-93 are £114·7 million and £34·5 million respectively. The final figures will be available in "British Aid Statistics", due to be published later this year.

UNICEF Progress

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans the ODA has to meet representatives of UNICEF-UK to discuss the implications for United Kingdom overseas aid policy of the findings of the UNICEF report "The Progress of Nations".

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Overseas Development Administration officials are in regular contact with UNICEF-UK on all UNICEF related matters. My officials attended a briefing meeting with UNICEF staff as well as the press launch last month of the progress of nations report.

Angola

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the recent situation in Angola.

Mr. Lennox-Boyd: Following United Nations Security Council resolution 864 and the introduction of limited sanctions against UNITA the movement has declared a unilateral ceasefire and agreed to return to negotiations based on the 1991 Bicesse peace accords. "Proximity talks" involving the Government of Angola and UNITA, chaired by the United Nations Secretary General's special representative, Mr. Beye, began in Lusaka on 25 October. We hope that these will result in direct talks. We shall continue actively to support the Secretary General's efforts to bring about a nationwide ceasefire and a negotiated settlement.

Aid Projects

Dr. John Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on how many occasions since October 1989 he has overruled the advice of his Department's accounting officer that a project being considered for aid funds should not be supported in each case, giving the reasons for his decision.

Mr. Hurd: I have given a ministerial directive to ODA's accounting officer on one occasion. I refer the right hon. Member to the answer I gave him yesterday on the Pergau hydro-electric project.

EDUCATION

Literacy

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what proportion of *(a)* school leavers and *(b)* 16 to 19-year-olds have poor literacy skills; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Boswell: A recent survey by the Government-funded adult literacy and basic skills unit suggested that more than 40 per cent. of students entering further education colleges needed help with basic literacy in order to achieve a good qualification. The raising of literacy standards is a top priority for the Government's policies for education.

Sex Education

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps he is taking to ensure that boys are being taught moral responsibility in sex education.

Mr. Forth: In the new draft guidance which will be issued shortly, schools will be reminded of the requirement that sex education should be provided in such a manner as to encourage pupils to have due regard to moral considerations and to the value of family life. The guidance will emphasise the need for schools to foster in both sexes responsible sexual attitudes and behaviour.

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps he will take to encourage the work of the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority in sex and moral education.

Mr. Forth: Under section 1 of the Education Reform Act 1988 all maintained schools are required to offer a curriculum which promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school and of society. The School Curriculum and Assessment Authority will be carrying out its work within this framework.

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will issue guidance to education authorities advising them not to use the Family Planning Association's primary school workbook on sex education for four-year-olds; and what is his policy on the use of explicit teaching materials for sex education in primary schools.

Mr. Forth: The law does not require primary schools to teach about sex. It does, however, require that where there is such teaching it should encourage pupils to have due regard to moral considerations and to the value of family life. My right hon. Friend has made clear his view that education about sex should begin in the home, as should all education. Governors of all schools should keep closely in touch with parents on this sensitive subject.

School Inspections

Ms Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list the number of people trained by the Office for Standards in Education for inspection; and for which categories they have been trained.

Mr. Robin Squire: The arrangements for inspecting schools under the Education (Schools) Act 1992 are a matter for Ofsted.

I have asked Professor Sutherland to write to the hon. Member.

First-Degree Arts Courses

Sir Cranley Onslow: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what estimate he has made of the saving to public funds that could be achieved by a reduction to two years in the time taken for first-degree arts courses at universities in England and Wales.

Mr. Boswell: Average public funding per student through Funding Council grant, mandatory awards and student loans for a funded student place on a classroom-based course in 1993-94 is around £5,000. If all such courses were of the conventional length of three years full time, a reduction to two years would lead to recurrent savings of some £560 million in 1993-94 prices when the change was fully implemented.

If the length of first degree courses were reduced with no corresponding increase in the amount of teaching per year, curriculum coverage would be reduced. The Higher Education Funding Council for England is funding a pilot scheme of accelerated degree courses, which provide for more intensive teaching over two years. Direct comparisons with the costs of conventional three year degrees are not possible since the pilot courses attract special funding from the HEFCE and students are eligible for additional maintenance payments. The Government believe that such accelerated courses are likely to appeal mainly to some mature students.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education under what statutory power he intends to provide a grant to the Grant-maintained Schools Centre to enable it to set up four regional offices to provide information on grant-maintained status.

Mr. Robin Squire: My right hon. Friend is making grant available to the Grant-maintained Schools Centre pursuant to regulation 15 of the Education (Grant) Regulations 1990 (SI 1990/1989).

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the total cost to the Exchequer of the reduction in the special purposes grant-paid to grant-maintained schools to compensate for their reduced liability to pay council tax—uniform business rate—for the years 1991-92, 1992-93 and 1993-94.

Mr. Robin Squire: No cost to the Exchequer arises in this manner.

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will list the special purposes grants given to each grant-maintained school in Devon for each financial year since 1991-92, including the current financial year.

Mr. Robin Squire: The following self-governing schools in Devon have received special purpose grants (SPGs):

Amount paid (£) for each financial year

	1991-92	*1992-93*	*1993-94*
School			
COLYTON GRAMMAR SCHOOL			
SPG (Development)	17,450	19,635	22,695

	1991-92	1992-93	1993-94
SPG (VAT)	7,723	—	2,164
SPG (Premises)	2,303	2,495	2,082
KNOWLES HILL SCHOOL			
Transitional Grant	—	—	53,849
SPG (Development)	—	—	19,759
ST. BONIFACE'S COLLEGE			
Transitional Grant	—	—	51,660
SPG (Development)	—	—	31,068
SPG (VAT)	—	—	40,700
SPG (Restructuring)	—	—	8,627
SPG (Premises)	—	—	4,197
TEIGN SCHOOL			
Transitional Grant	—	34,620	21,930
SPG (Development)	—	—	37,612
SPG (VAT)	—	—	8,162
SPG (Restructuring)	—	—	17,883
SPG (Premises)	—	—	5,602
TORQUAY BOYS' GRAMMAR SCHOOL			
Transitional Grant	—	56,460	—
SPG (Development)	—	9,276	37,825
SPG (VAT)	—	—	9,680
SPG (Premises)	—	—	6,000
UFFCULME SCHOOL			
Transitional Grant	—	—	50,520
SPG (Development)	—	—	7,799

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans he has to increase the grant to the Grant-Maintained Schools Centre.

Mr. Robin Squire: My right hon. Friend announced on 16 March, *Official Report*, column *143*, that he was making funds available to the Grant-maintained Schools Centre to support the dissemination of factual information about grant maintained status. The grant to the Grant-maintained Schools Centre for 1993-94 is likely as a consequence of this announcement to increase to around £790,000. The precise figure is yet to be finalised.

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will place in the Library a copy of the 1992-93 audited accounts for the Grant-Maintained Schools Centre.

Mr. Robin Squire: Yes, as soon as they are available.

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what amount was given to each grant-maintained school under section 11 funding for each financial year since 1991-92, including the current financial year.

Mr. Robin Squire: The table shows the section 11 grants paid by the Department direct to grant-maintained schools for each of the years in question. Payments for the current financial year are those paid to date. The table excludes payments in respect of those grant-maintained schools which have elected to remain part of approved projects within their former maintaining local education authority, as these payments are not made by the Department.

Section 11 payments

School	£
1991-92	
Ash Green School	4,384·00
Avon Valley School	4,837·00
Burntwood School	20,564·00
Claremont High School	8,541·00
Francis Bacon School	29,856·00
Hendon School	28,097·00
London Oratory School	18,752·00
Moseley Park GM School	8,413·00
Small Heath School	41,637·00
Southlands School	6,234·00
Stratford School	18,419·00
TOTAL	189,734·00
1992-93	
Ash Green School	5,496·20
Avon Valley School	15,069·76
Bridgewater Hall School	8,328·00
Brindley Hall School	1,130·00
Burntwood School	32,327·25
Claremont High School	12,991·66
Copeland Community School	36,720·86
Desborough School	1,580·00
Francis Bacon School	36,353·00
Graveney School	69,687·29
Greenford High School	30,475·45
Hendon School	26,170·43
Holy Trinity CE School	2,344·00
London Oratory School	37,010·00
Moseley Park GM School	818·00
Myton School	19,898·78
Northampton School	26,706·00
Northolt High School	1,844·25
Oldfield School	1,629·00
Raine's Foundation School	26,167·00
Robert Napier School	395·86
Small Heath School	48,068·75
Southlands School	11,802·25
Stratford School	56,208·53
TOTAL	509,222·35
1993-94	
Ashcroft High School	1,097·35
Avon Valley School	3,878·75
Beechview School	2,385·51
Bridgewater Hall School	4,329·71
Burntwood School	18,780·00
Copeland Community School	10,792·00
Deacons School	6,489·00
Greenford High School	11,574·99
Greenwood Dale School	8,647·25
Hall Green School	2,355·00
Hamilton Combined School	13,695·08
Hendon School	9,119·18
Holy Trinity CE School	2,318·25
London Oratory School	12,570·25
Northampton School	6,834·75
Oldfield School	1,176·75
Radcliffe School	3,467·40
Raine's Foundation School	9,014·81
Robert Napier School	413·00
Small Heath School	16,308·00
Stratford School	18,094·43
Wrenn School	8,997·14
TOTAL	172,338·60

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will place in the Library a copy of the business plan drawn up by Coopers Lybrand for the Grant-Maintained Schools Centre.

Mr. Robin Squire: No. The business plan which Coopers and Lybrand helped prepare covers the full range of activities of the Grant-maintained Schools Centre. More than half these are not grant-aided and the information on them is commercial-in-confidence.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Cereal Stores

Rev. William McCrea: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are the amounts of cereals in storage in each region of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Ancram: Responsibility for the subject in question has been delegated to the Intervention Board Executive Agency under its chief executive, Guy Stapleton. I have asked him to provide the information requested.

Letter from Guy Stapleton to Rev. William McCrea, dated November 1993:

CEREALS IN STORAGE

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland has asked me to reply to your written Parliamentary Question (1235) tabled for answer on 29 October 1993:—

"To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what are the amounts of cereals in storage in each region of the United Kingdom."

The information you request is set out below. All figures are in thousands of tonnes and represent stocks at the end of September 1993.

Region[1]	*Feed-Wheat*	*Wheat B*	*Barley*	*Total*
East	90	—	217	307
South West	10	—	157	167
Midlands	17	1	392	410
North	35	—	172	207
England	152	1	938	1,091
Scotland	140	—	499	639
Total United Kingdom	292	1	1,437	1,730

[1]HGCA regions of England

There are no stocks of intervention cereals in Northern Ireland or Wales.

I am sending a copy of this letter to the House of Commons Library and the Public Information Office.

Government Offices

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many Government offices there are in Northern Ireland.

Sir John Wheeler: The number of Government offices in Northern Ireland housing Northern Ireland Office and Northern Ireland civil service staff is 322.

Office Costs

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the estimated amount to be spent in 1993-94 on rent and other costs associated with the offices of his Department in Whitehall.

Sir John Wheeler: A total of £1,060,362·08.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

EC Publications

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many copies of his departmental publication, "The European Community: Facts and Fairytales" have been published; at what cost; to whom and to what organisations it has been distributed *(a)* within the United Kingdom and *(b)* abroad; and if he will make a statement on its intended purpose.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: A total of 30,000 copies of the booklet "European Community: Facts and Fairytales" have been published so far, at a cost of £10,787. Copies have been sent to Members of Parliament, members of the House of Lords, United Kingdom MEPs, the media, including in Brussels, chambers of commerce, information offices, consumer organisations, women's associations, EC and EFTA embassies in London, major United Kingdom posts abroad and to all individuals who have asked for copies. Some 16,000 copies have been sent out so far. The booklet is intended to help inform public opinion about the Community and, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs said in the foreword, to fill in some of the gaps which occur when the facts behind the stories are not explained.

Korea

Mr. Parry: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the latest situation in respect of relations between the Republic of Korea and North Korea.

Mr. Goodlad: There have been three rounds of talks about talks during October after a period in which the two sides had not met each other. We have been disappointed at the lack of substantive progress. We hope however that North Korea's move at the third round in tabling a draft agreement for the exchange of high-level envoys may signify a willingness on their part to work towards specific progress at a fourth round of talks scheduled for early November.

Military Exports

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will place in the Library a copy of the United Nations report on military exports by country.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: This 123-page (A/48/344) report was issued by the United Nations on 11 October. It has been sent to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office by our mission to the United Nations and copies will be distributed to the Library very soon.

New Embassy, Berlin

Sir Cranley Onslow: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans there are for the construction of a new British embassy building in Berlin.

Mr. Goodlad: We propose to open a new embassy in Berlin when the Federal Government move from Bonn. The project is still at pre-planning stages. Issues relating to the site of the pre-war embassy, where Her Majesty the Queen unveiled a plaque in October 1992, and the size of the future embassy, are at present under active consideration.

Office Costs

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the estimated amount to be spent in 1993-94 on rent and other costs associated with the offices of his Department in King Charles street, London.

Mr. Goodlad: The main building of the FCO in King Charles street is undergoing major refurbishment extending until early 1997. During this programme approximately one quarter of the building is unoccupied. This is reflected in rent levels, and other costs for 1993-94, which are as follows:

Running costs	£
Rent, including works service charge and rates	8,195,719
Maintenance	475,000
Furnishings	700,000
Unilities	382,763
Contract cleaning	592,200
	10,345,682
Capital costs	
Refurbishment programme	11,732,000
TOTAL	22,077,682

WALES

Environmental Education

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will issue guidelines to school inspectors on the identification of good practice in the teaching of environmental education.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The statutory responsibility for school inspections rests with Her Majesty's chief inspector of schools in Wales under the Education (Schools) Act 1992 and extended in the Education Act 1993. It is for the chief inspector to issue to school inspectors such guidance on good teaching practice as he considers appropriate.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to require each further and higher education college in Wales to develop an environmental policy and action plan for implementation by the start of the 1994-95 academic year.

Sir Wyn Roberts: I have no plans to do so at the moment. However, the report of a committee on environmental education in further and higher education was sent to all FHE institutions in Wales in February 1993. This report contained a specific recommendation that, after consultation with its staff and students, every FHE institution should formally adopt and publicise, by the beginning of the academic year 1994-95, a comprehensive environmental policy statement, together with an action plan for its implementation.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to establish a central co-ordinating agency in Wales to encourage environmental education.

Sir Wyn Roberts: None. However, the Countryside Council for Wales is currently discussing this matter with other interested organisations.

Training and Enterprise Councils

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what guidelines he has given to the training and enterprise councils in Wales with respect to accounting conventions to be used in their annual report and accounts as regards *(a)* income and expenditure, *(b)* profit and loss account, *(c)* surplus and retained surplus, *(d)* gross profit and profit on ordinary activities after taxation, *(e)* turnover, *(f)* income and *(g)* chief executive and managing director level appointments and places on the board of such appointees; and if he will make a statement.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The annual operating agreement between the Welsh Office and training and enterprise councils, which is available in the Library of the House, requires them to publish an audited statement of accounts. As private limited companies, the training and enterprise councils are subject to the audit requirements of the Companies Act 1985 as to the form and content of these accounts.

The standard operating agreement also sets out the procedure each training and enterprise council must follow in appointing a chief executive or managing director.

As private limited companies, the composition of the board of training and enterprise councils is governed by the memorandum and articles of association of each.

Damp Housing

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what estimate he has of the number of houses in Wales affected by dampness, condensation, mould growth or a combination of these.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Estimates from the 1986 Welsh House Conditions Survey show that, 22,500 households had serious mould, 95,700 had rising damp, 150,400 had penetrating damp: no information is available on the number of households with condensation or those with any combination of these factors.

Waste Management

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of whether the regional groups of waste regulation authorities are being a adequately funded by their constituent authorities to enable them to fulfil their functions.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The functions and funding of regional groups are matters for constituent authorities to determine.

Tinworks Site, Treforest

Dr. Howells: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) what plans he has to order an immediate investigation of reports of anthrax contamination in buildings formerly used to house large quantities of animal bones for industrial processing at the tinworks site in Treforest, Pontypridd;

(2) if he will make it his policy that his Department will allow no development on the tinworks site in Treforest, Pontypridd until exhaustive investigations have been completed into reports that the site is contaminated with anthrax spores;

(3) what plans he has to order an immediate tightening of security arrangements around buildings known as the tinworks site in Pontypridd until such time as investigations are complete into reports that the buildings are contaminated with anthrax spores.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The issues of development and possible contamination of this site are matters for Taff Ely borough council as the local planning and environmental

health authority. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State understands the council has made development of the site conditional on a full prior examination of possible contamination. Should evidence of any contamination be revealed, no development would be permitted until appropriate remedial measures were undertaken.

In terms of the security of the site, my right hon. Friend has been advised that the council are following this matter up with the developers.

Office Costs

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the estimated amount to be spent in 1993-94 on rent and other costs associated with the offices of his Department in Gwydyr house, Whitehall.

Mr. Redwood: Property and operating costs comprising rent, rates, service charge, works, maintenance, utilities, cleaning and security are estimated at £418,000 for Gwydyr house in 1993-94.

Arable Regionalisation

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are his plans for arable regionalisation in Wales.

Mr. Redwood: For the 1993-94 scheme year—1994-95 marketing year—I propose that Wales should be split into two regions on a parish by parish basis using the pre-1974 boundaries.

In region 1, the notional average yield will be 5·93 tonnes per hectare, the same as in England.

The yield in region 2 will be calculated in such a way as to give an average of 4·65 tonnes per hectare over Wales as a whole.

A parish will be included in region 1 if:

it contains land suitable for growing winter cereals according to parameters defined by the Soil Survey and Land Research Centre; and

an average of at least 50 hectares of wheat and winter barley was grown in the parish in the three years in 1989-91.

I have placed in the Library of the House a copy of the report prepared for my Department by the Soil Survey and Land Research Centre along with a list of the parishes that fulfil the above criteria according to Welsh Office records based on the location of holdings. However, if it can be demonstrated by documentary evidence that a parish in which on average 50 or more hectares of wheat and winter barley was grown in 1989-91 is not included in my region 1 list and if the parish also fulfils the land suitability criteria, I will add it to region 1.

My officials will be writing to all cereal farmers in Wales giving details of the arrangements I am proposing. I am also inviting the views of industry representatives on them. Any comments on this proposal or representations on additions to region 1 should be made to my Department by 17 December.

Welsh Language Board

Mr. Richards: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will announce the members of the statutory Welsh Language Board.

Sir Wyn Roberts: The names of the members, to be formally appointed on 21 December 1993, are as follows:

Lord Elis-Thomas *(Chairman)*
Dr. Gareth Roberts
Ms Meri Huws
Mr. Godfrey Williams
Miss Gwerfyl Pierce Jones
Dr. Patrick Thomas
Mr. Geraint Price Thomas
Dr. Medwin Hughes
Dr. Neil Caldwell
Mr. Gwilym Owen
Mr. Richard John Edwards
Mr. Gwyn Griffiths
Mr. Edward Rea
Mr. Ron Jones
Mrs. Elan Closs Stephens

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Angling

Sir Cranley Onslow: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what estimate he has made of the Sports Council grant available during the current financial year to the sport of angling, expressed in terms per capita of those participating actively in the sport.

Mr. Brooke: Sports Council grant for angling for the current financial year is not yet known. In 1992-93 Sports Council grants to the governing bodies of angling was £46,800, a sum of 1·7p on a per capita basis for the 2·7 million adults actively participating in the sport.

Canoeing

Sir Cranley Onslow: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what estimate he has made of the grant available from the Sports Council and other public bodies in support of canoeing, expressed in terms per capita of those participating actively in this sport.

Mr. Brooke: In 1992-93 canoeing received grant of £344,426 from the Sports Council and a further £2,000 in awards from the Sportsmatch scheme. In total, this amounted to £3·46 per capita for those 100,000 actively participating in the sport.

Moated Granges

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list for the last 10 years the archaeological moated grange sites that have been demolished in England and Wales.

Mr. Brooke: This information is not readily available for England.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales is responsible for archaeological matters in Wales.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list archaeological moated grange sites that are due to be lost because of planning permission approval being granted.

Mr. Brooke: This information is not readily available.

ENVIRONMENT

Stoke Council (Ombudsman's Report)

Sir David Knox: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received regarding Stoke city council's refusal to implement the

recommendations contained in the report of the local government ombudsman, reference 90/B/1928; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Curry: My right hon. Friend has received no such representations. This is a matter between the city council and the local government ombudsman. The Government have, however, made it clear that if local authorities continue to ignore the findings of the ombudsman, steps will be taken to make the ombudsman's recommendations legally enforceable.

Oxford University (Pollution Allegations)

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what were the results of the investigation carried out recently by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution into alleged offences under the Radioactive Substances Act 1960 at Oxford university; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: The investigation concluded that alleged offences by Oxford university, under the Radioactive Substances Act 1960, were not proven. Limits and conditions within the authorisations granted to the University by Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution had not been breached. The inspectorate will continue to pay close attention to radioactive waste management operations at Oxford university and will always investigate any complaints.

Sour Gas

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what research his Department has carried out into the *(a)* toxicity and *(b)* inflammability of sour gas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: The properties of sour gas are well known, and no research has been considered necessary by my Department.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the power stations in England and Wales which have been authorised to use sour gas; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Yeo: No power stations in England and Wales have been authorised to burn sour gas.

Waste Incineration

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to require that all staff operating incineration plants in the United Kingdom are in receipt of formal qualifications by the year 1997.

Mr. Yeo: No.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to produce periodic revised guidelines on pollution control standards in incineration plants to reflect best available technology.

Mr. Yeo: The guidance notes which the Secretary of State and the chief inspector of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution have published, regarding best available techniques for controlling polluting releases from incinerators, will be reviewed at least every four years.

Ecolabelling Board

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to change the balance of interests represented by the composition of the United Kingdom Ecolabelling Board.

Mr. Yeo: My right hon. Friend has no plans to change the range of expertise originally available on the board. However, following the resignation of Miss Tessa Robertson in the summer, we are considering how to replace the expertise she brought to the board, in particular, her knowledge of the views of environmental non-governmental organisations. I hope we will be able to make an announcement shortly.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the members of the United Kingdom Ecolabelling Board showing what sector or company they come from.

Mr. Yeo: The members of the United Kingdom Ecolabelling Board are appointed in a personal capacity and not as representatives of their organisations. They bring with them expertise in a range of relevant fields. The current Chairman and members are:

Member	*Sector/Expertise*	*Position*
Dr. Elizabeth Nelson (Chairman)	Market research	Former Chairman of Taylor Nelson A. G. B. plc
Professor Roland Clift	Environmental Science	Professor of Environmental Technology and Director of the Centre for Environmental Strategy, University of Surrey
Ms Anne Foster	Consumer affairs	Director of the Scottish Consumer Council
Ms Julia Hailes	Environmental consultancy	Director of Sustainability Ltd, author of "Green Consumer guide"
Dr Keith Humphreys	Manufacturing	Chairman and Managing Director, Rhone-Poulenc Ltd.
Ms Pippa Hyam	Environmental consultancy	Senior Associate, PDA International
Mrs. Harriet Kimbell	Consumer affairs and Law	Consumer lawyer and law lecturer.
Mr. Kenneth Miles	Advertising	Director General, Incorporated Society of British Advertisers Ltd.
Miss Jyoti Munsiff	Law	Company Secretary, Shell Transport and Trading
Mr. Derek Norman	Manufacturing	Director of Environmental Affairs, Pilkington plc
Dr Richard Pugh	Retailing	Director, Tesco plc
Mr. Lew Scott	Manufacturing	Manufacturing Director Hoover, Ltd.
Miss Catherine Whitehead	Trading Standards	County Trading Standards Officer, Staffordshire County Council
Mr. Nigel Whitaker	Retailing	Executive Director Kingfisher, plc

Asylum

Dr. Twinn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will list those authorities which have accepted *(a)* more than 200, *(b)* 150 to 199, *(c)* 100 to 149 and *(d)* 50 to 99 asylum-seeking or refugee households in the last year;

(2) what is the estimated average cost of housing a refugee and asylum-seeking family of four in *(a)* local authority temporary accommodation and *(b)* local authority permanent accommodation in (i) the London borough of Westminster, (ii) Birmingham, (iii) Manchester and (iv) Uttlesford;

(3) how many refugees or asylum seekers were provided with *(a)* local authority temporary accommodation, *(b)* local authority permanent accommodation and *(c)* private sector accommodation in each of the last three years for which figures are available.

Sir George Young: In the year ending 30 June 1993, 13 local authorities in England reported accepting responsibility to secure permanent accommodation under the homelessness provisions of the Housing Act 1985 for 50 or more households where the reason for the loss of their last settled home was "refugee or asylum seeker". The authorities concerned and the numbers accepted are set out in the table. Other authorities which did not provide returns for all quarters may also have accepted 50 or more refugees or asylum seekers.

50 to 99 acceptances	*100 to 149 acceptances*	*150 or more acceptances*
Brent	Camden	None
Enfield	Lambeth	
Greenwich		
Hackney[1]		
Hammersmith and Fulham		
Harrow		
Hounslow		
Kensington and Chelsea[1]		
Newham		
Waltham Forest		
Westminster		

[1] Based on returns covering nine months only.
Source: Quarterly PIE returns.

Information is not available centrally, and my Department has no estimates, on the types of accommodation provided to refugees and asylum seekers, nor on the average costs of housing them.

Dr. Twinn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how the costs to local authorities of rehousing refugees and asylum seekers are reflected in the standard spending assessment calculaltions.

Mr. Baldry: The costs of rehousing refugees and asylum seekers are reflected through the use of information about the numbers of pupils, estimates of the resident population, the numbers of children of income support claimants and the social characteristics of local areas as measured by the latest population census. Authorities where refugees and asylum seekers tend to concentrate have above average standard spending assessmentts to reflect these and other unusual spending pressures.

The review of standard spending assessments for 1994-95 has considered the relevance of including an indicator of homelessness in addition to incorporating 1991 census information. This would be of some benefit to local authorities where refugees and asylum seekers qualify for permanent housing. Work on the review has now finished and my right hon. Friend will announce the outcome later in the autumn as part of his proposals for revenue support grant for 1994-95.

Tributyl Tin

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what research has been conducted by his Department on the effect of tributyl tin used as an anti-fouling marine biocide on ship hulls upon the marine environment with particular reference to the shellfish population.

Mr. Yeo: My Department funded research into the impact of tributyl tin—TBT—on dog whelks, *Nucella lapillus*, which exhibit effects at very low concentrations. This led to such effects being used as a biological indicator for a survey of TBT in the North sea reported upon in 1992. Current research is using the biological indicator to monitor recovery of the marine environment since the 1987 ban on TBT use on vessels of less than 25 m long and in assessing the implications of TBT use on vessels over 25 m.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on progress achieved in the design and construction of the intermediate level radioactive waste conditioning plant at Harwell; and when it will become operational.

Mr. Eggar: I have been asked to reply.

The main structure of the intermediate level waste vault store at Harwell has now been completed to schedule and below budget. Delivery and installation of plant and equipment is proceeding to programme. The store is on schedule to commence operation in 1996.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what request he has made to the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee for the committee to advise on the validity of calculation methods for radiation doses in regard to radioactive waste management.

Mr. Yeo: The committee has been asked to give its views on the usefulness of collective dose assessments and the validity of presenting such impacts in terms of numbers of fatalities.

Water Charges (Prepayment)

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment with which water companies the Office of Water Services has had discussions over the installation of prepayment devices.

Mr. Yeo: This is a matter for the Director General of Water Services.

Thermal Oxide Reprocessing Plant

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which Governments of European Community member states responded to the second public consultation period for the thermal oxide reprocessing

plant at Sellafield; and if he will indicate whether their submission was for or against THORP being commissioned.

Mr. Yeo: Responses to the consultation are still being assessed. Detailed information about the responses will be made available once they have all been considered.

Water Quality

Sir Cranley Onslow: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to seek a review of the EC water quality directive.

Mr. Yeo: As part of its programme of work following the Edinburgh summit, the European Commission is already reviewing the drinking water directive—80/778/EEC—and should make its recommendations next year. We have already made clear to the Commission the changes that we believe are required.

Standard Spending Assessments

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what consideration he is giving in his review of standard spending assessments to include as factors *(a)* unemployment, *(b)* health indicators, in particular standard morbidity rates, and *(c)* disability indicators;

(2) what plans he has to measure economic deprivation as part of his review of the standard spending assessment system; and what alternative measures he has so far considered in this regard;

(3) what conclusions he has reached on representations made to him concerning the use of health variables as a reflection of the differing social needs of an area, in place of the measures currently used;

(4) what conclusions he has reached on representations he has received concerning the extent to which the weighting within the current standards spending assessment system placed on the very elderly discriminates against those areas which have significant health problems but in which industrial traditions have lead to deaths at an earlier age.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 28 October 1993]:* The review of standards spending assessments has considered a wide range of issues including the potential use of indicators of health, disability, unemployment, homelessness and economic deprivation. The underlying statistical analysis has been discussed in detail with the local authority associations. Work on the review has now finished and my right hon. Friend will announce the outcome of the review later in the autumn as part of his proposals for revenue support grant for 1994-95.

Mr. Betts: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will as part of the standard spending assessment review consider incorporating factors which are of direct relevance to service provision rather than factors which are proxies for real needs.

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 28 October 1993]:* The calculation of standard spending assessments uses factors which are considered to be relevant to the provision of the service in question and cannot be directly influenced by local policy decisions. Inevitably this means that in a number of cases it is necessary to use factors which act as proxies for the underlying need to spend. The review of standard spending assessments has considered the incorporation of 1991 census data and the relevance of existing and other possible new factors.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the national total of capital allocations for housing to local authorities in England for *(a)* 1979-80, *(b)* 1982-83, *(c)* 1985-86 and *(d)* each year since 1988-89; and if he will give the breakdown of the total between (i) non-metropolitan district councils, (ii) county councils, (iii) metropolitan district councils, (iv) London boroughs and (v) the City of London.

Sir George Young *[holding answer 28 October 1993]:* Information on housing investment programme allocations is given in the table. The figures for 1990-91 and subsequent years are not directly comparable with those for earlier years because of the revisions to the capital finance system introduced in April 1990.

Housing investment programme (HIP) allocations[1,2] by area

£ thousand

	1979-80	*1982-83*	*1985-86*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*1992-93*	*1993-94*
Non Metropolitan D.C.	1,009,252	958,581	690,813	525,707	426,030	847,373	847,477	818,398	865,132
County Councils[3]	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Metropolitan D.C.	648,540	602,396	427,151	377,511	339,386	502,755	485,552	460,156	492,922
London Boroughs[4]	885,894	630,241	487,083	427,141	329,244	538,164	527,396	547,553	561,412
City of London	706	720	417	281	214	708	668	605	679
England	2,544,392	2,191,938	1,605,463	1,330,640	1,094,874	1,889,000	1,861,093	1,826,712	1,920,145

[1] Allocations for the years up to and including 1989-90 are final allocations, ie the initial allocation plus any increases to the initial allocation made in-year. The allocations figures for 1990-91 and subsequent years are the HIP allocations (housing annual capital guidelines plus specified capital grants) issued prior to the start of the financial year. These figures do not include any supplementary credit approvals issued during the year.

[2] From 1990-91, under the new capital finance system, the HIP allocation is an assessment of relative need for housing capital expenditure rather than a directly borrowing approval. Borrowing approval is now conveyed by the single, all service, basic credit approval.

[3] County councils are not allocated any monies through the Housing Investment Programme as they have no housing stock.

[4] Allocations for the Greater London Council up to and including 1985-86 are included in the figures for the London boroughs.

Water Disconnections

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many households have been disconnected from their water supply for non-payment of sewerage charges each year since privatisation.

Mr. Yeo *[holding answer 28 October 1993]:* Condition H of the instrument of appointment of each water or water and sewerage undertaker states that disconnection of a water supply can only be made for the non-payment of charges due to the water undertaker for the supply of water.

Capital Allocations

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the regional total of capital allocations for housing to the local authorities in England for *(a)* 1979-80, *(b)* 1982-83, *(c)* 1985-86 and *(d)* each year since 1988-89 for each standard English region.

Sir George Young *[holding answer 28 October 1993]:* Information on housing investment programme allocations is given in the table. The figures for 1990-91 and subsequent years are not directly comparable with those for earlier years because of the revisions to the capital finance system introduced in April 1990.

Housing Investment Programme (HIP) allocations[1,2] by standard statistical region

£ thousand

Statistical region	*1979-80*	*1982-83*	*1985-86*	*1988-89*	*1989-90*	*1990-91*	*1991-92*	*1992-93*	*1993-94*
North (including Cumbria)	180,000	145,740	92,060	85,019	72,469	112,587	111,920	103,243	116,867
Yorkshire and Humberside	216,000	214,813	140,326	123,706	106,288	171,199	169,217	162,516	179,570
East Midlands	159,872	152,916	96,812	72,983	60,687	104,420	111,815	117,693	128,238
East Anglia	57,414	65,351	53,093	34,443	26,394	61,446	61,506	58,666	54,969
Greater London	886,600	630,961	487,500	427,422	329,458	538,872	528,064	548,158	562,091
South East (excluding London)	338,075	299,516	237,092	163,716	122,805	297,616	285,156	265,778	280,645
South West	125,000	138,691	101,021	79,033	62,319	153,269	155,399	140,473	145,607
West Midlands	248,000	204,601	165,767	142,301	127,808	198,040	204,137	201,916	204,557
North West (excluding Cumbria)	333,431	339,349	231,792	202,017	186,647	251,551	233,879	228,269	247,601
England	2,544,392	2,191,938	1,605,463	1,330,640	1,094,874	1,889,000	1,861,093	1,826,712	1,920,145

Notes:

[1] Allocations for the years up to and including 1989-90 are final allocations, ie the initial allocation plus any increases to the initial allocation made in-year. The allocations figures for 1990-91 and subsequent years are the HIP allocations (housing annual capital guidelines plus specific capital grants) issued prior to the start of the financial year. These figures do not include any supplementary credit approvals issued during the year.

[2] From 1990-91, under the new capital finance system, the HIP allocation is an assessment of relative need for housing capital expenditure rather than a directly borrowing approval. Borrowing approval is now conveyed by the single, all service, basic credit approval.

Mr. Henderson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the capital allocation for housing for each local authority in England for *(a)* 1979-80, *(b)* 1982-83, *(c)* 1985-86 and *(d)* each year since 1988-89.

Sir George Young *[holding answer 28 October 1993]:* Information on housing investment programme allocations since 1978-79 for each local authority in England is available in the Library of the House.

Housing, Lancashire

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the number and value of home improvement grants paid to private owners and for tenanted properties, in Lancashire since 1989.

Sir George Young *[holding answer 22 October 1993]:* Information about the total number and value of home improvement grants paid in Lancashire is shown in the table.

Home improvement grants paid: number and amount of grants: Lancashire[1]

	Grants paid under the Housing Act 1985		*Grants paid under the Local Government and Housing Act 1989[2]*	
Financial year	*Number*	*Amount (£000s)*	*Number*	*Amount (£000s)*
1989-90	3,721	13,813	—	—
1990-91	2,929	12,213	231	808
1991-92	897	4,294	1,848	14,201
1992-93	78	571	2,401	22,413

[1] Including estimated figures for local authorities not providing statistical returns about home improvement grants.

[2] Includes mandatory and discretionary grants; covers renovation grants, disabled facilities grants, HMO grants and common parts grants; excludes minor works assistance.

The available information about the numbers of grants paid to owner occupiers and paid for tenanted properties is shown in the table. Figures about the amount of grant paid to each group are not available.

Number of grants paid: by group receiving grant: Lancashire:

(a) Grants paid under the Housing Act 1985[1]

number

Financial Year	*Owner occupiers grants*	*Other grants*	*Total grants*
1989-90	3,101	620	3,721

[1] This information was not collected after 1989-90.

(b) Grants paid under the Local Government and Housing Act 1989

number

Financial Year	*Owner occupier grants*	*Other grants*	*Total grants*
1990-91	182	49	231
1991-92	1,696	152	1,848

[2] The information for 1992-93 is currently in preparation and is not yet available.

Leasehold Reform

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects the advisory service for leaseholders seeking to enfranchise or extend their lease under the provisions of the Leasehold Reform, Housing and Urban Development Act 1993 to come into operation.

Sir George Young *[pursuant to his reply, 19 October 1993]:* The Government have been ready to provide a contribution to the costs of an advisory service since the Act received Royal Assent on 20 July, through the special grants programme. Normally up to 50 per cent. of the cost can be met by public funds.

A formal bid was received on 7 October. This showed a low level of initial contributions from private sector bodies, many of whom might expect to be closely involved in the enfranchisement procedures. My noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment has, therefore, written to a number of institutions seeking further support before final decisions are made about the agency's budget.

I remain confident that the service will be in operation very soon. In the meantime, there is a considerable effort being put into disseminating information about the new legislation. My Department has issued 60,000 leaflets so far, and demand remains high. Several books are being published, and a number of solicitors and valuers have published their own guides. Several conferences are also being organised, in which my Department is playing a full part.

SCOTLAND

Government Offices

Sir Nicholas Fairbairn: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what were the *(a)* original estimated cost and *(b)* actual cost of (i) the new courts and offices in Parliament house, Edinburgh, (ii) the proposed new Scottish Office building in Leith and (iii) the cost of moving thereto and moving other Government Departments into the offices so vacated in St. Andrew's house.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 25 October 1993]:* The estimated cost at tender stage of the extension to Parliament house was £14·16 million. The estimated final cost is in the range £15·5 million to £16 million. This takes account of inflationary costs allowed under the contract, covers significant foundation difficulties experienced during construction and an increase in VAT during the contract, and includes an allowance for a contractual claim which is under negotiation with the main contractor.

The new building for the Scottish Office in Leith is being acquired by Property Holdings from the developers for a fixed price of £47·5 million. The rental which the Scottish Office will pay to Property Holdings for the new building will represent a saving on rental payable on three buildings which are being given up including New St. Andrew's house, which is being vacated because of the widespread incidence of asbestos there.

The capital costs associated with the new building which will fall to the Scottish Office cover occupational service works and furniture and are estimated at £9·8 million. The cost of moving staff from existing buildings to the new building is estimated to be £0·1 million.

Lost Working Days

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will estimate the number of working days lost due to *(a)* ill health, *(b)* industrial injuries and *(c)* industrial action for each year since 1988.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 27 October 1993]:* The number of working days lost as a result of ill health and industrial injury is not available for Scotland. The number of days lost in Scotland in each year since 1988 as a result of industrial action is set out in the table:

Number of days lost in Scotland as a result of industrial action

Year	Number
1988	205,000
1989	541,000
1990	122,000
1991	121,000
1992	55,000

Overseas Staff and Premises

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the cost for the current financial year to his Department of having *(a)* premises and *(b)* personnel overseas; and what were the comparable figures for *(a)* 12, *(b)* 24, *(c)* 36 and *(d)* 48 months ago.

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 27 October 1993]:* My Department has no premises overseas. The cost to my Department of having personnel overseas is expected to be around £317,000 in the current financial year and was £230,000 in 1992-93. Details are not available for previous years.

Strategic Land Use

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what are his proposals for strategic land use planning following the reform of local government in Scotland.

Mr. Stewart *[holding answer 28 October 1993]:* Our proposals are set out in paragraphs 3.18-20 of "Shaping the Future—The New Councils" (Cm. 2267).

Office Costs

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the estimated amount to be spent in 1993-94 on rent and other costs associated with the offices of his Department at Dover house, Whitehall.

Mr. Lang: The estimated cost, including fuel and utilities and maintenance, for Dover house for 1993-94 is £956,982.

Severely Disadvantaged Areas

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many farmers were in receipt of hill livestock compensatory allowances in the severely disadvantaged areas according to the most recent figures for each year since 1978.

Sir Hector Monro: The number of farmers in receipt of hill and livestock compensatory allowances in the severely disadvantaged areas in each year since 1978 is set out in the table.

Year	*Number of Farmers*
1978	19,802
1979	19,485
1980	19,198
1981	19,072
1982	18,760
1983	18,610
1984	18,343
1985	18,203
1986	17,889
1987	17,852
1988	17,768
1989	17,630
1990	17,537
1991	17,403
1992	17,260
[1]1993	16,827

[1]to date.

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many producers are entitled to hill livestock compensatory allowances; and what proportion of those are located in *(a)* severely disadvantaged areas and *(b)* disadvantaged areas.

Sir Hector Monro: Based on the 1992 HLCA scheme, the latest complete scheme for which figures are available, of 17,893 claims received 17,260 were from producers located in severely disadvantaged areas and 633 from producers located in disadvantaged areas.

Ewe and Suckler Cow Premiums

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the figures relating to 1993 for the value of the ewe premium and suckler cow premium per head distinguishing the value of any supplements if applicable.

Sir Hector Monro: The rate of sheep annual premium in Scotland for the 1993 marketing year is fixed only after the end of the year. To date, European Commission regulations provide for payments of two advances totalling £12·55 per eligible ewe and a supplement in less favoured areas of £5·16 per eligible ewe. The final rate of premium and supplement due will be fixed by the Commission in spring 1994.

The 1993 suckler cow premium rate per head in Scotland is £65·73. In addition a payment of £28·17 per head can be made if the stocking density on a holding is less than 1·4 livestock units per hectare of eligible forage area.

HEALTH

Community Care

Mr. Simon Coombs: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what financial provision she intends for community care.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: I announced last year that the special community care transitional grant to local social services authorities in England would be £716 million for 1994-95 and £618 million for 1995-96. The grant will be increased by £20 million to £736 million in 1994-95 and by £30 million to £648 million in 1995-96. These increases will help local social services authorities to arrange for more home care and respite care. The special transitional grant is additional to the resources in general local government settlements which will be announced in due course. The grant will be phased out in 1996-97. In that year a further £418 million will be made available to local social services authorities to reflect the continued development of their community care responsibilities. The cumulative extra finance then available for local authorities' new community care responsibilities will exceed £2·2 billion in England.

Hospital Services

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the new services that have been provided by the increase in the hospital and community services budget in each of the last three years.

Mr. Sackville: Government spending on hospital and community health services has risen by 13·8 per cent. in real terms since 1990-91. Over this period there have been significant improvements in the level and quality of services provided to patients. General and acute activity is forecast to be 16 per cent. higher this year than in 1990-91. Since December 1992, no patient in the regions has been waiting longer than two years for in-patient or day case treatment, compared with 51,053 at March 1991. The patients charter has raised the standard of services for patients. The national health service has at the same time taken forward the "Health of the Nation" strategy for preventing premature death and avoidable ill health. With local authorities, health authorities and trusts have successfully introduced our community care reforms, which are designed to provide more flexible and local services to people in the community. We shall continue to build on this progress and improve services still further.

Depleted Uranium

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what collaborative studies her Department has conducted with the authorities of the United States on risks from inhalation of depleted uranium dust particles.

Mr. Sackville: None.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the waiting time for hospital in-patient treatment in each of the regional health authorities which cover the Greater London area.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information requested is given in "Hospital Waiting List Statistics: England". The latest published figures are for March 1993 and are available in the Library. The Greater London area is covered by the figures for the four Thames regional health authorities.

Junior Doctors

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of junior doctors are currently working more than their contracted hours.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not available centrally.

Mrs. Mahon: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made as to the implications for the health service of the EC 48-hour working week directive with particular reference to junior doctors; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: The directive on working time has not yet been adopted finally by the European Community Council. However, at the start of negotiations, an assessment was made of the impact of the proposals on the working arrangements of junior doctors within the health service in the light of existing initiatives. On the basis of this assessment we obtained an exclusion from the draft directive for doctors in training.

Abortion

Sir Cranley Onslow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total cost to the NHS of termination of pregnancy operations in England and Wales in the last 12 months for which figures are available; what proportion of total NHS expenditure this represented; and what were the corresponding figures for each of the previous five years.

Mr. Sackville: The annual cost to the national health service of termination of pregnancy is not available centrally. The cost of this treatment varies according to factors such as gestation and length of stay. The estimated average cost of a surgical abortion in a NHS hospital is £140 for a day case and £270 for a straightforward in-patient case, at 1990-91 figures. In 1991, there were 54,602 residents of England and Wales treated in the NHS on a day care basis and 20,570 as in-patients.

Food Safety Law Enforcement

Sir Cranley Onslow: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many times since the Food Safety Act 1990 came into force his Department has investigated cases where there has been a suggestion that the law has been applied in an over-zealous way by a local authority; and with what results.

Mr. Sackville: The Department started keeping a record of investigations in 1992. Of the 32 cases it has investigated the Department considered eight complaints to be justified. During 1992 the total number of hygiene inspections and other visits carried out under the Food Safety Act 1990 was 542,855.

Magnetic Resonance Imaging Scanner, Greenwich

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Health who authorised the payment by South-East Thames regional health authority of a deposit for the purchase of a magnetic resonance imaging scanner; for what purpose and on what date; whether the deposit was refundable or non-refundable; on what date Greenwich Healthcare Trust agreed to purchase the scanner and pay the balance of the costs; on what date Greenwich Healthcare Trust took delivery of the scanner; and on what date it was brought into operational use.

Mr. Sackville: The purchase of equipment to support health care is a matter for managers and clinicians in trust hospitals; for the remaining directly managed units it is the responsibility of health authorities. The hon. member may wish to write to the chairman of the Greenwich Healthcare Trust, Mr. Neville Thompson, about the financing and installation of medical equipment at the Brook and Greenwich hospitals.

Bed Closures and Cancelled Operations

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will give details of the number of beds closed and operations cancelled for financial reasons since 1 January for each of the district health authorities for England.

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally.

NHS Management

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her oral statement of 21 October, *Official Report*, columns 398-400, on managing the new NHS, what mechanisms will be established to enable the new regional offices to monitor and promote sub-regional equity.

Dr. Mawhinney: Following the proposed abolition of regional health authorities, the allocation of resources to district health authorities, family health services authorities and general practitioner fundholders would be handled by the National Health Service Management Executive, of which the regional offices will be part, within the policies and financial strategy set by Ministers.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her oral statement of 21 October, *Official Report*, columns 398-400, on managing the new NHS, (1) how the regional function related to the implementation of the "The Health of the Nation" strategy will be managed;

(2) how the regional research and development function will be managed;

(3) how the regional clinical audit function will be managed.

Dr. Mawhinney: The main functions carried out in the national health service above the level of purchasers and providers are described in the background document "Managing the new NHS", copies of which are available in the Library. The detailed allocation of functions to the NHS Management Executive headquarters and regional offices, and the arrangements for discharging those functions, have not yet been decided. The Government remain committed to the "Health of the Nation" strategy, the research and development strategy and the development of clinical audit.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what actions she intends to take to enable the NHS Management Executive to take on a clearer identity as the headquarters of the national health service.

Dr. Mawhinney: The National Health Service Management Executive is to be streamlined and reorganised to include eight regional offices, each headed by a regional director. This will focus it on the key functions which it needs to perform as the headquarters of the NHS, with a strategic rather than operational role. Work will be undertaken to define clearly the respective roles and responsibilities of the NHS Management Executive and the wider Department of Health.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her latest estimate of the number of NHS staff who will be made redundant as a result of the proposed abolition of regional health authorities and NHS Management Executive outposts; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: No estimate has been made. Future manpower requirements for the National Health Service Management Executive will be determined in the light of the functions which are to be discharged by the headquarters and the regional offices.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guarantees of terms of employment she intends to implement for NHS staff transferring from regional health authorities to other NHS bodies.

Dr. Mawhinney: Our intention is that, so far as the law allows, all staff who transfer from regional health authorities to other national health service bodies will have their terms of employment determined as though the provisions of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 apply. This will mean that staff transferring will generally be able to preserve their continuity of service in the NHS. Staff who transfer between health authorities in the circumstances provided by the NHS (Transfer of Officers Regulations) (No. 2) Regulations, 1986 are already assured of continuity of service.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish a table showing how many national health service trusts fall into *(a)* band 1, *(b)* band 2 and *(c)* band 3 according to unit turnover.

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to the reply my hon. Friend the Minister for Health gave the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Milburn) on 23 February at columns *550-55.*

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her oral statement of 21 October, *Official Report,* columns 398-400, on the new NHS, what role she is planning for community health councils within the new NHS structure; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: Community health councils have an important role in representing, from an independent viewpoint, the voice of individuals and communities, and this will continue. Arrangements for the establishment and funding of community health councils after the proposed abolition of regional health authorities will be discussed with representatives of the Association of Community Health Councils of England and Wales as legislation is prepared.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her oral statement of 21 October, *Official Report,* columns 398-400, on managing the new NHS, what plans she has to ensure *(a)* that a public health function remains at the intermediate tier and *(b)* that those succeeding regional directors of public health retain their ability to make independent statements.

Dr. Mawhinney: The background document "Managing the New NHS", which provides further information in support of the decisions announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on 21 October, states that the major public health responsibilities currently undertaken by regional health authorities will be incorporated in the regional offices of the National Health Service Management Executive, and that the professional accountability for public health issues will remain unaltered. Copies of the background document are available in the Library.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations were received by those conducting the NHS functions and manpower review from representatives of community health councils.

Dr. Mawhinney: None. The deputy chief executive of the National Health Service Management Executive discussed issues relating to the functions and manpower review at a meeting with representatives of the Association of Community Health Councils of England and Wales in September.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will publish a table showing how many family health service authorities fall into *(a)* band 1, *(b)* band 2 and *(c)* band 3 according to the population of the area covered by the authority;

(2) if she will publish a table showing how many district health authorities fall into *(a)* band 1, *(b)* band 2 and *(c)* band 3 according to revenue budget.

Dr. Mawhinney: This information is not available centrally.

Fact-finding Trips

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what discussions she has had with officials from *(a)* Worcester royal infirmary or *(b)* Worcester district health authority regarding levels of expenditure within the district on fact-finding trips.

Mr. Sackville: None. The hon. Member may wish to contact the chairman of Worcester and district health authority, Mr. Prescott, for details.

Read Coding

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what evaluation has been made of the ability of Read coding to map to other classification systems.

Mr. Sackville: A report published in 1988 by the joint computing group of the Royal College of General Practitioners and the General Medical Services Committee of the British Medical Association[1], confirmed that the Read codes were compatible with the World Health Organisation's International Statistical Classification of Diseases, Injuries and Causes of Death (ninth revision) (Injuries and Causes of Death-9), and with the Classification of Surgical Operations and Procedures produced by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys (OPCS).

In 1992 the Read codes were the subject of a report produced by the OPCS diagnostic support service[2]. This is the World Health Organisation's London collaborating centre for the classification of diseases. The report described an exercise to validate the cross-referencing of the Read codes to ICD-9. The report's recommendations have now been implemented.

Copies of both reports will be placed in the Library.

[1] "The Classification of General Practice Data": GMSC-RCGP Joint Computing Group Technical Working Party. JCG 20 1987-88.
[2] "Report on the Validation of the Cross-Referencing of NHSCCC-5 Codes to ICD-9": OPCS Diagnostic Support Service and WHO London Collaborating Centre for the Classification of Diseases.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health who owns the intellectual property rights to the Read codes.

Mr. Sackville: The intellectual property rights to the Read codes were purchased on behalf of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health in 1990 thereby making the Read codes Crown copyright.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what mechanisms have been put in place to ensure that the NHS will have the appropriate analytic and interpretive skills to make use of Read codes.

Mr. Sackville: The analytical and interpretive skills to use Read codes are no different from those currently exercised by clinicians, clinical coders and others in using other coding and classification systems.

However, the National Health Service Management Executive's information management group will be providing training packages in the use of Read codes, tailored to the needs of various professional groups in the NHS.

The specialty working groups developing Read codes are keeping clinicians informed: within the last 18 months they have produced over 100 publications and given 200 presentations.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what discussions she has had with the National Health Service Management Executive regarding the use of Read codes within the national health service.

Mr. Sackville: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health has agreed with the National Health Service Management Executive that, with the acknowledged support of the medical profession, it should promote and facilitate the use of Read codes within the NHS.

The NHS Management Executive's information management and technology strategy, launched by Ministers in December 1992, has the Read codes as one of its key elements. Copies of the strategy are available in the Library.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish details of the financial terms under which the clinical coding centre at Loughborough was taken into ownership by the NHS.

Mr. Sackville: The national health service for coding and classification was created following the purchase in 1990 of the intellectual property rights for the Read codes. The financial terms of the purchase are commercially confidential.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what financial arrangements exist for national health service organisations and others wishing to adopt the Read coding system.

Mr. Sackville: A recent executive letter, EL(93)87, copies of which are available in the Library, has announced changes in the forms of Read code licence now available to secondary care users in the national health service. Licences are available for individual providers, groups of providers and for all secondary care users within the NHS regions, at increasing levels of discount.

At present a different mechanism applies to general medical practitioners. The suppliers of GP computer systems pay a licence fee in order to include Read codes in their systems: that cost is recovered in the charges paid by GPs to use one of those systems.

Medical Records

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what action she is taking to guarantee the confidentiality of medical records; and if she will make a statement.

Mr. Sackville: The confidentiality of personal health information is protected by the common law, the ethical obligations of health professionals and, where the information is held in computerised form, by provisions of the Data Protection Act 1984.

The National Health Service Management Executive issued guidance in September 1992, EL(92)60, which advised the NHS of the need to secure the confidentiality of personal information in the context of contracting, and which also reminded the NHS of the importance of safeguarding the security of its information systems. In addition, the Department plans to issue for consultation draft guidance to the NHS on the confidentiality, use and disclosure of personal health information. Copies of the guidance, EL(92)60, are available in the Library.

NHS Policy Board

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the full membership of the present NHS Policy Board, with the professional status of each member.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information is as follows:

The Rt. Hon. Virginia Bottomley, JP, MP
Secretary of State for Health *(Chairman)*

Sir Roy Griffiths
Company Director *(Deputy Chairman)*

Mr. John Bowis Esq., OBE, MP
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State

Dr. Kenneth Calman
Chief Medical Officer

Professor Cyril Chantler
Professor in Paediatric Nephrology

Sir Tim Chessells
Businessman and Accountant

The Baroness Cumberlege, CBE
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State

Mr. Peter Gummer
PLC Chairman and Chief Executive

Mr. Graham Hart
Permanent Secretary, Department of Health

Ms Kate Jenkins
Independent Management Consultant

Dr. Brian Mawhinney, MP
Minister of State for Health

Ms Sheila Masters
Chartered Accountant

Mrs. Yvonne Moores
Chief Nursing Officer

Sir Duncan Nichol
Chief Executive, NHS Management Executive

The Hon. Tom Sackville, MP
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State

Oral Health

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she expects to announce details of her Department's proposed oral health strategy.

Dr. Mawhinney: In due course.

Prescriptions

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many pharmacies in *(a)* Pendle, *(b)* Lancashire, *(c)* the north-west and *(d)* England dispense fewer than 1,700 prescriptions per month.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information is shown in the table:

Total number of pharmacies		*Dispensing less than 1,700 per month*	*Per cent.*
Pendle	18	3	17·0
Lancashire	303	35	12·0
North West	838	94	11·0
England	9,763	1,790	18

Notes:

i. "Pendle" comprises the postcodes BB8 and BB9 covering Colne, Barnoldswick, Earby, Nelson, Bierfield, Trauden, Bartley. This information was obtained from the Public Enquiry Office at the House of Commons and Lancashire Family Health Services Authority.

ii. Lancashire as per the FHSA area.

iii. North West as per the North Western Regional Health Authority.

iv. The source of the prescription data is Table C20 from the Prescription Pricing Authority, and includes pharmacies that operated throughout the 1992-93 financial year with closures excluded and new openers annualised. New openers' prescription numbers are "annualised" using raising factors. A factor of 12 was applied to get an approximate monthly figure.

Dental Services, London

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what discussions she has had in the last six months regarding the availability of hospital dental and orthodontic services within the London area.

Dr. Mawhinney: The London implementation group, which was established to report to Ministers on progress in carrying forward policies to improve London's health services, has met the British Dental Association, the Eastman dental hospital and the Institute of Dental Health to discuss the provision of dental services, including hospital services, in the London area. The London implementation group is now considering the need to examine the provision of these services in more detail.

Regional Policy Board

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what criteria will be used in the selection of the eight regional policy board members whose appointment she announced on 21 October.

Dr. Mawhinney: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Pendle (Mr. Prentice) on 27 October at column 695.

East Yorkshire DHA

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health whether the contract for the construction of the new headquarters of the East Yorkshire district health authority and Humberside family health services authority was put out to tender.

Mr. Sackville: I understand that the contract for the construction of the new headquarters was subject to competitive tendering.

Office Costs

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the estimated amount to be spent in 1993-94 on rent and other costs associated with the offices of her Department at Richmond house, 79 Whitehall, London.

Mr. Sackville: Richmond house is a Crown building and the Department of Health pays an annual assessed rent to Property Holdings. The assessed rent for 1993-94 based on the space currently occupied by the Department of Health amounts to £5·5 million.

Other costs directly associated with the accommodation —for example, contribution in lieu of rates, fuel—amount to £2·336 million.

Hypothermia

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list, for each year since 1975, the number of recorded deaths from hypothermia in *(a)* England and Wales and *(b)* the United Kingdom as a whole.

Mr. Sackville: The information for England and Wales is shown in the table. The information relating to Scotland and Northern Ireland is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Number of deaths (a) with hypothermia as the underlying cause of death and (b) with any mention of hypothermia on the death certificate, all ages, England and Wales, 1975-1992.

Year	*Underlying Cause*	*Mentions*
1975	25	511
1976	21	585
1977	14	613
1978	21	708
1979	435	863
1980	261	596
1981	276	685
1982	326	664
1983	221	538
1984	266	555
1985	440	827
1986	437	837
1987	269	559
1988	194	440
1989	166	372
1990	152	368
1991	249	534
1992	149	362

Note:

1 The figure for underlying cause between the years 1975-78 and 1979-92 are not comparable. This is due to the change from the 8th to the 9th Revision of the International Classification of Diseases (ICD). The 8th revision code is assigned to ICD 788.9 while the 9th revision code is assigned to ICDs 778.3 and 991.6.

2 For 1986 to 1992 neonatal deaths are included in the mentions but not for the underlying cause of death (neonatal deaths were not given an underlying cause of death from 1 January 1986 onwards).

Staphylococcus Aureus

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what advice has been issued by her Department regarding the infectious disease multi-resistant staphylococcus aureus.

Mr. Sackville: Guidelines on the control of methicillin-resistant staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) were issued by professional organisations in 1985 and revised in 1990. Copies will be placed in the Library. The Department supports the advice given in these guidelines which are applicable to other multi-resistant staphylococcus organisms.

The Department of Health issued general guidance to the national health service on hospital infection control in 1988, HC(88)33, copies of which are available in the Library. A joint Department of Health/Public Health Laboratory Service working party is currently updating this and we expect to issue revised guidance in 1994.

The staff of the PHLS are able to offer detailed advice to the professionals involved in hospitals affected by MRSA.

GPs (False Claims)

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what steps have been taken by her Department to ensure that FHSAs are able to safeguard against general practitioners submitting false claims for the number of patients registered at their practice; and if she will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: Family health service authorities are required to validate general practitioners' claims for fees and allowances, and where appropriate, to make payment accordingly. Regional health authorities are responsible for monitoring the performance of their FHSAs in the general discharge of their duties. The national health service central register can assist FHSAs in checking a patient's registration and the name of the previous doctor.

Morning-after Pill

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what discussions she has had regarding the possibility of making the morning-after pill available without prescription.

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Bristol, South (Ms Primarolo) on 26 October at column *607*.

Northumbria Health Authorities

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what proposals she has for the amalgamation of Newcastle district health authority with North Tyneside health authority.

Dr. Mawhinney: We understand that the Northern regional health authority is planning to carry out a public consultation shortly on a proposal to merge Newcastle district health authority and North Tyneside district health authority.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Literacy

Mr. Cormack: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what assessment he has made of the impact of improved literacy levels on departmental expenditure.

Mr. Burt: The assessment and provision of information to the public on benefits is a matter for Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Mr. Michael Bichard to Mr. Patrick Cormack, dated October 1993:

As Chief Executive of the Benefits Agency it is my responsibility to answer questions raised about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking what assessment he has made of the impact of improved literacy levels in departmental expenditure.

All publicity material and external claim forms are tested, at pre production stage, with representatives of the customer group, and when appropriate their advisers. This research ensures all relevant factors and considered and taken account of including any differentials in resource requirements.

I hope you find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the Official Report and a copy will also be placed in the Library.

Child Support Agency

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many absent parents in receipt of income support are paying a contribution towards maintenance by means of deducion of benefit as a result of a reference to the Child Support Agency.

Mr. Burt: The latest available information, collected in August 1993, indicates that deductions from income support in place of payments of child maintenance, at the standard rate of £2·20 a week, were being made from 1,522 absent parents. This information is taken from the management information statistics collated by the Benefits Agency, and is provisional.

Mr. Channon: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement about the recent case in Teesside county court involving the Child Support Agency; and if he will take steps to clarify the legal position of fathers who are already making maintenance payments as a result of a court order or an agreement made between the parties concerned.

Mr. Burt: Under child support legislation, parents with care not on income support, family credit or disability working allowance and who have a court order or written maintenance agreement will be able to apply to the agency between April 1996 and March 1997, and not before. Where a relevant benefit is in payment, the case will be taken on by the agency before April 1996, regardless of whether there is an existing court order or written maintenance agreement.

The case before the Teesside combined court involved a parent with care not receiving relevant benefit who had previously sought to have her existing court order revoked so that she could apply to the agency before 1996. It is for the courts to decide whether, in any particular case, it is appropriate for them to revoke an existing court order. I

welcome the court's decision and although it sets no precedent, it may discourage others from attempting to jump the queue.

National Insurance Contributions

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estimate for 1993-94 or give the most recently available estimate of the number of *(a)* employees who pay national insurance contributions, *(b)* employees with earned income above the NIC ceiling, *(c)* employees with earnings less than the income tax threshold who pay NICs, *(d)* self-employed who pay class 4 NICs, *(e)* self-employed who pay class 2 NICs, *(f)* self-employed who pay class 3 NICs, *(g)* all self-employed people paying NICs, *(h)* self-employed who pay no NICs and *(i)* self-employed with profits above the upper profits limit for NICs.

Mr. Hague: The information requested is as follows:

(a) 17·7 million;
(b) 3·0 million;
(c) 0·5 million;
(d) 1·9 million;
(e) 2·4 million;
(f) Reliable estimates are not available;
(g) In addition to those at (e) a number of self-employed earners pay Class 3 NICs to make-up their contribution record or Class 1 NICs from concurrent employment as an employed earner. Reliable estimates of the numbers involved are not available;
(h) 0·45 million;
(i) 0·43 million;

Note: Figures (a-e) have been rounded to nearest 0·1 million.

Means-tested Benefits

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer of 25 March, *Official Report*, column *678*, what are the figures for tax-paying households in receipt of means-tested benefits for the latest year now available.

Mr. Burt: Pursuant to the hon. Member's question tabled in July, I wrote to the hon. Member on 28 September 1993 and provided him with the latest available information. A copy of the letter was placed in the Library.

Mortgage Payment Assistance

Mr. Hendry: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what is his latest estimate of the number of households receiving assistance with mortgage payments *(a)* for interest-only mortgages and *(b)* for endowment mortgages; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what was the number of home owners in receipt of income support at the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Burt: The information is not available in the form requested. However, according to the latest available figures, 536,000 claimants are receiving income support to help with their mortgage interest payments and a further 59,000 are receiving income support to help with their housing requirements but no help with mortgage interest.

Housing Benefit

Ms Estelle Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to change the housing benefit rules as they apply to 16 and 17-year-olds who are looked after by social service departments.

Mr. Burt: Housing benefit is payable only to people who are liable to pay rent. I intend issuing further guidance to local authorities to clarify the circumstances in which housing benefit is properly payable to young people being looked after by social service departments. The local authority associations will be consulted before this guidance is issued.

Residential Homes

Mr. Callaghan: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement about the level of benefits paid to people in residential nursing homes.

Mr. Burt: A total of 273,000 people receive help through income support with residential care and nursing home fees at a cost of £2·5 billion[1]. This compares with 12,000 people who received such help in 1979 at a cost of £10 million.

Since April 1985 practically all the income support limits for residential care and nursing homes have been increased in real terms. The limit for elderly people in residential care homes increased by 13 per cent. in real terms and the limit for elderly people in nursing homes by 36 per cent.

These limits are reviewed each year as part of the general benefit uprating exercise and an announcement will be made as usual later this year.

[1] Income Support Quarterly Statistical Enquiry: Residential Care and Nursing Home Report November 1992.

Invalidity Benefit

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to alter the invalidity benefit rules to disqualify people who undertake voluntary work.

Mr. Scott: We are reviewing invalidity benefit in the context of the fundamental review of social security expenditure. The review covers all aspects of the benefit including rules relating to the treatment of work. No decisions have yet been made.

Benefit Claimants

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will publish the number, age and gender of claimants without accommodation, by Benefits Agency local and district offices, and the number who are submitting sick certificates.

Mr. Burt: I understand from Mr. Michael Bichard, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency, that the information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit

Mr. Dunnachie: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will extend the right to apply for industrial injuries disablement benefit for those suffering from chronic bronchitis, emphysema or both to shipyard workers as well as miners; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: The Industrial Injuries Advisory Council advises my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on the prescription of diseases for industrial injuries disablement benefit. I understand the council has not received the necessary scientific evidence to suggest that bronchitis and emphysema should be recommended for prescription in relation to shipyard workers.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many mothers on means-tested benefits have been financially penalised for not naming absent fathers since April 1993.

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for Ros Hepplewhite, the chief executive. She will write to the hon. Member shortly and a copy will be placed in the Library.

Letter from Ros Hepplewhite to Mr. Jim Cunningham, dated 28 October 1993:

As Chief Executive of the Child Support Agency it is my responsibility to answer questions about relevant operational matters. I am therefore replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security asking how many mothers on means tested benefits have been financially penalised for not naming the fathers since April 1993.

To date, 22 Reduced Benefit Directions in respect of parents with care who have refused without good cause to co-operate with the Agency have been passed to the Benefits Agency to implement. The majority of these have not yet been implemented.

I hope you will find this reply helpful. A copy will appear in the Official Report and a copy will also be placed in the Library.

NATIONAL FINANCE

VAT (Domestic Fuel)

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what consideration is being given to exempting day nurseries from VAT on fuel.

Sir John Cope: None. Many fee-paying day nurseries already pay VAT on their purchases of fuel. Nurseries that use small amounts of fuel and charitable providers of free day nursery care may currently buy fuel zero-rated, but such supplies will become liable to VAT at 8 per cent. from 1 April 1994 and at the standard rate from 1 April 1995.

Ms Quin: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what regional assessment of the effect of VAT on domestic heating his Department has undertaken.

Sir John Cope *[holding answer 27 October 1993]:* No specific regional assessment has been made. Expenditure within a region varies widely and depends on a wide range of factors.

Office Costs

Mr. Byers: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the estimated amount to be spent in 1993-94 on rent and other costs associated with the offices of his Department at Parliament street, London.

Sir John Cope: The Treasury's rent and works service charges for its offices in Parliament street are estimated in 1993-94 to be:

	£
Rent (including VAT)	6,748,822
Works services charge	1,370,850

This accommodation is on the common user estate owned by the Crown and administered by Property Holdings. In addition a contribution in lieu of rates of £1,676,655 has been made to the Crown Property Unit of the Valuation Office of the Inland Revenue.

It is also estimated that in 1993-94 other associated Treasury costs in the Parliament street building will be as follows:

	£
Fuel and Utilities	280,000
Cleaning Costs	260,000
Charges for maintenance and minor new works	250,000

Private Pensions

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what additional costs are included in departmental budgets and accounts in respect of achieving an equivalence in accounting treatment with the additional costs incurred by private sector companies in respect of the loss of tax relief on private sector pensions above the earnings cap.

Mr. Dorrell: None. Departments are expected to contain any pay-related costs within their existing budgets.

EC Contributions

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will set out what happens to the level of resources available to the European Community for each of the years for 1993 to 2000 on the basis of the growth rates assumed at Edinburgh and for average European growth rates of 0·25 per cent. per annum, 0·5 per cent. per annum, 1 per cent. per annum and 2 per cent. per annum less than those assumed.

Mr. Nelson: On the basis of the economic growth assumptions and the own resources ceilings agreed at the Edinburgh European Council, the information requested for the years 1993-1999—the period covered by the Edinburgh financial perspective—is as follows:

	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Own resources ceilings (percentage of GNP)	1·20	1·20	1·21	1·22	1·24	1·26	1·27
Own resources ceilings (mecu—1992 prices)							
Edinburgh economic assumptions[1]	65,820	67,272	69,527	71,858	74,859	77,968	80,551
Reduced real growth in Community GNP:							
–¼ per cent. per annum	65,521	66,799	68,871	71,002	73,790	76,667	79,014
–½ per cent. per annum	65,359	66,470	68,364	70,308	72,890	75,547	77,669
–1 per cent. per annum	65,035	65,816	67,359	68,935	71,116	73,347	75,038
–2 per cent. per annum	64,387	64,516	65,379	66,249	67,672	69,107	70,004

[1] Edinburgh assumed real growth in Community GNP of 1·4 per cent. in 1993, 2·2 per cent. in 1994 and 2·5 per cent. a year thereafter.

Exchange Rate Mechanism

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what review he is currently giving to membership by the United Kingdom of the ERM; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nelson: I have made it clear that sterling could not join the ERM for some time ahead—possibly not in this Parliament. Re-entry cannot be considered until there is greater convergence between the monetary policies appropriate for all the Community economies and I should also need to be satisfied that the system would be operated to the benefit of all its members.

Income Tax

Mr. Mandelson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the direct revenue yield in a full year at 1993-94 levels of income from restricting *(a)* personal allowances, *(b)* relief from pension contributions and *(c)* other reliefs to relief at (i) 25p and (ii) 20p giving, in each case, the numbers of people affected.

Mr. Dorrell: Estimated full-year yields at 1993-94 income levels based on a projection of the 1991-92 survey of personal incomes and other survey data are given in the table. The figures do not take account of any behavioural effects which might result from the introduction of such changes, and show the yield from restructuring each allowance or relief separately. If two or more were restricted the total yield would be greater than the sum of the individual figures.

	Restriction to			
	Basic rate		*20p*	
Effect of restricting	*Yield £ million*	*Numbers affected Millions*	*Yield £ million*	*Numbers affected Millions*
(a) Personal allowances[1]	1,600	2·9	6,500	25·7
(b) Relief for pension	530	1·4	1,100	10·5
(c) Other reliefs	200	0·6	[2]n/a	n/a

[1] Including the married couples' and related allowances.
[2] Information on reliefs given at source is not available from the Survey of Personal Incomes so it is not possible to estimate the effect of restricting other reliefs to 20 per cent.

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Darlington (Mr. Milburn), 24 February, *Official Report*, column *585*, if he will update the estimates given to include figures for 1993-94, expressing all estimates in 1993-94 prices.

Mr. Dorrell: The table shows the direct revenue costs in a full year compared with reintroduced tax rates of 45, 50, 55 and 60 per cent. The band widths for the tax rate schedule have been calculated by uprating the corresponding parts of the 1987-88 regime by movements in retail prices index as in the statutory indexation formula. The estimates take account of the introduction of independent taxation from 1990-91 and the restriction of mortgage interest relief to the basic rate from 1991-92.

	Estimated change in tax revenue at rates in excess of 40 per cent.	
Year	*At current prices £ billion*	*At 1993-94 prices £ billion*
1988-89	2·6	3·4
1989-90	3·2	3·9
1990-91	3·7	4·1
1991-92	4·3	4·5
[1]1992-93	4·4	4·5
[1]1993-94	4·6	4·6

[1] Provisional estimates.

The estimates do not allow for any behavioural effect that might have resulted had the tax rates above 40 per cent. been retained and do not include capital gains tax.

Balance of Payments

Mr. Dewar: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the answers to the hon. Member for Taunton (Mr. Nicholson) on 17 February, *Official Report*, column *206*, if he will update the estimates giving figures for 1994-95 and for a full year.

Mr. Dorrell: Assuming statutory indexation in 1994-95 the basic rate limit would be £24,200. Estimated costs on yields at 1994-95 income levels compared with the indexed base are given in the table.

Band of taxable income over which 35 per cent. rate would be charged	*Revenue cost at 1994-95 income levels from introducing a 35 per cent. rate £ million*	
£	*In 1994-95*	*Full-year*
24,200—26,000	140	190
24,200—30,000	380	510
24,200—35,000	600	800

Level of taxable income above which 50 per cent. rate would be charged	*Revenue yield at 1994-95 income levels from introducing a 50 per cent. rate* £ million	
£	*In 1994-95*	*Full-year*
50,000	1,450	1,950
60,000	1,210	1,620
70,000	1,030	1,380

The estimates do not allow for any behavioural effect that might result from such changes to the tax system and do not include capital gains tax.

CAMBRIDGE REFERENCE LIBRARY

Coin Designs

Mr Burns: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans Her Majesty's Government has to issue new designs for circulating coins.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Her Majesty the Queen has been graciously pleased to approve my recommendation for a new series of designs for the reverse of the £1 coin. The designs will represent each of the four parts of the United Kingdom and will be adopted in turn during the years 1994-97.

INDEX TO THE

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 230**

SESSION 1992–93

18th October, 1993—29th October, 1993

SCOPE OF THE INDEX, ARRANGEMENT AND ABBREVIATIONS

This index is derived from the House of Commons Library's Parliamentary On-Line Information System (POLIS), and the subject terms used are based on those used in POLIS. There are often changes in column numbering, etc, between the daily part or weekly Hansard (which simply collects together the daily parts without revision) and the bound volume. The index for the bound volume is revised to take account of these changes and cannot therefore, be used in connection with the daily part or weekly Hansard. For these versions use the Fortnightly Index.

Scope and arrangement of the Index

Oral and Written Parliamentary Questions are indexed under subject headings and the names of Members asking and Ministers replying to them. Questions are not listed under the names of Departments replying. Departmental listings can be arrived at indirectly by looking under the names of the Minister(s) of that Department. There are, however, the headings 'Northern Ireland', 'Scotland', and 'Wales' under which one can find not only most Questions answered by the Northern Ireland Office, Scottish Office, Welsh Office but also Questions about these areas of the United Kingdom which are answered by other Departments. Ministerial statements are indexed under subject headings, under 'Ministerial statements' and the names of Ministers making them and Members speaking on them. General debates are indexed under broad subject headings and under the names of all Members and Ministers taking part. Debates on legislation (Bills, Orders, Regulations etc.) are indexed under the name of the Bill, Statutory Instrument etc, under subject headings and under the names of those taking part.

Rulings and Statements by Speaker and deputies are brought together under the heading Speaker's rulings and statements.

Other contributions by Speaker and deputies appear under the heading Speaker.

Opposition Day Debates, Estimates Day Debates and Standing Order No. 10 applications are listed under those respective headings and under subject headings too.

The date of each item except Parliamentary Questions is inserted immediately before the reference.

Members' names are given in the form by which they prefer to be known and are printed in bold italics. Under their names, entries are arranged under one of the two headings *Debates etc* (to include interventions on statements, points of order and so on) or *Questions*.

Abbreviations

Bills 1R=first reading, 2R=second reading, Money res=money resolution, Com=Committee stage, Rep=Report stage, 3R=third reading, amendt/amendts=amendment/amendments, *=matter taken formally, without debate.

Column numbers followed by the letter W refer to Written Questions. These appear at the end of each daily part or volume with their own sequence of column numbers printed in italics.

A1
Dual carriageways 431-2w, 617w, 639w
East Lothian 617-8w
Road accidents 618w
Road traffic 617-8w
Scotland 617-8w

A1-M1 Link
Road construction 639w

A26
430w

A27
430w

A38
Bridges 808w
Road traffic control 808w
Road works 808w

A77
Motorways 687w

A418
(19:10:93) 252-8

Aberdeen
Local government reform 819

ABM Treaty
729w

Abortion
NHS 835w

Absent parents
377-8w, 592-4w, 752-5w, 844w

Access funds
264w

Access to countryside
Forestry 815-7
Forestry Commission 958
Northern Ireland 787w

Access to Parliament
Disabled workers 771w

Accident & emergency departments
678-9
Greater London 316w
Hospital beds 36w

Accidents
Armed forces 726w

Accommodation agencies
Licensing 691w
Scotland 691w

Accommodation Agencies Act 1953
Questions
650w

Accountants
Government departments 269w

Accounting
NHS trusts 316w
Northumbria Ambulance NHS Trust 311w
Training & enterprise councils 163w
Welsh Development Agency 781w

Accounts Services Agency
804-5w

Actors
Income tax 675w

Adams, Gerard
(22:10:93) 483-550

Adjudication officers
Social security claims 509w

Administration of justice
637w

Adoption
316w

Adult education
Educational finance 440w

Advertising
BBC 568

Advisory bodies
Animal Procedures Committee 641w
Curriculum 441w

Advisory Committee on Novel Foods & Processes
Lupins 183-4w
Public appointments 568-9w

Advisory Committee on Scotlands Travelling People
see Scotland's Travelling People Advisory Committee

Advisory Council on Research & Development for Fuel & Power
647-9w

Advisory services
Leasehold housing 194w, 831w

AEA Technology
see United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority

Aerial photography
161w

Age discrimination
Public sector employment 476w

Agreement on the Conservation of Small Cetaceans of the Baltic & North Seas
351w

Agricultural Development & Advisory Service
177-8w, 181w

Agricultural land
Alternative energy 274w
East Lothian 784w
Forestry 512-3w
Scotland 784w

Agricultural machinery
Tractors 17w

Agricultural marketing
Apples 780w
Horticulture 774w

Agricultural production
190w
Cereals 185w

Agricultural products
Export promotion 965-6
Export rebates 514-8w
GATT 959
Import duties 514-6w
Prices 187w

Agricultural Training Board
775w

Agricultural Wages Board
777w

Agricultural workers
Manpower 776w
Treaties 777w
Working hours 613w

Agriculture
Horses 176w
Industrial accidents 598-9w
International Labour Organisation 777w
Public expenditure 182-3w
UN Economic Commission for Europe 189w

Aid financed trade
16-8, 102w, 812w
Codes of practice 811w
Expenditure 732w
Malaysia 732w

Aids for handicapped
Motorway service areas 298-9w

Ainger, Mr Nick
Debates etc.
Defence estimates (19:10:93) 165
Questions
Armed forces officers, Armed forces noncommissioned ranks 528-9w

Ainger, Mr Nick*—*continued
Customs & Excise, Ship chartering 9-10w
Defence Export Services Organisation, Manpower 492w
Defence industries, Manpower 491w
Fishing vessels, Licensing 21w, 190w
Fishing vessels, Prosecutions 189-90w
Helicopters, Rescue services 65-8w
Potato marketing scheme 776w
Sea King helicopters, Navigational aids 491w
Transport of animals, EC law 564w

Ainsworth, Mr Robert
Questions
GP fundholders 677

Air accidents
Birds 271w, 327w, 716w
Hercules aircraft 529w
Low flying 54w, 527w
Military aircraft 49w, 60w
Tornado aircraft 519w, 701w

Air fares
VAT 571w, 752w

Air force
Armed forces recruitment 803w
Armed forces training 57-8w, 803w

Air force bases
Goose Bay 490-1w
Low flying 59w

Air pollution
Asthma 236w
Greater London 236w

Air pollution control
Ozone layer 253w

Air routes
Low flying 51-2w

Air safety
Low flying 52-3w
Military aircraft 60w

Air travel
Security 640w

Aircraft noise
F15 aircraft 490w
F16 aircraft 489w

Airlines
EC action 298w

Airmisses
B52 bombers 528w

Airport tax
Tax yields 381w

Aitken, Mr Jonathan, Minister of State for Defence Procurement
Debates etc.
Defence estimates (18:10:93) 46, (19:10:93) 204, 214, 236-44
Questions
Air accidents, Birds 327w
Ammunition, Uranium 63w, 705-6w
Arms exports 706w
AWE Aldermaston, Construction 800w
AWE Aldermaston, Radioactive waste disposal 800w
AWE Aldermaston, Radioactive wastes 62w
Defence contracts, USA 802w
Defence equipment, Bridges 529w
Defence Export Services Organisation, Manpower 492w
Defence industries, Diversification 700-1w
Defence industries, Manpower 491w
Defence procurement 728w
Defence Research Agency, Woolwich Arsenal 731w
5 Airborne Brigade, Military vehicles 328w
Guided weapons, Defence procurement 490w, 803w
International Atomic Energy Agency, Nuclear weapons 700w
Jetstream aircraft, Defence procurement 68w
Laser-guided bombs, Defence procurement 801w

Aitken, Mr Jonathan—continued
Minesweepers, Defence procurement 700w
Ministry of Defence, Civil service manpower 492w
Ministry of Defence, Doyle, Patrick 369w
Ministry of Defence, Manpower 803w
Navy, Nature conservation 328w
Nuclear weapons tests 699-700w
Nuclear weapons tests, France 519w
Radiation hazards, Gibraltar 519w
Trident missiles, Defence procurement 729-30w
Trident missiles, Nuclear weapons tests 729w
Trident submarines 729w
Warships, Command & control 328w

Alaska
Armed forces training 58w
Low flying 58w

Alcohol advertising
967-8

Alcoholic drinks
Consumption 419-20w
France 544-5w, 673w
Motor vehicles 544-5w

Alcoholic drinks duties
421w
Brewing industry 967
Inspections 673w
Whisky 420-1w

Alcoholism
Rehabilitation centres 499w, 605w

Alexander, Mr Richard
Debates etc.
Coal mining (20:10:93) 281
Management & Administration of Safety & Health at Mines Regulations 1993 (26:10:93) 714-7, 739
NHS administration (21:10:93) 411

Alison, Rt Hon Michael, Second Church Estates Commissioner
Debates etc.
Coal mining (20:10:93) 279-80
Management & Administration of Safety & Health at Mines Regulations 1993 (26:10:93) 719-21
Priests (Ordination of Women) Measures 1993 (29:10:93) 1084-97, 1137, 1144-8
Questions
Bishops, Housing 72-8w
Church Commissioners, Costs 540w
Church Commissioners, House of Commons questions 540w
Church property, Birkenhead 405w
Parishes, Finance 707w

Allason, Mr Rupert
Debates etc.
Assisted Areas Orders 1993 (27:10:93) 925, 938
Crime (28:10:93) 1025-8
Defence estimates (19:10:93) 223
Questions
Business questions 390

Allen, Mr Graham
Debates etc.
European Convention on Human Rights (20:10:93) 364-7, 369
Human Rights (No 3) Bill, 1R (19:10:93) 158
Questions
Drinking fountains 531w
European Commission of Human Rights 411-2w
Former Ministers, Redundancy pay 14w, 746-8w
House of Commons accommodation, Day care of children 346w
House of Commons accommodation, Members' facilities 233w
House of Commons broadcasting, Dept for Education 99w
House of Commons broadcasting, Dept of Employment 71w
House of Commons broadcasting, Dept of Health 33w
House of Commons broadcasting, Dept of Transport 23-4w
House of Commons broadcasting, Members' facilities 405-6w
House of Commons broadcasting, Scottish Office 478w
House of Commons catering 233w
House of Commons Chamber 347w, 810w
House of Commons times of sittings, Costs 347w
Human Rights Week 411w
Leader of the House of Commons, Parliamentary questions 811w
Members' pensions, Prime Ministers 425w
Members' staff, Contracts of employment 406w
Members' staff, Members' relatives 406w
Mineworkers' pension scheme 433w
Parliamentary questions 406w

Allitt Inquiry
307w

Alternative energy
245w
Agricultural land 274w

Alternatives to prison
136-42w
Costs 133w

Alton, Mr David
Debates etc.
Bombings, Northern Ireland (25:10:93) 583-4
Crime (28:10:93) 1031-6
Questions
"Analysing Offending" 453w
Anglo-Irish talks 319w
China, Family planning 662-3w
China, Infanticide 664w
China, Law 412w
China, Marriage 414w
Crimes of violence, Prison population 642w
Empty housing, Liverpool 251w
Family planning, UK contributions 663w
Hong Kong, Family planning 414w
International Planned Parenthood Federation, UK contributions 662-3w
Tibet, Family planning 663-4w

Alzheimer's disease
419w, 503w

Ambulance services
Emergency calls 36-7w, 306-8w
Manpower 323w
Northern Ireland 321-2w
Paramedical staff 681-2
Performance standards 321-4w
Scotland 483-4w
Wales 322-4w

Ambulances
95w

Amess, Mr David
Questions
Citizen's charter 495w
Unemployment, Basildon 132

Ammunition
63w
Uranium 63w, 325w, 702w, 705-6w

Amnesty International
411w

"Analysing Offending"
453w

Ancient monuments
Architectural conservation 272-3w, 376w, 677w, 786w, 822w
Conservation 471-2w
Northern Ireland Office 677w
Scotland 785-6w

Ancram, Mr Michael, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Northern Ireland Office
Debates etc.
Education & Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1993 (26:10:93) 748-52, 754, 758, 762-8

Ancram, Mr Michael—continued
Questions
Ambulance services, Northern Ireland 321w
Ambulance services, Performance standards 321-2w
Arable area payments scheme, Northern Ireland 469w
Cereals, Intervention stocks 817w
Community care, South Down 465w
Curriculum, Ministerial policy advisors 680-1w
Curriculum, Northern Ireland 375-6
Eastern Health & Social Services Board, Expenditure 212w
Eye tests, Northern Ireland 793w
Farm incomes, Northern Ireland 530w
Fishing vessels, Decommissioning grants 466w
Health centres, Armagh 465w
Health services, Down 320w, 371
Health services, Eastern Health & Social Services Board 373
Hospital closures, Northern Ireland 318w, 321w
Hospital closures, Omagh 373
Hospitals, Down 371-2, 379-80
Hospitals, Downpatrick 372
Hospitals, Northern Ireland 372-3
Invalidity benefits, Social security claims 790w
Land ownership & tenure, Northern Ireland 530w
Multiple sclerosis, Respite care 464w
Myalgic encephalomyelitis, Northern Ireland 788w
Northern Ireland Dept of Agriculture, Manpower 681w
Northern Ireland Dept of Health & Social Services, Disability living allowance 790-1w
Northern Ireland health & social services trusts 467-8w
Nurses, Northern Ireland 678w
Ophthalmology, Hospital waiting lists 92-4w
Overseas students, EC countries 786-7w
Portrush Hotel & Catering College, Student numbers 680w
Post traumatic stress disorder, Counselling 463w
Potatoes, Northern Ireland 678-9w
Residential care, Eastern Health & Social Services Board 463-4w
Residential care, Income support 787w, 789w, 791-2w
Residential care, Northern Ireland 792w
Social Fund, Social security claims 791w
Student numbers, Northern Ireland 320w, 679w
University of Ulster, Student numbers 466w

Anderson, Mr Donald
Debates etc.
Crime (28:10:93) 1000, 1009, 1028-30
Welsh Development Agency (19:10:93) 152

Anderson, Ms Janet
Debates etc.
Low pay, Lancashire (28:10:93) 1076, 1079-80
Questions
KONVER programme 645w

Anglesey
Brucellosis 513-4w

Anglian Water
Water charges 274

Anglo-Irish Agreement
320w, 374, (22:10:93) 483-550

Anglo-Irish talks
143, 318-21w, 376-9, 973-4

Angola
Peace negotiations 812w

Animal experiments
Cosmetics 641-2w
Tobacco 641-2w

Animal Procedures Committee
Advisory bodies 641w

Animal products
Hong Kong 77w

Animal welfare
Arctic fox 180w
Mink 178-81w
Poultry 777w
Transport of animals 512w, 660w, 773w, 968

Annual reports
Chief Electoral Officer for Northern Ireland 530w
Crown Estate Commissioners 380w
NHS trusts 580w
Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art 573w
Training & enterprise councils 819-20w
Transport Security Division 810w
Veterinary Medicines Directorate 203w

Antarctic
Environment protection 81w

Antarctic Minerals Act 1989
Questions
81w

Antarctic Treaty
81w

Anthrax
Foot-and-mouth disease 820-1w

Appendicitis
624-6w

Appin
Mink 177w

Apples
Agricultural marketing 780w
Apples Day 963-4

Apples Day
Apples 963-4

Arab boycott
412w

Arable area payments scheme
276-8w, 512-3w, 515-6w, 659-60w
Northern Ireland 469w
Scotland 631-6w, 689-90w
Wales 453w

Arable farming
Wales 821w

Arafat, Yasser
590w

Archaeology
(27:10:93) 944-52

Architectural conservation
469w
Ancient monuments 272-3w, 376w, 677w, 786w, 822w
Brodsworth Hall 472-3w
EC grants & loans 43-4w
Scotland 43-4w

Arctic fox
180-1w
Animal welfare 180w

Areas of outstanding natural beauty
Planning permission 787w

Argyll & Bute
Local government reform 385w

Argyll & Clyde Health Board
384w

Armagh
Health centres 465w

Armed forces
Accidents 726w
Racial discrimination 703w

Armed forces casualties
Bosnia-Herzegovina 325w

Armed forces discharges
Pregnant women 492-3w, 704-6w

Armed forces housing
Property transfer 701w

Armed forces noncommissioned ranks
Armed forces officers 528-9w

Armed forces officers
Armed forces noncommissioned ranks 528-9w

Armed forces recruitment
Air force 803w

Armed forces storage depots
702w

Armed forces strength
492w

Armed forces training
Air force 57-8w, 803w
Alaska 58w
Bristol University 803w
Canada 57w
Goose Bay 702w
Morocco 57w
Tornado aircraft 57w, 326w

Arms control
Nuclear weapons 205w
UN General Assembly 412w

Arms embargoes
China 575w
Radar 575w

Arms exports
706w
Export controls 402w

Arms to Iraq Inquiry
13-4, 569-72, 573w, 574
Civil servants' secondment 104w

Arms trade
Iraq 143
Mines 402w

Armstrong, Ms Hilary
Debates etc.
NHS administration (21:10:93) 406
Questions
Schools, Inspections 292-3w, 813-4w

Army in Northern Ireland
375, 382-3

Arnold, Mr Jacques
Debates etc.
Channel tunnel, Railway network (29:10:93) 1153-6
Education, Kent (21:10:93) 474-6
Questions
Ambulance services, Paramedical staff 682
Local government reform, Scotland 819

Arnold, Sir Thomas
Questions
Arts Council 565
Bureaucracy 141-2
Cabinet committees, Departmental publications 427w
Income support, Take-up 5
Israel, Hostages 573w
Kenya, British residents abroad 370w
Overseas aid 18-9
Standard spending assessments 250w

Art works
Exports (27:10:93) 944-52

Arthur Andersen
Astra Training Services 365-6w

Artificial sweeteners
511w

Arts Council
470w, 565

Arts finance
470-1w, 565
Theatres 472w

Asbestos
Land pollution 158w
Parliamentary buildings 669-70w
Wales 158w

Ashby, Mr David
Debates etc.
Coal mining (27:10:93) 850

Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Questions
Iraq, Arms trade 143
Terrorism, Northern Ireland 688

Ashton, Mr Joseph
Debates etc.
Coal mining (20:10:93) 286, (27:10:93) 915
Management & Administration of Safety & Health at Mines Regulations 1993 (26:10:93) 725-8
National Lottery Etc Bill, Lords amendts (20:10:93) 327-8, 331-2

Asia
Nuclear non proliferation 81w

Assaults on police
384

Assisted areas
723-4w
Essex 155w
Southend-on-Sea 402-4w

Assisted Areas (Amendment) Order 1993
Debates etc.
(27:10:93) 923-43

Assisted Areas Order 1993
Debates etc.
(27:10:93) 923-43

Association of Insurance & Risk Managers in Industry & Commerce
155w

AST Training
268w, 293-4w, 322w, 324w, 337w, 342w, 346w, 369w, 373w, 376-8w, 382w, 385w, 389w, 578w

Asthma
Air pollution 236w

Astley Ainslie Hospital
Medical rehabilitation 626w

Astra Training Services
366w
Arthur Andersen 365-6w
Company liquidations 365w

Atkins, Mr Robert, Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office
Questions
Access to countryside, Northern Ireland 787w
Ancient monuments, Architectural conservation 677w
Areas of outstanding natural beauty, Planning permission 787w
Belfast Airport, Privatisation 319w
Defective housing; Rural areas 94-5w
Economic situation, Northern Ireland 380
Electricity tariffs, Northern Ireland 321w
Employment discrimination, Northern Ireland 212w
Employment level, EC nationals 679-80w
Employment opportunities, Northern Ireland 792w
Environment protection, Northern Ireland 788w
Gas fired power stations 677w
Gas fuels, Research 529-30w
Homelessness, Northern Ireland 381-2
Industrial development, Northern Ireland 380-1
Litter, Northern Ireland 789-90w
Local authorities, Debts 788w
Local government reform, Northern Ireland 792w
Motor vehicle testing, Northern Ireland 95w
Northern Ireland Airports Police 94w
Northern Ireland Airports Police, Police committees 94w
Northern Ireland Office, Ancient monuments 677w
Northern Ireland Office, Doyle, Patrick 322w
Peat bogs, Nature conservation 789w

Atkins, Mr Robert—continued
Planning permission, Environment protection 320w
Privatisation, Northern Ireland 381
Public sector housing, Northern Ireland 465-6w
Public service vehicles, Northern Ireland 95w
Recycling, Northern Ireland 789w
Road works, South Down 213w
Sea transport, Northern Ireland 319w
Waste disposal, Belfast 92w

Atkinson, Mr David
Debates etc.
Defence estimates (19:10:93) 210-1
Priests (Ordination of Women) Measures 1993 (29:10:93) 1142-3
Vietnamese refugees (18:10:93) 122-4
Questions
English Tourist Board, Government grants 562
Identity cards 971
Local government reform 259
Public sector employment, Recruitment 208w

Atkinson, Mr Peter
Questions
Fisheries, Norway 966-7

Attorney General
Government buildings 657w

Audit
Grant maintained schools 744w

Austin-Walker, Mr John
Debates etc.
Business questions (28:10:93) 995-6
Questions
British National Party, Public order policing 557w
Defence Research Agency, Woolwich Arsenal 731w
Family doctors, Professional misconduct 769-70w
Greenwich Healthcare NHS Trust, Tomography 835-6w
Hospital closures 836w
Jubilee line, Construction 641w
Police, Plumstead 557w
Police, Protective clothing 715w
Telecommunications industry, Licensing 647w
Telephone systems 648w
Telephones 646-7w
VAT, Publications 677w

Australia
Nuclear weapons tests 325-6w

Automated low flying enquiry & notification system
60w

Average earnings
476w

Aviation fuels
Excise duties 424w, 426w, 673w

AWE Aldermaston
Construction 800w
Radioactive waste disposal 800w
Radioactive wastes 62[illegible]

Axle weights
Lorries 27w

Ayrshire
Local government reform 820

"A-Z of Quality a Guide to Quality Initiatives in the NHS"
35w

B52 bombers
Airmisses 528w

B6355
Snow & ice 618w

Bahai sect
Iran 84-5w

Bail
216-7w, 221w
Habitual offenders 218-9w, 239w

Bail information schemes
Wolds Remand Prison 117-8w

Baker, Rt Hon Kenneth
Debates etc.
Police Responsibilities & Rewards Inquiry (28:10:93) 980

Balance of payments
850-1w

Baldry, Mr Tony, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept of the Environment
Debates etc.
Local government reform, Isle of Wight (25:10:93) 666-70
Questions
Barnet Borough Council, Revenue support grant 720w
City challenge 653w
Contaminated land registers 271-2
Council housing, Refugees 825-6w
Council tax, Single people 264
Council tax, Valuation 417w
Development plans, Defence land 416w
Docklands light railway, Construction 254w
EC Committee of the Regions 272
EC grants & loans, Greater London 532w
Employment opportunities, Walsall 86w
Empty housing, Liverpool 251w
Estate Action, Expenditure 251w
Gypsies, Caravan sites 87-8w
Land use, Horses 654w
Local Government Commission for England, Expenditure 533w
Local government constituencies, Metropolitan districts 88w
Local government finance 719-20w
Local government reform 416w
Local government revenue 89w, 255-6w
Local government revenue, Lancashire 348-9w
Local government services, Contracts for services 256w, 272
London docklands 251-2w
Multiple occupation, Local authority powers 88-9w
Official cars, Lead free petrol 720w
Ordnance Survey, Land Registry Office 416w
Peat, Environment protection 652-3w
Peat bogs, Environment protection 652-3w
Planning compensation, Mining 653w
Planning permission, Extractive industries 532w
Planning permission, Kirkstall Valley 282w
Planning permission, Mining 653w
Planning permission, Opencast mining 539w
PSA Building Management, Redundancy 415w
Sports facilities, Rate rebates 89w
Standard spending assessments 86w, 717-8w, 827-8w
Urban programme 252w
Valuation Office, Councillors 281-2w

Ballistic missile defence
Russia 729w

Ballots
Grant maintained schools 295-6w

Bangor Co Down
Residential care (22:10:93) 482

Bankruptcy
423w

Banks, Mr Matthew
Debates etc.
Crime (28:10:93) 1029
Education (School Teachers Pay & Conditions) (No 2) Order 1993 (26:10:93) 787
Questions
EC Labour & Social Affairs Council 211-2w
Employment Service Agency 211w
Eye tests, Optical charges 680
Local government reform, Southport 276
Prisoner escorts, Greater London 551w
Social security benefits 166w
Sudan, Overseas aid 102w

Banks, Mr Matthew—continued
Training for work 210w
Water pollution, North West region 251w

Banks, Mr Robert
Questions
Orange badge scheme 21w
Pensioners, Personal income 8-9
Social Security Benefits Agency, North Yorkshire 169w

Banks, Mr Tony
Debates etc.
Assisted Areas Orders 1993 (27:10:93) 926
Business questions (18:10:93) 23
Questions
Air accidents, Birds 271w, 327w, 716w
Cetaceans, Nature conservation 350-1w
Cetaceans, North Sea 275w
Conferences, Expenditure 735w
County Hall 262
Dept of Social Security, Civil servants' visits abroad 247w
Dept of Social Security, Official cars 247w
Dept of Social Security, Official visits 247w
Hong Kong, Animal products 77w
Hong Kong, Ivory 240-2w
Hong Kong, Nature conservation 242w, 733-4w
Hormone treatments, Women 683-4
Mink, Transport of animals 177w
Navy, Nature conservation 327-8w
Official cars, Lead free petrol 720w
Official hospitality, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster 236w
Official hospitality, Dept for Education 262w
Official hospitality, Dept of Employment 248-9w
Official hospitality, Dept of Health 235w
Official hospitality, Dept of National Heritage 273w
Official hospitality, Dept of Social Security 247w
Official hospitality, Dept of the Environment 256w
Official hospitality, Dept of Trade & Industry 244-5w
Official hospitality, Dept of Transport 235w
Official hospitality, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 242w
Official hospitality, Home Office 240w
Official hospitality, Lord Chancellor's Dept 234w
Official hospitality, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 661w
Official hospitality, Ministry of Defence 246w
Official hospitality, Northern Ireland Office 235w
Official hospitality, Prime Minister 428w
Official hospitality, Privy Council 233w
Official hospitality, Scottish Office 483w
Official hospitality, Treasury 244w
Official hospitality, Welsh Office 234w
Party conferences, Security 239-40w, 528w, 652w
Whales, Nature conservation 276w, 772w
Whales, Norway 276w, 967

Barking
Railway network 19-20w

Barnes, Mr Harry
Debates etc.
Bombings, Northern Ireland (25:10:93) 586
Business questions (28:10:93) 998
Coal mining (20:10:93) 294
Education & Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1993 (26:10:93) 760-2, 766
Northern Ireland (22:10:93) 504, 534, 539, 548
Police Responsibilities & Rewards Inquiry (28:10:93) 987
Questions
Anglo-Irish talks 376-7
Day nurseries 611w
Inquiries, Northern Ireland 92w
Jobplan workshops 208w
Transport of animals, Animal welfare 773w
Water supply disconnections 276
Yugoslavia, Overseas aid 103w, 418w

Barnet Borough Council
Revenue support grant 720w

Barnet Health Authority
601w

Barron, Mr Kevin
Debates etc.
Coal mining (20:10:93) 289-90
Management & Administration of Safety & Health at Mines Regulations 1993 (26:10:93) 707-8, 711

Basildon
Unemployment 132-3

Bates, Mr Michael
Debates etc.
Priests (Ordination of Women) Measures 1993 (29:10:93) 1143-4
Questions
Aid financed trade 17-8
Ambulance services, Paramedical staff 681
Cars, Repairs & maintenance 541w
Economic situation, Northern region 131-2
Nissan, Foreign investment in UK 972-3
Pakistan, Overseas aid 812w
Railway transport, Bicycles 433w
Unemployment benefits, Offshore workers 69w

Batiste, Mr Spencer
Debates etc.
Coal mining (20:10:93) 287
Defence estimates (19:10:93) 167
Questions
A1-M1 Link, Road construction 639w
Identity cards 714w
National Council of Victim Support, Government grants 272w
Social security abuse, Identity cards 751w
Unemployment, West Yorkshire 135

Battle, Mr John
Questions
Invalidity benefits, Voluntary work 846w
Overseas aid 20
Planning permission, Kirkstall Valley 282w
Rents to mortgages scheme 265-6
Social security recipients, Homelessness 846w

Bayley, Mr Hugh
Debates etc.
NHS administration (21:10:93) 407
Questions
Fertility, Medical treatments 35w
Forestry Review Group 612w
Forests, Land acquisition 562w
GP fundholders 496-7w
GP fundholders, Finance 496-7w, 600-1w
Health authorities, Budgeting 343-4w
Hospital admissions 600w
Medical education, Expenditure 28-9w
National income 380w
Resources conservation 249w
Sugar, Intervention prices 192w
Unemployment, Young people 332-3w
Youth unemployment, Yorkshire & Humberside 305-6w

BBC
563-6
Advertising 568
Broadcasting finance 471w
Public appointments 638w
Radio engineering 102w

Beaches
Sea pollution 268-70

Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Debates etc.
Business questions (18:10:93) 21, (28:10:93) 991
Questions
National insurance contributions 383-4

Bed & breakfast accommodation
694w

Beef
Intervention stocks 372-3w

Beef premiums
515w

Beer
Measurement 724w

Beggs, Mr Roy
Debates etc.
Northern Ireland (22:10:93) 486, 523, 530-1, 541
Welsh Development Agency (19:10:93) 156
Questions
Curriculum, Northern Ireland 376
Electricity tariffs, Northern Ireland 321w
Waste disposal, Belfast 92w

Beith, Rt Hon A J
Debates etc.
Coal mining (20:10:93) 288
Questions
Ecclesiastical Committee, House of Commons staff 540w
House of Commons accommodation, Day care of children 346w
House of Commons times of sittings, Costs 347w
Local government reform, Berwickshire 814-5
Parliamentary buildings, Asbestos 669-70w
Parliamentary Works Office, Manpower 669w
Standard spending assessments, Northumberland 270
VAT exemptions, Clubs 382w

Belarus
Diplomatic service 665w

Belfast
Bombings (25:10:93) 577-90
Waste disposal 92w

Belfast Airport
Privatisation 319w

Bell, Mr Stuart
Debates etc.
Coal mining (27:10:93) 860
European Economic Area Bill (HL), 2R & Com (21:10:93) 419-25, 431, 450, 453-5, 457

Bellingham, Mr Henry
Debates etc.
Defence estimates (18:10:93) 109
Police Responsibilities & Rewards Inquiry (28:10:93) 986-7
Questions
GATT 688
Privatisation, Northern Ireland 381
Water charges 197-8w

Bendall, Mr Vivian
Questions
Taxis, Competition 638w

Benefits Agency
see Social Security Benefits Agency

Benefits Agency district offices
Disabled workers 231-2w

Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Debates etc.
Bombings, Northern Ireland (25:10:93) 589-90
Coal mining (20:10:93) 284
Former Members, Points of order (26:10:93) 693
Northern Ireland (22:10:93) 514-9
Priests (Ordination of Women) Measures 1993 (29:10:93) 1090, 1099, 1107-11

Bennett, Mr Andrew F
Debates etc.
Assisted Areas Orders 1993 (27:10:93) 940
Questions
Ecolabelling 249w
Medical examinations, Social security benefits 36w
Television licences 568

Benton, Anthony
270-1w

Beresford, Sir Paul
Questions
Citizen's charter 572

Berkeley power station
Decommissioning 721-2w

Berkshire Properties
282w

Berry, Dr Roger
Questions
Bristol University, Armed forces training 803w

Berwickshire
Local government reform 630-1w, 814-5, 819
Tourist industry 480w

Betts, Mr Clive
Questions
Community care, Government grants to local authorities 767w
Local authorities, Debts 275-6
NHS trusts, Corporate plans 761-2w
NHS trusts, Finance 761w
Standard spending assessments 86w, 718w, 827-8w

Bicycles
Railway transport 433w
Road safety 808w

Biffen, Rt Hon John
Debates etc.
European Economic Area Bill (HL), 2R & Com (21:10:93) 416, 425-8, 450

Bilsthorpe colliery
(28:10:93) 997
Mine accidents 687

Biocidal products
90-1w

Birds
260w
Air accidents 271w, 327w, 716w
Organophosphorous pesticides 777-8w

Birkenhead
Church property 405w

Birmingham
Vacancies 597-8w
Youth employment 772w

Birmingham Education Authority
558w

Birmingham relief road
430w

Bishops
Housing 72-8w

Black & Ethnic Minority Task Force
625w

Blackwood, Orville
Death 29w

Blair, Mr Tony
Debates etc.
Police Responsibilities & Rewards Inquiry (28:10:93) 978-9

Blakenhurst Prison
Crimes of violence 105w
Inspections 716w
LSD 455w
Manpower 133-4w
Prison discipline 237w, 455w
Prison employment 456w
Prison population 126-7w
Prison riots 715-6w
Prison staff 455-6w, 716w

Bielloch Inquiry
see Ministry of Defence Police Committee of Inquiry

Blind
Departmental publications 173w

Blood donors
Prisoners 399w

Bloomfield Committee
see Dental Remuneration Review

Blunkett, Mr David
Debates etc.
NHS administration (21:10:93) 400-1, 412
Questions
Accident & emergency departments, Greater London 316w

Blunkett, Mr David—continued
Adoption 316w
Allitt Inquiry 307w
Ambulance services, Emergency calls 306-8w
Ambulance services, Manpower 323w
Ambulance services, Northern Ireland 321w
Ambulance services, Performance standards 321-4w
Ambulance services, Scotland 483-4w
Community health councils 837w
Dental charges, Income 317w
Dental health 841w
Dental Remuneration Review 317w
Dental services 504-5w
Dental services, Greater London 841w
Dental services, NHS 697-8w
Depo-medrone 315-6w
Deprivation indicators 311w
Diseases, Classification schemes 838-40w
Doctors' list of patients 843w
Ealing Hospital NHS Trust 310w
East Yorkshire Health Authority, Construction 842w
Eye tests 317w
Family health services authorities, Directors 838w
Hormone treatments, Creutzfeldt-Jakob dementia 312w
Hospital doctors, Clothing 317-8w
Hospital staff, Crimes of violence 317w
Hypothermia, Death 842w
Islington Health Authority, Contracts for services 316w
London Ambulance Service 311w
London Ambulance Service, Computers 312w
London Ambulance Service, Information technology 312w
Medical records, Privacy 840w
Methicillin resistant 843w
Ministers' visits abroad, Thailand 309-10w
NHS, Public appointments 309w
NHS administration 310w, 837-8w
NHS charges exemptions, Pensioners 317w
NHS Management Executive 836w
NHS Management Executive, Publications 312-4w
NHS Management Functions & Manpower Review, Community health councils 838w
NHS Policy Board, Public appointments 840-1w
NHS Supplies Authority 315w
NHS trusts, Accounting 316w
NHS trusts, Directors 837w
NHS trusts, Finance 310w
NHS trusts, Fringe benefits 611-2w
NHS trusts, Managers 310w
Northumbria Ambulance NHS Trust, Accounting 311w
Nurses, Career structure 314-5w
Nurses, Uniforms 311w
Nursing homes, Elderly 310w
Prescription charges exemptions 680
Prescription drugs, Disclosure of information 318w
Regional health authorities 836w
Regional health authorities, Employment protection 837w
Regional health authorities, NHS administration 836w
Regional health authorities, Redundancy 837w
Residential care, Deregulation initiative 309w
Road accidents, Casualties 313-4w
RU486 843w
Smoking, NHS 315w
Standard spending assessments 350w
Surgery 308-9w
VAT, Medical equipment 382w
Worcester Health Authority 838w

Blyth Valley
Defence land 703w
Social security recipients 670-2w
Unemployment 140-1

Board of Inland Revenue
see Inland Revenue

Boating
Government grants 822w

Body searches
Customs 570w

Bombings
Belfast (25:10:93) 577-90
Lockerbie 592w
Ministerial statements (25:10:93) 577-90
Reading 970-1

Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Debates etc.
Defence estimates (18:10:93) 115, (19:10:93) 187-93

Booth, Mr Hartley
Questions
Occupational pensions 167w

Borders region
Tourist boards 479-80w, 622w
Tourists 480w

Bosnia-Herzegovina
(18:10:93) 27-120, 392
Armed forces casualties 325w
Military aircraft 83-4w, 240w
Overseas aid 102w
Refugees 713w
War casualties 500w

Boswell, Mr Tim, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education
Debates etc.
St Philip's College Birmingham (26:10:93) 800-4
Questions
Access funds 264w
Adult education, Educational finance 440w
Dept for Education, Civil service manpower 449w
Dept for Education, Government buildings 297w
Dept for Education, Official hospitality 262w
Dept for Education, Public relations 262w
Discretionary student grants, Expenditure 560-1w
Doyle, Patrick 293-4w
Further education colleges, Finance 668w
Humanities, Higher education 814w
Literacy 101w, 813w
Literacy, Government grants 738w
Social science & humanities students, Student numbers 443w
Special education, Educational finance 559w
Special education, Further education 443-4w
Student accommodation, Multiple occupation 263-4w
Student unions 99w, 262w, 559w
Students, Energy prices 560w
Training 667w

Bottomley, Mr Peter
Debates etc.
Northern Ireland (22:10:93) 496, 505, 511
Priests (Ordination of Women) Measures 1993 (29:10:93) 1088, 1104
Questions
Criminal statistics 142-3w
Drinking & driving 144-5w, 556w
Drinking & driving, Legislation 555w
Drinking & driving, Road accidents 555w
Exclusion orders, Appeals 145w
Fraud 104w
Historic buildings, City of London 471w
Industrial tribunals, Disclosure of information 248w
Jubilee line, Construction 341w
Road accidents, Casualties 16w
Road safety 16w
Road traffic control, Greater London 19w
Student accommodation, Multiple occupation 263-4w
Student unions 262w
Summertime 145w, 388w
Summertime, Road accidents 683w
Working hours, Agricultural workers 613w

Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia, Secretary of State for Health
Debates etc.
NHS administration, Ministerial statements (21:10:93) 398-412

Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia—continued
Questions
Allitt Inquiry 307w
Community care, Transitional arrangements 833-4w
Community health councils 675-6
European Medicines Evaluation Agency 610w
GP fundholders 676-8, 685
Hospital admissions 600w
Regional health authorities 675

Botulism
Mink 178w

Bournemouth
Railway accidents 27w

Bovine spongiform encephalopathy
261-2w

Bovine tuberculosis
774w
RAF Aston Down 566w

Bowden, Mr Andrew
Debates etc.
Parliamentary security, Points of order (28:10:93) 26
Priests (Ordination of Women) Measures 1993 (29:10:93) 1083
Questions
Income support, Social security recipients 168w
Industrial health & safety, Health education 35w
Invalidity benefits, Social security recipients 168w
NHS charges exemptions 34w
NHS charges exemptions, Pensioners 33-4w
Occupational health, Older workers 70w
Optical charges, Spectacles 34-5w
Optical charges exemptions, Spectacles 29-30w

Bowis, Mr John, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept of Health
Questions
Adoption 316w
Alcoholism, Rehabilitation centres 605w
Alzheimer's disease 503w
Blackwood, Orville, Death 29w
Children, Migration 503-4w
Children in care, Lambeth Borough Council 603w
Children in care, Supervision orders 608w
Children's Homes Staff Selection Inquiry 604w
Community care 685
Community care, Care assessment 498w
Community care, Government grants to local authorities 767w
Community care, Homelessness 498w
Community care, Housing 345w
Community care, Occupational therapists 686
Community care, Voluntary organisations 603w
Day nurseries 611w
Deaf, Mental health services 501w
Drug rehabilitation centres 499w
Home care services 601w
Hormone treatments, Creutzfeldt-Jakob dementia 312w
Hormone treatments, Women 683-4
Hospital patients 692w
Hospital waiting lists 684
Life expectancy 605w
Mental illness specific grant 31w
Mental patients 603w
Mental patients, Hospital beds 30-1w
Mentally disturbed offenders, Health services 603-4w
Nursing homes, Hospital beds 758w
Nursing homes, Private sector 497w
Post traumatic stress disorder 33w
Rampton Hospital, Ministers' domestic visits 499-500w
Residential care 601w
Residential care, Deregulation initiative 309w
Schizophrenia 36w
Schizophrenia, Homicide 606w

Boyce, Mr Jimmy
Questions
Iron & steel industry, Factory closures 137
Low incomes 166w
Unemployment 691-2

Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Questions
Integrated pollution control, Fees & charges 536w

Bradley, Mr Keith
Questions
Animal Procedures Committee, Advisory bodies 641w
Invalidity benefits, Medical examinations 223-4w, 230-1w
Invalidity benefits, Social security appeals 224w
Invalidity benefits, Social security recipients 224w
Maintenance, Children 226-8w
Pensioners, Energy prices 9
Social security benefits overpayment 228-30w
Social security benefits overpayment, Civil proceedings 228-9w

Braille
173w

Brain
Medical rehabilitation 626w

Brandreth, Mr Gyles
Questions
Retirement age, Sex discrimination 168w
Weeds Act 1959 775w

Brass bands
Tourist industry 560

Brazier, Mr Julian
Debates etc.
Defence estimates (18:10:93) 38, 60, 93, (19:10:93) 172, 226-8, 238-9
Questions
Agricultural products, Export promotion 965-6
Drinking Water Inspectorate 650w
Milk Marketing Board 373-4w

Bread
Prices 188w

Breast cancer
Medical research 346w, 620-2w
Medical treatments 620-1w
Scotland 620-2w

Brewing industry
Alcoholic drinks duties 967

Bridges
A38 808w
Defence equipment 529w

Bristol Channel
Sewage 566-7w

Bristol University
Armed forces training 803w

British Aerospace
245w, 392
Defence contracts 803w
Redundancy 809
Scotland 809

British Bankers' Association
278w

British Broadcasting Corporation
see BBC

British citizenship
War widows 222w

British Coal Corporation
(18:10:93) 24, (20:10:93) 277-95, 433-4w, (27:10:93) 835-922
Privatisation 399w
Redundancy pay 435w

British embassies
Cyprus 84w
Germany 818w

British embassies—continued
Interpreters 78w
Kenya 411w
Turkey 78w

British Gas
426w

British National Party
Demonstrations 385
Public order policing 557w

British Nuclear Fuels
153w, 252-3w, 505-6w

British Rail
15-6w, 19-20w, 297-8w, 341w, 428-9w
Privatisation 25-6w, 235w, 433w, 541w, 758w, 969-70

British Rail Telecommunications
297-8w

British Railways (No 4) Bill 1991/92
Debates etc.
Order to proceed in next session (26:10:93) 671-4, (27:10:93) 805-8, (28:10:93) 953-6

British residents abroad
Kenya 370w
Maintenance 592-3w

British Standards Institution
804w

British Telecom
426w

British Transport Police
20w

British Transport Police Committee
20w
Public appointments 20w

British Transport Police Federation
20-1w

British Waterways Bill (HL) 1990/91
Debates etc.
Order to proceed in next session (26:10:93) 671-4, (27:10:93) 805-8, (28:10:93) 953-4

Broadcasting Act 1990
Questions
470w

Broadcasting finance
BBC 471w

Broadmoor Hospital
29w

Brodsworth Hall
Architectural conservation 472-3w

Bronchitis
846w

Brooke, Rt Hon Peter, Secretary of State for National Heritage
Debates etc.
National Lottery Etc Bill, Lords amendts (20:10:93) 335-7, 343-6
Questions
Ancient monuments, Architectural conservation 272-3w, 376w, 822w
Architectural conservation 469w
Arts Council 470w, 565
Arts finance 470-1w, 565
BBC 563-6
BBC, Broadcasting finance 471w
BBC, Public appointments 638w
BBC, Radio engineering 102w
Boating, Government grants 822w
Broadcasting Act 1990 470w
Brodsworth Hall, Architectural conservation 472-3w
Fishing, Government grants 822w
Football, Millwall 471w
Independent Television Commission 470w
National lottery 469w
Dept of National Heritage, Doyle, Patrick 376-7w
Dept of National Heritage, Official hospitality 273w

Brooke, Rt Hon Peter—continued
Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art, Annual reports 573w
South East Arts Board 471w
Sports 567
Sports, Government grants 566-7
Television licences 474w
Theatres, Arts finance 472w

Brown, Mr Nicholas
Debates etc.
Defence estimates (19:10:93) 211-4
Public Accounts Committee (25:10:93) 652-7, 660
Questions
Business statements 389-90

Browning, Mrs Angela
Debates etc.
Crime (28:10:93) 1014, 1021, 1030-1
Questions
Horticulture, Agricultural marketing 774w
Science & technology, Expenditure 236w

Bruce, Mr Ian
Debates etc.
Defence estimates (18:10:93) 43, (19:10:93) 173
Parliamentary security, Points of order (27:10:93) 827
Questions
Assisted areas 723-4w
Fish conservation 774w
Forestry, Access to countryside 815-6
Science & technology research 574-5
Vocational training 139

Bruce, Mr Malcolm
Debates etc.
Coal mining (20:10:93) 280
European Economic Area Bill (HL), 2R & Com (21:10:93) 426, 429, 431, 434-8
Management & Administration of Safety & Health at Mines Regulations 1993 (26:10:93) 717-9
Questions
Unemployment, Graduates 137-8

Brucellosis
514w
Anglesey 513-4w
Cheshire 513-4w

Buckinghamshire
Bypasses (19:10:93) 252-8

Budgeting
Health authorities 343-4w

Building industry
256w

Building repairs
Council housing 250w

Building Research Establishment
278-9w

Buildings
European Parliament 82w

Burden, Mr Richard
Questions
Hull Prison, Special category prisoners 151w
Iran, Bahai sect 84-5w
Nicotine patches, Prescriptions 767w
Student unions 99w
UN High Commissioner for Refugees, UK contributions 103w

Bureaucracy
141-2

Burns, Mr Simon
Debates etc.
Coal mining (20:10:93) 288, (27:10:93) 855-61
Questions
Cash limits, Government departments 752w
Coinage, Design 852w
Creutzfeldt-Jakob dementia 697w
EC Finance Council 156
Government shareholding 675-6w

Burt, Mr Alistair, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept of Social Security
Debates etc.
Hearing allowances (28:10:93) 1067-71
Questions
Benefits Agency district offices, Disabled workers 231-2w
Child benefit 676w
Child benefit, EC countries 169w
Child Support Agency 166w, 331w, 753w
Child Support Agency, Performance standards 753w
Dept of Social Security, Civil service manpower 510w
Dept of Social Security, Departmental publications 844w
Dept of Social Security, Doyle, Patrick 378w
Dept of Social Security, Public appointments 171w
Disability living allowance, Social security appeals 510w
Family credit, Expenditure 163w
Family Resources Survey 169-70w
Handicap benefits, Low incomes 171-2w
Housing benefits, Social security benefits rates 168w, 509-10w
Housing benefits, Social security recipients 164-5w, 509w
Housing benefits, Tower Hamlets 596w
Housing benefits, Young people 845-6w
Income support, Cunninghame 168w
Income support, Expenditure 510w
Income support, Mortgages 845w
Income support, Residential care 225-6w, 846w
Income support, Social security benefits reductions 226w
Income support, Social security recipients 168w
Income support, Take-up 5
Income support, Young people 5
Low incomes 166w
Low incomes, Family income 7-8
Maintenance 377-8w
Maintenance, British residents abroad 592-3w
Maintenance, Children 9-11, 226-8w, 592-4w, 752-5w, 844-5w, 847w
Maintenance, Social security benefits disqualification 594w
Maintenance, Social security benefits reductions 170w, 844w
Means tested benefits, Social security recipients 845w
Personal income 166-7w
Personal income, Housing 756w
Personal pensions 225w
Quarry House, Contracts for services 331w
Social security, Computers in government departments 377w
Social security abuse 163-4w
Social Security Appeal Tribunals 330w
Social security appeals 377w
Social security benefits, Energy prices 595w
Social security benefits, Expenditure 377w
Social security benefits, Lone parents 594w
Social Security Benefits Agency, North Yorkshire 169w
Social Security Benefits Agency, Offices 379w
Social security benefits overpayment 228-30w
Social security benefits overpayment, Civil proceedings 228-9w
Social security claims, Adjudication officers 509w
Social security recipients, Blyth Valley 671-2w
Social security recipients, Homelessness 846w
Social security recipients, Lone parents 330-1w, 506-8w

Bus fares
VAT 752w

Bus Promotion Working Party
22w

Bus services
Competition 299w
East Lothian 622w
Greater London 757w
Privatisation 22w

Bus services—continued
South Yorkshire 299w

Buses
Motor vehicle safety 544w
Plant power 298w
Reading 298w

Business
Environment 96w
Environmental education 248w

Business expenses
Welsh Development Agency 781w

Business motions
(29:10:93) 1152

Business premises
Fire regulations 152w

Business questions
390-7

Business start-up scheme
208w

Business statements
(18:10:93) 21-3, 389-90, (28:10:93) 990-8

Butcher, Mr John
Questions
Unemployment 687

Butler, Mr Peter
Questions
Aid financed trade 16-7
Crown Prosecution Service, Manpower 15

Butter
Intervention stocks 568w

Bwrdd yr Iaith Gymraeg
see Welsh Language Board

Byers, Mr Stephen
Debates etc.
Education (School Teachers' Pay & Conditions) (No 2) Order 1993 (26:10:93) 776, 778, 787-91
Questions
Civil service manpower, Dept for Education 449w
Civil service manpower, Dept of Employment 475w
Civil service manpower, Dept of Social Security 510w
Civil service manpower, Dept of the Environment 657w
Civil service manpower, Dept of Trade & Industry 434-5w
Civil service manpower, Home Office 454w
Civil service manpower, Ministry of Defence 492w
Employment opportunities, Northern region 209w
Government buildings, Dept of Health 842w
Government buildings, Dept of Transport 809w
Government buildings, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 818-9w
Government buildings, Ministry of Defence 493w
Government buildings, Northern Ireland Office 817w
Government buildings, Scottish Office 832w
Government buildings, Treasury 847-8w
Government buildings, Welsh Office 821w
Grant maintained schools, Government grants 447w
Grant Maintained Schools Centre 448w, 815w
Grant Maintained Schools Centre, Corporate plans 816w
Grant Maintained Schools Centre, Government grants 814-5w

Bypasses
Buckinghamshire (19:10:93) 252-8

Cabinet committees
Departmental publications 427w

Caborn, Mr Richard
Debates etc.
Coal mining (20:10:93) 281, (27:10:93) 850-1, 859, 882-4, 917

Caerphilly
Urban investment grants 324-5w

Caesarean sections
499w

Callaghan, Mr Jim
Questions
Arts Council 470w
Income support, Residential care 846w

Campbell, Mrs Anne
Questions
Anglian Water, Water charges 274
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Radiation hazards 85w
Sudan, Human rights 664w

Campbell, Mr Menzies
Debates etc.
Crime (28:10:93) 1019
Defence estimates (18:10:93) 41, 61-5, (19:10:93) 183, 193
Questions
Licensing laws, Scotland 821
Local government reform, Scotland 832w
NATO, Infrastructure 68-9w
World War II, Festivals & special occasions 728w

Campbell, Mr Ronnie
Debates etc.
Coal mining (20:10:93) 292, (27:10:93) 846, 900-2
Management & Administration of Safety & Health at Mines Regulations 1993 (26:10:93) 704-5, 741
Questions
A1, Dual carriageways 432w
Defence land, Blyth Valley 703w
Homelessness, Northumberland 417w
Invalidity benefits, Social security recipients 670-1w
Opencast mining, Northumberland 434w
Planning permission, Opencast mining 539w
Social security recipients, Blyth Valley 671-2w
Unemployment, Blyth Valley 140-1

Campbell-Savours, Mr D N
Debates etc.
Assisted Areas Orders 1993 (27:10:93) 928
Oral question time intervention (25:10:93) 571
Questions
Factories, Workington 132
Hospital closures, Northern Ireland 321w

Canada
Armed forces training 57w
Low flying 522-7w, 698-9w
Military aircraft 699w

Canavan, Mr Dennis
Questions
Gorman, Billy 95w
Local government reform, Scotland 813
"Scotland in the Union Partnership for Good" 683w

Cancer
Dental health 693w

Cann, Mr Jamie
Debates etc.
Defence estimates (19:10:93) 228-9

Cannabis
South Wales 9-10w

Capital punishment
Jamaica 96w
Pakistan 411w

Caravan sites
Gypsies 87-8w
Travelling people 480-2w

Cardiff
European Medicines Evaluation Agency 323-4w

Cardiff Bay
Water pollution 161-2w

Cardiff Bay Development Corporation
587-8w

Care assessment
Community care 498w

Care during Childbirth Expert Committee
37w

Career structure
Crown Prosecution Service 104-5w
Midwives 30w
Nurses 30w, 314-5w

Carlile, Mr Alex
Questions
Manufacturing industries, Manpower 208w

Carlisle, Mr John
Questions
Sports 567

Carlisle, Mr Kenneth
Questions
British Rail, Privatisation 541w

Carpets
11 Downing Street 244w

Carrington, Mr Matthew
Questions
Special Operations Executive, Public records 242w

Cars
Repairs & maintenance 541w

Cash, Mr William
Debates etc.
Coal mining (20:10:93) 284-5, (27:10:93) 852
European Economic Area Bill (HL), Order relating to Com (20:10:93) 301, 311, 314
European Economic Area Bill (HL), 2R & Com (21:10:93) 444, 446-8
Questions
Public utilities, Procurement 301-2w

Cash limits
Government departments 752w

Casual workers
209w

Casualties
Road accidents 16w, 313-4w

Category A prisoners
151w, 213w

Category B prisoners
151w

Catering Select Committee
347-8w

Central Council of Physical Recreation
436w

Central line
Closures 299-300w

Centre for Exploitation of Science & Technology
574-5w

Centre for Policy Studies
216w

Centre for Young Musicians
203w

Cereal products
Folic acid 777w

Cereals
Agricultural production 185w
Co-responsibility levy 184-6w
Exports 185w
Intervention prices 567w
Intervention stocks 567-8w, 817w

Cervical cancer
Inverclyde Royal Hospital 384w
Screening 384w, 696-7w

Cervical Smear Test Inquiry
384w

Cetaceans
327-8w
Death 650w

Cetaceans—continued
Nature conservation 350-1w, 569-70w
North Sea 275w, 350-1w

Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster
Doyle, Patrick 268w
Government buildings 725w
Official hospitality 236w

Chancellor of the Exchequer
see Treasury

Channel tunnel
Police 546w
Railway network 638-9w, 809w, (29:10:93) 1153-60

Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Debates etc.
Business questions (28:10:93) 992
Priests (Ordination of Women) Measures 1993 (29:10:93) 1099
Questions
Maintenance, Children 844-5w

Charitable trusts
Health authorities 603w
Regional health authorities 499w

Charities Board
see National Lottery Charities Board

Chartermark scheme
571

Chemical Weapon Convention
734w

Chemical weapons
Iraq 666w

Chemists shops
Prescriptions 841w

Cheshire
Brucellosis 513-4w

Chief Electoral Officer for Northern Ireland
Annual reports 530w

Chief Inspector of Transport Security
see Transport Security Division

Child benefit
676w
EC countries 169w

Child Migrants Trust
503w
Finance 428w

Child patients
Dental services 697-8w

Child Support Agency
166w, 226-8w, 331w, 377-8w, 592-3w, 752-5w, 844-5w, (28: 0:93) 991, 992-3, 995, 997
Expenditure 593w
Performance standards 753w

Children
Kenya 662w
Maintenance 7, 9-11, 226-8w, 592-4w, 752-5w, 844-5w, 847w
Migration 503-4w
Vaccination 605-6w

Children in care
Lambeth Borough Council 603w
Supervision orders 608w

Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1993
Questions
375, 393

Children's hearings
Scotland 612w

Children's Homes Staff Selection Inquiry
604w

Children's panels
Scotland 44-6w

China
Arms embargoes 575w
Family planning 662-3w

China—continued
Human rights 414w
Infanticide 664w
Law 412w
Marriage 414w
Nuclear weapons tests 206w
Prisoners 80w

Chisholm, Mr Malcolm
Questions
Edinburgh Western Hospital 683w
Invalidity benefits, Social security recipients 225w
Maintenance, Social security benefits reductions 170w

Chlorofluorocarbons
Refrigerators 96w

Chronically sick
Insurance 14w
Prescription charges 606w

Church Commissioners
405w
Costs 540w
House of Commons questions 540w

Church in Wales
Finance 162w

Church of England
540w, (29:10:93) 1083-151

Church property
Birkenhead 405w
Wales (25:10:93) 590

Churchill, Mr Winston
Debates etc.
Coal mining (20:10:93) 283, (27:10:93) 840, 847, 853, 866-9, 917
Defence estimates (18:10:93) 33-4, (19:10:93) 174, 181

Cider
964

Citibank International Bill (HL) 1992/93
Debates etc.
3R order read (19:10:93) 129, (21:10:93) 371, (28:10:93) 953

Citizen's charter
495w, 570, 572
Compensation 494-5w
Publicity 571
USA 569

City challenge
417w, 653w

City of London
828w
Historic buildings 471w

City of London Corporation
19w

Civil defence
Government buildings 728-9w

Civil liability
Land pollution 278w

Civil proceedings
Group 4 Securitas 129w
Social security benefits overpayment 228-9w
Squatting 218w

Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill (HL) 1992/93
Questions
427w

Civil servants
Freemasonry 493w
Northern Ireland 793w
Public meetings 369-70w

Civil servants' secondment
Arms to Iraq Inquiry 104w

Civil servants' visits abroad
Dept of Social Security 247w
France 247w

Civil service
573
Contracts for services 494w

Civil service agencies
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 173-5w
Ministry of Defence police 327w, 490w
Orders & regulations (26:10:93) 695-7
Public Trustee 793-4w
Scottish Office Education Dept 384w
Traffic areas 545w

Civil service dispersal
Scottish Office 783w

Civil service manpower
Dept for Education 449w
Dept of Employment 475w
Dept of Social Security 510w
Dept of the Environment 657w
Dept of Trade & Industry 434-5w
Home Office 454w
Ministry of Defence 492w
Miscarriages of justice 553w
Scottish Office 785w

Clapham, Mr Michael
Debates etc.
Coal mining (27:10:93) 899
Management & Administration of Safety & Health at Mines Regulations 1993 (26:10:93) 707, 716, 737-8

Clappison, Mr James
Debates etc.
Coal mining (27:10:93) 898-900
NHS administration (21:10:93) 408-9
Questions
Council tax, Single people 264
Energy conservation, Government departments 256-9w
Workstart 135-6

Clark, Dr David
Debates etc.
Defence estimates (18:10:93) 44-53, 56, (19:10:93) 176-7

Clark, Dr Michael
Debates etc.
Coal mining (20:10:93) 283-4
Questions
Energy Advisory Panel, Public appointments 577w, 647-9w
Energy review 576w

Clarke, Mr Eric
Debates etc.
Coal mining (20:10:93) 287, (27:10:93) 844, 850
Questions
Forestry, Research 816

Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth, Chancellor of the Exchequer
Questions
Coinage, Design 852w
Crown Estate Commissioners, Annual reports 380w
EC Finance Council 15w

Clarke Committee
see NHS Policy Board

Class sizes
Educational standards 99w

Classification schemes
Diseases 838-40w

Clayton
Low flying 523w, 525-6w

Clelland, Mr David
Questions
Industrial disablement benefits, Social security claims 511w
Local government reform 259-60

Clifton-Brown, Mr Geoffrey
Debates etc.
Business questions (28:10:93) 996
Defence estimates (19:10:93) 234, 242
Questions
Contracts for services 569-70

Clifton-Brown, Mr Geoffrey—continued
Local government services, Contracts for services 249w, 272
Social security abuse 163-4w

Climate Change Convention
280w

Clinical audit
766w

Clinical wastes
Incinerators 654w

Close companies
Company taxation 672w

Closed Churchyards (Wales) Bill 1992/93
Debates etc.
1R (25:10:93) 590

Closures
Central line 299-300w

Clothier Inquiry
see Allitt Inquiry

Clothing
Hospital doctors 317-8w
VAT 572w, 752w

Clubs
VAT exemptions 382w

Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Debates etc.
Coal mining (27:10:93) 907-8
National Lottery Etc Bill, Lords amendts (20:10:93) 334

Clyde Fishermens' Association
16-7w

Coal
Energy research 156-7w
Imports 576w

Coal mine closures
434w
Wakefield 134-5

Coal Mines Regulation Act 1908
Debates etc.
(20:10:93) 277-95

Coal mining
Investment 434w
Methane 804w
Mine safety (18:10:93) 24
Ministerial statements (20:10:93) 277-95
Opposition days (27:10:93) 835-922
Production 305-6w

Coastal areas
Low flying 487w

Coastal protection
Repairs & maintenance 775w

COCOM
see Coordinating Committee on Export Controls

Cohen, Mr Harry
Debates etc.
Defence estimates (18:10:93) 60, 89-91, (19:10:93) 238
Questions
Arms to Iraq Inquiry 574
Geneva conventions 407-10w
Geneva conventions, Law of war 371w
Listed buildings, Hospitals 472w
London Underground 386
Weapons, Treaties 406w, 410w

Coinage
Design 852w

Cold weather payments
(28:10:93) 1039-73

Colerne airfield
803w

Colvin, Mr Michael
Debates etc.
Defence estimates (18:10:93) 40, 93-4, 110-2
Questions
Armed forces housing, Property transfer 701w

Colvin, Mr Michael—continued
Business start-up scheme 208w
Maxwell companies, Pension funds 594-5w
Ministry of Defence, Property transfer 701w
Police Responsibilities & Rewards Inquiry 151w
THORP, Radioactive waste disposal 252w

Comfrey
563w

Command & control
Warships 328w

Commission of the European Communities
see European Commission

Commissioner for the Rights of Trade Union Members
669w

Commissions for local administration
Stoke on Trent City Council 822-3w

Common agricultural policy
965
EC budget 969
Expenditure 186-8w, 372w, 964-5

Common fisheries policy
961-2

Commonwealth
590-2w

Commonwealth Institute
Finance 811w

Commonwealth Parliamentary Association
Offices 233w

Community action
National insurance contributions 225w

Community care
682-3, 686
Care assessment 498w
Government grants to local authorities 767w
Homelessness 498w
Housing 266w, 345w
Housing construction 281w
Occupational therapists 686
South Down 465w
Transitional arrangements 833-4w
Voluntary organisations 603w

Community councils
Local government reform 248w
Scotland 248w

Community health councils
497w, 675-6, 837w
NHS Management Functions & Manpower Review 838w

Community health services
Government grants 834w

Community nurses
Manpower 37w
Midwives 37w

Community service orders
217w

Companies political contributions
Conservative Party 384-5

Companies Registration Office (England & Wales)
Press advertising 806w
Privatisation 157w

Company cars
Taxation 381-2w
Welsh Development Agency 781-2w

Company liquidations
Astra Training Services 365w

Company taxation
Close companies 672w

Competition
Bus services 299w
Taxis 638w

Complaints
Food inspection 835w
Group 4 Securitas 128-9w

Complaints—continued
Low flying 52w, 56w
Noise 281w
Prisoner escorts 128-9w

Compliance cost assessments
202w

Compulsorily detained mental patients
692w
Sexual offences 553-4w

Computer applications
Sizewell B 245w

Computer privacy
716-7w

Computers
Export controls 244w
London Ambulance Service 312w

Computers in government departments
Social security 377w

Computers in National Health Service
Procurement 345w

Condensation
820w

Conditions of employment
Royal Ulster Constabulary 94w

Conferences
367w
Energy conservation 193w
Expenditure 735w
Grant maintained schools 745-6w
International Atomic Energy Agency 205w
Partnership for change 193w, 265w

Conflict of interests
Welsh Development Agency 781w

Congdon, Mr David
Questions
County Hall 262
Local government services, Contracts for services 249-50w

Connarty, Mr Michael
Questions
Child Support Agency 166w
Housing standards, Scotland 825-6

Conservation
Ancient monuments 471-2w

Conservative Party
239-40w
Companies political contributions 384-5
Finance 144
Party conferences 528w, 652w

Consultants
Government departments 269w

Consumer durables
Pensioners 595-6w

Consumption
Alcoholic drinks 419-20w
Whisky 419-20w

Contact lenses
Optical charges 679-80

Contaminated land registers
271-2

Contempt of court
Home Office 641w
Legal costs 641w

Contracts
Nuclear fuels 153w

Contracts for services
569-70, 573
Civil service 494w
Information technology 572-3
Islington Health Authority 316w
Land Registry Office 797w
Local government services 249-50w, 256w, 272-3

Contracts for services—continued
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 176w
NHS trusts 345w
Patent Office 202w
Prison Service 131-2w
Prisoner escorts 128w
Prisons 115w
Quarry House 331w
Welsh Office Drawing Office 161w
Wolds Remand Prison 117w

Contracts of employment
Members' staff 406w

Contributions Agency
see Social Security Contributions Agency

Control of Pollution Act 1974
Questions
281w

Convention of Scottish Local Authorities
813

Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species
242w, 414w

Convictions
Long, George 453-4w

Cook, Mr Frank
Debates etc.
Defence estimates (18:10:93) 37, 81-2, 116
Questions
Health services, Down 371

Cook, Mr Robin
Debates etc.
Coal mining (20:10:93) 278-9, (27:10:93) 835-43, 848-9, 918

Coombs, Mr Anthony
Debates etc.
Defence estimates (18:10:93) 43-4
NHS administration (21:10:93) 410
Questions
Vocational training, Kidderminster 137

Coombs, Mr Simon
Questions
Chartermark scheme 571
Community care, Transitional arrangements 833-4w

Coordinating Committee on Export Controls
244w

Cope, Rt Hon Sir John, Paymaster-General
Questions
Accountants, Government departments 269w
Airport tax, Tax yields 381w
Alcoholic drinks duties 421w
Alcoholic drinks duties, Inspections 673w
Customs, Body searches 570w
Customs & Excise, Ship chartering 9-10w
11 Downing Street, Carpets 244w
Excise duties, Aviation fuels 424w, 426w, 673w
Tax havens 672-3w
Tobacco duties, Tax evasion 748-9w
Touche Ross, Government departments 269-70w
Treasury, Government buildings 746w, 847-8w
UK contributions to EC budget 422w
VAT, Air fares 571w, 752w
VAT, Clothing 572w, 752w
VAT, Construction 200-1w
VAT, Day nurseries 847w
VAT, EC countries 8-9w
VAT, Energy prices 382w, 422w, 676-7w, 847w
VAT, Food 14-5w, 268w
VAT, Medical equipment 382w
VAT, Publications 243-4w, 570w, 677w, 751w
VAT, Tax harmonisation 6-8w
VAT, Tax yields 380-1w
VAT exemptions, Clubs 382w
VAT zero rating 571-2w

Cope, Rt Hon Sir John—continued
Whisky, Alcoholic drinks duties 420-1w
Whisky, Consumption 419-20w
Whisky, Retail trade 420w

Copyright
Harmonisation of legislation 401w

Corbett, Mr Robin
Debates etc.
National Lottery Etc Bill, Lords amendts (20:10:93) 327
Questions
BBC 566
Sudan, Human rights 734w

Corbyn, Mr Jeremy
Debates etc.
Defence estimates (18:10:93) 27, 28, 52, 107-10
NHS administration (21:10:93) 412
Simpkin Partnership (22:10:93) 552-7
Questions
Accident & emergency departments, Hospital beds 36w
Antarctic, Environment protection 81w
Asthma, Air pollution 236w
British embassies, Interpreters 78w
Business questions 394
Cycleways, Greater London 21w
Cycling, Road safety education 22w
El Salvador, Electoral register 79w
Falkland Islands, Mining 82w
Hostels, Greater London 86-7w
Housing construction, Greater London 259-60w
India, Human rights 80-1w
M25, Road works 18w
Network SouthEast, Finance 15-6w
Nicaragua, Overseas aid 103w
Packaging 195-6w
Railway network, Barking 19-20w
Recycling 195w
UN Mission for a Referendum in Western Sahara 80w
Vanunu, Mordechai 79w

Co-responsibility levy
Cereals 184-6w

Cormack, Mr Patrick
Debates etc.
Coal mining (20:10:93) 281, (27:10:93) 847, 875-6, 884-6
Defence estimates (18:10:93) 38, (19:10:93) 167, 190, 230-1
Priests (Ordination of Women) Measures 1993 (29:10:93) 1086, 1127-30, 1147
Questions
Dept of Social Security, Departmental publications 844w
Income tax, Tax rates & bands 571w
Literacy, Government grants 738w
Rating of Plant & Machinery Review 721w
Social security benefits, Energy prices 595w
VAT, Energy prices 676-7w
VAT zero rating 571-2w

Cormorants
383w, 797w

Corporate plans
Grant Maintained Schools Centre 816w
NHS trusts 761-2w

Corporation tax
Small businesses 12w

Corston, Ms Jean
Debates etc.
Priests (Ordination of Women) Measures 1993 (29:10:93) 1134-6
Questions
Cervical cancer, Screening 696-7w
Children in care, Supervision orders 608w
Handicap benefits, Low incomes 171-2w
Independent Living 1993 Fund, Local government functions 594w
Personal income 166-7w
Young offenders 714-5w
Youth custody 548-50w

Cosmetics
Animal experiments 641-2w

Cost per pupil
Primary education 444-6w
Secondary education 444-6w

Couchman, Mr James
Debates etc.
Defence estimates (18:10:93) 82-4
NHS administration (21:10:93) 405
Police Responsibilities & Rewards Inquiry (28:10:93) 984
Questions
Defence equipment, Bridges 529w
Health education 602-3w

Council house rents
250w

Council house sales
252w
Local government revenue 251w, 534w

Council house waiting lists
Lancashire 349w

Council housing
Building repairs 250w
Lancashire 348-9w
Local government expenditure 720w
Lone parent families 253-4w, 348w
Refugees 825-6w

Council of Europe
205w

Council of Ministers
(28:10:93) 998

Council tax
282-4w
Single people 264
Valuation 417w

Councillors
Valuation Office 281-2w

Counselling
Post traumatic stress disorder 463w

Countryside
Wind power 415w

Countryside Commission
274w

Countryside stewardship scheme
533w

County Hall
262-3

Courts & Legal Services Act 1990
Questions
419w

Court's Charter
Magistrates 575-6

Courts martial
World War II (19:10:93) 159-61

Cousins, Mr Jim
Questions
Investment income 10-1w
Newcastle Health Authority, North Tyneside Health Authority 843w
Premium bonds 11w
Terrorism, Codes of practice 681-2w

Cox, Mr Tom
Questions
Armed forces, Racial discrimination 703w
Cereals, Intervention prices 567w
Cereals, Intervention stocks 567-8w
EC grants & loans, Greater London 532w
Energy conservation 250w
Fishing vessels, Shipping registration 374w
Hospital waiting lists, Greater London 834w
Industrial accidents, Agriculture 598-9w
Junior hospital doctors, Working hours 609w
Kenya, British embassies 411w
Kenya, Children 662w
Kenya, Refugees 731w
Legal aid scheme 797w
Set-aside schemes 659-60w
Unemployment, Greater London 208w

Credit Suisse First Boston
594-5w

Creutzfeldt-Jakob dementia
607w, 697w
Hormone treatments 312w

Crime
Detection rates 642w
Opposition days (28:10:93) 999-1038

Crime prevention
13, 143, 689

Crime victims
218w

Crimes of violence
Blakenhurst Prison 105w
Hospital staff 317w
Lewisham 144w
Prison population 642w
Prison staff 105w, 130-1w, 460-1w
South London 144w
Wolds Remand Prison 116w
Young offenders 393w

Criminal Cases Review Authority
220-1w

Criminal injuries compensation
548w
Administrative delays 547-8w
Merseyside 547w

Criminal Injuries Compensation Board
547-8w

Criminal injuries compensation scheme
217w, 221w, 547w

Criminal investigation
Genetics 215w
War crimes 144w, 707w

Criminal Justice Liaison Committees
Wolds Remand Prison 116w

Criminal Justice Royal Commission
218w, 220-1w

Criminal law
Sex discrimination 457w

Criminal proceedings
Rape 222w

Criminal statistics
142-3w, 239w
Lewisham 143-4w
Young offenders 549-52w

Crofters (Scotland) Bill (HL) 1992/93
Debates etc.
Order relating to Com (29:10:93) 1151-2

Crossrail
Road traffic 27w

Crown courts
Judges 6w
Snaresbrook 5-6w, 794-6w
Trials 793w

Crown Estate Commissioners
38w
Annual reports 380w

Crown Prosecution Service
14-5, 104-5w, 657-8w
Career structure 104-5w
Manpower 15

Croydon Tramlink Bill (HL) 1991/92
Debates etc.
Order to proceed in next session (26:10:93) 671-4, (27:10:93) 805-8, (28:10:93) 953-6

Cryer, Mr Bob
Debates etc.
Business questions (18:10:93) 22, (28:10:93) 997
European Economic Area Bill (HL), Order relating to Com (20:10:93) 311-5
European Economic Area Bill (HL), 2R & Com (21:10:93) 415, 420-1, 423, 448-53, 457-8, 461-2, 464-70

Cryer, Mr Bob—continued
Management & Administration of Safety & Health at Mines Regulations 1993 (26:10:93) 698, 703, 716, 729, 735-7
National Lottery Etc Bill, Lords amendts (20:10:93) 344
Questions
Alcohol advertising 967-8
Business questions 392-3
Unemployment, West Yorkshire 135

CSFB
see Credit Suisse First Boston

Cumberlege Committee
see Care during Childbirth Expert Committee

Cumbernauld Development Corporation
684-6w

Cumbria
Grant maintained schools 99-101w, 745w

Cummings, Mr John
Debates etc.
Business questions (28:10:93) 993
Coal mining (20:10:93) 290-1, (27:10:93) 877-9, 899-900
Management & Administration of Safety & Health at Mines Regulations 1993 (26:10:93) 708

Cunliffe, Mr Lawrence
Debates etc.
Coal mining (20:10:93) 286

Cunningham, Mr Jim
Questions
Maintenance, Children 593-4w, 847w
Urban programme 252w

Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Questions
Aid financed trade 812w
Aid financed trade, Expenditure 732w
Iraq, Chemical weapons 666w
Malaysia, Aid financed trade 732w

Cunninghame
Income support 168w
Unemployment 689

Curriculum
Advisory bodies 441w
Educational assessment 448w
English education 368w
Genetics 98w
Ministerial policy advisors 439-40w, 680-1w
Northern Ireland 375-6, 680-1w
Sex education 813w

Curry, Mr David, Minister of State, Dept of the Environment
Questions
County Hall 262-3
Local authorities, Debts 275-6
Local government reform 272-3
Local government reform, Hampshire 273
Local government reform, Southport 276
Local government services, Contracts for services 249-50w
PSA Building Management, Privatisation 351-2w
Rating of Plant & Machinery Review 531w, 721w
Standard spending assessments 270-1, 350w
Standard spending assessments, Northumberland 270
Stoke on Trent City Council, Commissions for local administration 822-3w

Customs
Body searches 570w

Customs & Excise
(25:10:93) 591-662
Ship chartering 9-10w

Cycleways
Greater London 21w

Cycling
Road accidents 808w
Road safety education 22w

Cyprus
British embassies 84w

Cystic fibrosis
NHS complaints 622-3w
Scotland 622-3w

Dafis, Mr Cynog
Debates etc.
Coal mining (20:10:93) 290
Public Accounts Committee (25:10:93) 610, 630-2
Questions
Adult education, Educational finance 440w
Alcoholism, Rehabilitation centres 605w
Berkeley power station, Decommissioning 721-2w
Clinical wastes, Incinerators 654w
Drug rehabilitation centres 499w
Employment opportunities, Energy conservation 597w
Energy conservation, Energy prices 654w
Environment protection, Sites of special scientific interest 652w
Environmental education, Wales 819w
Excise duties, Aviation fuels 424w, 673w
Housing & handicapped, Wales 578-9w
Housing standards, Dampness 820w
Income tax, Actors 675w
Lead pollution, Pollution control 532w
Nuclear power stations, Nuclear safety 434w
Nuclear reactors, Decommissioning 575w
Nursery nurses, Wales 376w
Organophosphorous pesticides, Birds 777-8w
Organophosphorous pesticides, Fish 777w
Peat, Ecolabelling 652w
Peat, Environment protection 652-3w
Peat, Nature conservation 566w
Peat bogs, Environment protection 652-3w
Peat bogs, Set-asise schemes 566w
Peat bogs, Wales 644-5w
Pesticide residues, Food contamination 797-8w
Pesticides 798w
Planning compensation, Mining 653w
Planning permission, Mining 653w
Radioactive Substances Act 1960, Prosecutions 656-8w
Sewage, Waste disposal 653w
Sulphur, Treaties 652w
Sustainable development 656w
Tax allowances, Waste disposal 424w
Trade promotion, Environment protection 574-5w
Tributyl tin, Nature conservation 826w
Waste disposal 416w, 656w
Waste disposal, Incinerators 654-5w, 824w
Waste disposal, Tyres 655-6w
Waste management 655w
Waste management, Licensing 655w

Dairy Crest
373-4w

Dairy farming
772w

Dalyell, Mr Tam
Questions
Advisory Committee on Novel Foods & Processes, Lupins 183-4w
Arms to Iraq Inquiry, Civil servants' secondment 104w
Genetics, Curriculum 98w
Local government reform, Midlothian 691w
Lockerbie, Bombings 592w
Sellafield, Radioactivity 211w
Transplant surgery 610-1w

Dampness
Housing standards 820w

Darling, Mr Alistair
Questions
Accountants, Government departments 269w

Data Protection Act 1984
Questions
716-7w

Davidson, Mr Ian
Debates etc.
Defence estimates (19:10:93) 193, 231-2

Davies, Mr Bryan
Questions
Independent Television Commission 470w

Davies, Rt Hon Denzil
Debates etc.
Welsh Development Agency (19:10:93) 13[illegible]

Davies, Mr Quentin
Debates etc.
Coal mining (27:10:93) 902-4
Questions
Maintenance, Children 11

Davies, Mr Ron
Debates etc.
Public Accounts Committee (25:10:93) 629
Valleys initiative, Points of order (20:10:93) 296
Welsh Development Agency (19:10:93) 149-50
Questions
Family credit, Social security recipients 780w
Hill livestock allowances 779w
Hill livestock allowances, Scotland 784w
Hill livestock allowances, Wales 452-3w, 782w
Income support, Social security recipients 780-1w
Local government finance, Wales 642-4w
Urban investment grants, Caerphilly 324-5w
Welsh Office, Expenditure 453w

Davis, Mr David, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Office of Public Service & Science
Questions
Arms to Iraq Inquiry 570-1
Chartermark scheme 571
Citizen's Charter 495w, 570
Citizen's Charter, Compensation 494-5w
Civil servants, Freemasonry 493w
Civil service 573
Contracts for services 573
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, Government buildings 725w
Information technology, Contracts for services 572-3
Organisation for Economic Cooperation & Development, Science & technology research 268w
Science & technology policy 493w

Davis, Mr Terry
Debates etc.
NHS administration (21:10:93) 402-3
Public Accounts Committee (25:10:93) 617, 622-30, 661
Welsh Development Agency (19:10:93) 155

Day care of children
House of Commons accommodation 346w

Day nurseries
611w
Scotland 688w
VAT 847w

D-Day landings
728w

Deaf
Mental health services 501w
Smoke alarms 37w, 784w

Deal Barracks
Military bands 386-8

Dearing review
667w

Death
Blackwood, Orville 29w
Cetaceans 650w
Dolphins 650w
Hospitals 499w
Hypothermia 842w
Scotland 624-6w
Smoking 32w
Surgery 766w

Debts
Local authorities 275-6, [illegible]88w

Debts written off
Income tax 750w
PAYE 750w

Decommissioning grants
Fishing vessels 466w

Deeside
Radon gas 825

Defective housing
Northern Ireland 94-5w
Rural areas 94-5w

Defence advisory notices
325w

Defence contracts
British Aerospace 803w
USA 802w

Defence equipment
Bridges 529w
Exports 818w

Defence estimates
(18:10:93) 27-120, (19:10:93) 162-251

Defence expenditure
368w
Nuclear weapons policy 703w

Defence Export Services Organisation
Manpower 492w

Defence industries
Diversification 700-1w
Manpower 491w

Defence land
Blyth Valley 703w
Development plans 416w

Defence Police Federation
65w

Defence procurement
728w
Guided weapons 490w, 803w
Jetstream aircraft 68w
Laser-guided bombs 801w
Minesweepers 700w
Trident missiles 729-30w

Defence research
Military aircraft 60w

Defence Research Agency
Woolwich Arsenal 731w

"Defending our Future White Paper"
(18:10:93) 27-120, (19:10:93) 162-251

Demonstrations
British National Party 385

Denham, Mr John
Questions
Poultry, Animal welfare 777w
Premium bonds 11-2w

Dental charges
Income 317w

Dental health
841w
Cancer 693w
Ethanol 693w

Dental Practice Board
607w

Dental Remuneration Review
317w

Dental services
504-5w
Child patients 697-8w
Greater London 841w
Hygiene 693w
NHS 697-8w
Prison medical services 149w
Scotland 613-5w
Waiting lists 613-5w
Wales 579w

Dentists
Manpower 614w
Medical equipment 29w

Dentists—continued
Pay 610w
Scotland 614w

Departmental circulars
Police cautions 546w

Departmental correspondence
Administrative delays 95-6w
Deportation 799-800w
Performance standards 95w
Sickness benefits 378w
Tarmac Brick & Tiles 350w
THORP 267w

Departmental forms
Employment Service 335-6w
Employment training 337-8w
Health & Safety Executive 334w

Departmental publications
Blind 173w
Cabinet committees 427w
Dept of Social Security 844w
EC action 664w, 817-8w
Environmental policy 280-1w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 173w

Departmental records
1-2w, 161w

Departmental responsibilities
Miscarriages of justice 552-3w

Depo-medrone
315-6w

Deportation
Departmental correspondence 799-800w

Deprivation indicators
311w, 350w, 827-8w

Dept for Education
293-4w
Civil service manpower 449w
Government buildings 297w
House of Commons broadcasting 99w
Official hospitality 262w
Public relations 262w

Dept of Employment
Civil service manpower 475w
Deregulation initiative 337w
Doyle, Patrick 337w
Government buildings 597w
House of Commons broadcasting 71w
Official hospitality 248-9w

Dept of Health
(21:10:93) 398-412
Doyle, Patrick 346w
Government buildings 498w, 842w
House of Commons broadcasting 33w
Official hospitality 235w
Relocation of employees 318w

Dept of National Heritage
Doyle, Patrick 376-7w
Official hospitality 273w

Dept of Social Security
(25:10:93) 591-662
Civil servants' visits abroad 247w
Civil service manpower 510w
Departmental publications 844w
Doyle, Patrick 378w
Official cars 247w
Official hospitality 247w
Official visits 247w
Public appointments 171w

Dept of the Environment
652w
Civil service manpower 657w
Government buildings 650-1w
Official hospitality 256w

Dept of Trade & Industry
Civil service manpower 434-5w
Doyle, Patrick 578w
Environment protection 153-4w
Government buildings 300-1w
Official hospitality 244-5w

Dept of Transport
Doyle, Patrick 342w
Government buildings 432w, 809w
House of Commons broadcasting 23-4w
Official hospitality 235w

Deregulation initiative
157-8w, 383
Dept of Employment 337w
Health & Safety Executive 335-7w
Industrial health & safety 300w
Residential care 309w
Tourist industry 559-60

Deregulation (No 2) Bill 1992/93
Debates etc.
1R (26:10:93) 695-7

Desert Storm syndrome
63w

Detection rates
Crime 642w
Police authorities 642w

Deva, Mr Nirj Joseph
Questions
Rents to mortgages scheme 265

Development agencies
Public appointments 46-50w
Scotland 46-50w

Development aid
Ethiopia 242-3w

Development plans
Defence land 416w

Devlin, Mr Tim
Debates etc.
Defence estimates (18:10:93) 39, 74-6
Education (School Teachers' Pay & Conditions) (No 2) Order 1993 (26:10:93) 786-8
Police Responsibilities & Rewards Inquiry (28:10:93) 989
Questions
Architectural conservation 469w
Quarrying, Highlands of Scotland 683w

Devon
Grant maintained schools 814-5w

Dewar, Mr Donald
Questions
Balance of payments 850-1w
Income tax, Self-employed 675-6w
Income tax, Tax rates & bands 572w
Income tax, Tax yields 673-4w, 849-50w
Invalidity benefits 3
Maintenance, Children 10-1, 592-3w, 753-5w
Maintenance, Social security benefits disqualification 594w
Maintenance, Social security benefits reductions 844w
Means tested benefits, Social security recipients 845w
National insurance contributions 845w
Social security benefits, Lone parents 594w
Tax allowances 674w
Taxpayers 571-2w, 675-6w

Diabetes
607w
Driving licences 757w
Medical equipment 693w
Wales 580w

Dickens, Mr Geoffrey
Debates etc.
Bombings, Northern Ireland (25:10:93) 588
Business questions (18:10:93) 22
Coal mining (20:10:93) 289
Welsh Development Agency (19:10:93) 153
Questions
Aid financed trade 102w
Apples, Apples Day 963-4
Citizen's Charter 570
Personal pensions 11-2

Dicks, Mr Terry
Debates etc.
Northern Ireland (22:10:93) 520, 542

Diplomatic service
Belarus 665w
Education allowances 412-3w
Kazakhstan 665w

Dir77/143/EEC
95w

Dir80/778/EEC
827w

Dir88/449/EEC
95w

Director General of Fair Trading
see Office of Fair Trading

Director General of Telecommunications
see Office of Telecommunications

Director General of the National Lottery
see Office of the National Lottery

Director General of Water Services
see Office of Water Services

Director of Passenger Rail Franchising
758w
Public appointments 544w

Directors
Disqualifications 722w
District health authorities 838w
Family health services authorities 838w
NHS trusts 762w, 837w

Disability living allowance
510w, (25:10:93) 591-662, 790w
Northern Ireland Dept of Health & Social Services 790-1w
Social security appeals 510w
Telephone services 596-7w

Disability working allowance
Social security appeals 510w
Social security recipients 510w

Disabled facilities grants
533-4w

Disabled workers
Access to Parliament 771w
Benefits Agency district offices 231-2w
Public sector employment 353-4w

Disciplinary proceedings
Family doctors 769-70w

Disclosure of information
EC law 658w
Immigration 150w
Industrial tribunals 248w
Low flying 486w
Prescription drugs 318w
Shares (28:10:93) 1073

Disclosure of Interests in Shares (Amendment) (No 2) Regulations 1993
Debates etc.
(19:10:93) 158, (28:10:93) 1073

Discretionary student grants
Expenditure 560-1w

Disease control
Import of live animals 564-5w

Diseases
Classification schemes 838-40w

Disposable nappies
Waste disposal 430w

Distributive trade
Newspaper press 722w

District courts
Local government reform 478w
Scotland 478w

District health authorities
Directors 838w
Public appointments 345w

Dobson, Mr Frank
Debates etc.
Coal mining (27:10:93) 844-5, 850, 908-13
Management & Administration of Safety & Health at Mines Regulations 1993 (26:10:93) 698-704, 706-7, 709-10

Dobson, Mr Frank—*continued*
Questions
Astra Training Services, Arthur Andersen 365-6w
Astra Training Services, Company liquidations 365w
Dept of Employment, Deregulation initiative 337w
Deregulation initiative, Industrial health & safety 300w
Doyle, Patrick 293-4w, 592w
Doyle, Patrick, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster 268w
Doyle, Patrick, Dept of Employment 337w
Doyle, Patrick, Dept of Health 346w
Doyle, Patrick, Dept of National Heritage 376-7w
Doyle, Patrick, Dept of Social Security 378w
Doyle, Patrick, Dept of Trade & Industry 578w
Doyle, Patrick, Dept of Transport 342w
Doyle, Patrick, Home Office 389w
Doyle, Patrick, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 373w
Doyle, Patrick, Ministry of Defence 369w
Doyle, Patrick, Northern Ireland Office 322w
Doyle, Patrick, Scottish Office 385w
Doyle, Patrick, Treasury 382w
Doyle, Patrick, Welsh Office 324w
Employment Service, Departmental forms 335-6w
Employment training, Departmental forms 337-8w
Health & Safety at Work Etc Act 1974 334w
Health & Safety Executive, Deregulation initiative 335-7w
Industrial health & safety, Inspections 334-5w
Industrial health & safety, Small businesses 366-7w
Low pay, Lancashire 130
Quota of disabled workers 338w
Skillcentres, Privatisation 138, 366w

Docklands light railway
Construction 254w
Greenwich 200w
Lewisham 200w

Doctors' list of patients
843w

Dog whelk
826w

Dolphins
Death 650w
Drift nets 660-1w

Domestic wastes
Recycling 39w

Dominie aircraft
53-4w

Donohoe, Mr Brian H
Questions
New towns development corporations, Scotland 684w
Unemployment, Cunninghame 689

Dorrell, Mr Stephen, *Financial Secretary to the Treasury*
Debates etc.
Public Accounts Committee (25:10:93) 637, 657-62
Questions
Balance of payments 850-1w
Bankruptcy 423w
Close companies, Company taxation 672w
Company cars, Taxation 381-2w
Corporation tax, Small businesses 12w
Foreign companies in UK, Land ownership & tenure 424w
Former Ministers, Redundancy pay 14w, 746-8w
Government shareholding 675-6w
Government shareholding, Public utilities 426w
Income tax, Actors 675w
Income tax, Debts written off 750w
Income tax, Low incomes 14w, 427w
Income tax, Self-employed 675-6w

Dorrell, Mr Stephen—*continued*
Income tax, Tax allowances 14w
Income tax, Tax rates & bands 571-2w, 749-51w
Income tax, Tax yields 422-3w, 673-4w, 849-50w
Investment income 10-1w
Offshore trusts 424w
Personal equity plans, Tax allowances 13w
Personal pensions 848w
Tax allowances 674w
Tax allowances, Waste disposal 424w
Tax avoidance 381w
Tax havens 423-6w
Tax havens, Fraud 424-5w
Tax repayments 9-10w
Tax yields 423w
Tax yields, Immobilisation of vehicles 422w
Taxpayers 571-2w, 675-6w

Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James, *Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Scottish Office*
Questions
A1, Dual carriageways 617w
A1, Road accidents 618w
A1, Road traffic 617-8w
A77, Motorways 687w
Accommodation agencies, Licensing 691w
B6355, Snow & ice 618w
Bus services, East Lothian 622w
District courts, Local government reform 478w
Dual carriageways, Road safety 618w
Energy prices, Pensioners 822-3
Environmental education, Scotland 42w
Fire alarms, Scotland 691-2w
Health education, Drug abuse 686w
House condition survey, Scotland 687w
Housing insulation, Government grants 686w
Housing standards, Scotland 823-6
Lead pipes, Housing 690-1w
Licensing laws, Scotland 820-1
Local government reform, Emergency services 201w
Local government reform, Scotland 817-8
Private rented housing, Scotland 688w
Radon gas, Deeside 825
Road tolls, Scotland 478w
Scotland's Travelling People Advisory Committee 482w
Scotland's Travelling People Advisory Committee, Public appointments 482w
Scottish Office Education Dept, Civil service agencies 384w
Smoke alarms, Deaf 37w, 784w
Summertime, Road accidents 683w
Sunday trading, Scotland 686w
Tourist boards, Borders region 622w
Tourist boards, East Lothian 479-80w
Tourist industry, Haddington 480w
Tourists, Lothian 480w
Transport, Scotland 688w
Transport, Stranraer 478-9w
Travelling people, Caravan sites 480-2w
Travelling people, Scotland 480w
Unfair trading practices, Prosecutions 383w

Dounreay
Radioactive waste disposal 628w

Down
Health services 320w, 371
Hospitals 371-2, 379-80
Multiple sclerosis 464w

Downpatrick
Hospitals 372

Doyle, Patrick
293-4w, 365w, 592w
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster 268w
Dept of Employment 337w
Dept of Health 346w
Dept of National Heritage 376-7w
Dept of Social Security 378w
Dept of Trade & Industry 578w
Dept of Transport 342w
Home Office 389w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 373w
Ministry of Defence 369w

Doyle, Patrick—*continued*
Northern Ireland Office 322w
Scottish Office 385w
Treasury 382w
Welsh Office 324w

Draskovic, Vuk
204w
Official visits 204w

Dreadnought Seamen's Hospital
36w

Drift nets
Dolphins 660-1w
EC law 778-9w

Drigg
Radioactive waste disposal 720-1w
Transport of radioactive materials 545w

Drinking & driving
144-5w, 556w
Legislation 555w
Road accidents 555w

Drinking fountains
531w

Drinking Water Inspectorate
650w

Driver & Vehicle Licensing Agency
432w, 542-3w, 639-40w

Driving
Disqualifications 146w, 460w
Isle of Man 146w, 460w

Driving instruction
Motorways 22w

Driving licences
Appeals 542-3w, 640w
Diabetes 757w
Disqualifications 16w
Medical examinations 639-40w
Mental health 16w
Road transport workers 542-3w, 639-40w, 757w

Drug abuse
Health education 686w
Prisoners 132w, 221w
Sports competitors 469-70w
Young people 222w

Drug rehabilitation centres
499w, 605w

Dual carriageways
A1 431-2w, 617w, 639w
Road safety 618w

Dual use goods & technologies
206-7w

Dublin
Terrorism 320w

Duncan, Mr Alan
Debates etc.
Former Members, Points of order (26:10:93) 694
Heating allowances (28:10:93) 1044, 1046, 1061-3

Duncan Smith, Mr Iain
Debates etc.
European Economic Area Bill (HL), 2R & Com (21:10:93) 436, 454
Questions
English Tourist Board 470w
GP fundholders 600w
Housing associations, Right to buy 267

Dunham Bridge (Amendment) Bill 1992/93
Debates etc.
Order to proceed in next session (28:10:93) 957

Dunn, Mr Bob
Debates etc.
Education, Kent (21:10:93) 471-4, 476
Police Responsibilities & Rewards Inquiry (28:10:93) 989

Dunn, Mr Bob—continued
Questions
Airlines, EC action 298w
British Rail Telecommunications 297-8w
Buses, Plant power 298w
Commonwealth 590-2w
EC Transport Council 297w
London Regional Transport, External financing limits 342w
Pensioners, Shareholders 168-9w
Transport Security Division, Annual reports 810w

Dunnachie, Mr Jimmy
Questions
Industrial injuries scheme, Shipbuilding 846w

Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Questions
BBC 563-4
Invalidity benefits, Medical examinations 2
Wessex Regional Health Authority, Resignations 612w
Youth unemployment 133

Durant, Sir Anthony
Questions
Bombings, Reading 970-1
Brewing industry, Alcoholic drinks duties 967
Land Registry Office, Contracts for services 797w
Land Registry Office, Ordnance survey 416w
Rents to mortgages scheme 265

Durham County
Opencast mining 434w

Duty of care
656w

Eagle, Ms Angela
Debates etc.
Defence estimates (18:10:93) 30
Questions
Employment opportunities, Young people 133-4
Know-how Fund 16
Patient's Charter 602w

Ealing
Housing associations 266

Ealing Hospital NHS Trust
310w

Earnings limits
845w

Easington colliery
(28:10:93) 993

East Coast Main Line (Safety) Bill 1991/92
Debates etc.
2R order read (21:10:93) 371, (28:10:93) 953

East London river crossing
25w

East Lothian
A1 617-8w
Agricultural land 784w
Bus services 622w
Local government reform 630-1w
Low flying 800w, 802w
NHS trusts 689w
Railway travel 622w
Tourist boards 479-80w, 622w

East Midlands
Low pay 208w
Prisoner escorts 128-30w

East Sussex
Housing construction 261-2
Railway network 433w
Road works 430w

East Yorkshire Health Authority
Construction 842w

Eastern Health & Social Services Board
371-2, 379-80, (22:10:93) 482
Expenditure 212w
Health services 373
Residential care 463-4w

EC action
Airlines 298w
Departmental publications 664w, 817-8w
Horticulture 513w
Packaging (28:10:93) 1073
Rabies 273w

EC Agriculture Council
260-1w

EC budget
Common agricultural policy 969

EC budget contributions
848-50w

EC Committee of the Regions
272
Public appointments 735-8w

EC Cons Doc 7673/93
279w

EC countries
Child benefit 169w
Employment level 70w
Fishery protection 371-2w
Nuclear fuel reprocessing 153w
Organic farming 778w
Overseas students 786-7w
Pensions 222-3w
Radioactive wastes 153w
Unemployment 71w
VAT 8-9w

EC Draft 8426/92
(28:10:93) 1073

EC Draft 8482/93
(28:10:93) 1073

EC Environment Council
90-1w, 193w

EC external trade
South Africa 435w

EC Finance Council
15w

EC Fisheries Council
277w

EC Foreign Affairs Council
206-7w

EC grants & loans
Architectural conservation 43-4w
European Social Fund 332w
Greater London 532w
Merseyside 245-6w
School milk 182w, 274-5w
Voluntary organisations 319w

EC internal trade
393
Export controls 154w

EC Labour & Social Affairs Council
211-2w

EC law
303w
Disclosure of information 658w
Drift nets 778-9w
Environment 279w
Fish conservation 778-9w
Fisheries 373w
Nature conservation 535w
Nuclear safeguards 155w
Transport of animals 564w
Veterinary drugs 773w
Water supply 827w

EC nationals
Employment level 679-80w
Northern Ireland 679-80w

EC Social Charter
(18:10:93) 21-2, 131, 145-6

EC Trade Marks Office
805-6w

EC Transport Council
297w

Ecclesiastical Committee
House of Commons staff 540w

ECOFIN
see EC Finance Council

Ecolabelling
249w
Peat 652w

Economic & monetary union
971-2

Economic Commission for Europe
see UN Economic Commission for Europe

Economic recession
144

Economic situation
386
Lanarkshire 687w
Northern Ireland 380
Northern region 131-2
Scotland 809-11

Edinburgh
Invalidity benefits 225w

Edinburgh Royal Infirmary
682w

Edinburgh Western Hospital
683w

Education
Ethnic minorities 666-7w
Greater London 666-7w
Kent (21:10:93) 471-80

Education allowances
Diplomatic service 412-3w

Education & Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1993
Debates etc.
(26:10:93) 748-71

Education (School Teachers' Pay & Conditions) (No 2) Order 1993
Debates etc.
(26:10:93) 772-96

Education Select Committee
559w

Educational assessment
Curriculum 448w

Educational finance
Adult education 440w
Special education 559w

Educational standards
Class sizes 99w

Eggar, Mr Tim, Minister for Energy
Debates etc.
Coal mining (20:10:93) 277-8, (27:10:93) 843-54, 864, 888
Coal mining, Ministerial statements (20:10:93) 277-95
Simpkin Partnership (22:10:93) 555-8
Questions
Accounts Services Agency 804-5w
Alternative energy 245w
Berkeley power station, Decommissioning 721-2w
British Coal Corporation, Privatisation 399w
British Coal Corporation, Redundancy pay 435w
Coal, Energy research 156-7w
Coal, Imports 576w
Coal mining, Investment 434w
Coal mining, Methane 804w
Coal mining, Production 305-6w
Dept of Trade & Industry, Civil service manpower 434-5w
Dept of Trade & Industry, Government buildings 300-1w
Dept of Trade & Industry, Official hospitality 244-5w
Deregulation initiative, Industrial health & safety 300w
Electricity, Imports 575-6w

Eggar, Mr Tim—continued
Energy Advisory Panel, Public appointments 577w, 647-9w
Energy costs 401-2w
Energy review 245w, 433-4w, 576w
Gas fired power stations 158w, 385-6w, 418w
Harwell, Radioactive waste disposal 826w
Mine accidents 304w
Mine safety 304w
Mineworkers' pension scheme 433w
Non-fossil fuel obligation 245w
Nuclear fuel reprocessing, EC countries 153w
Nuclear fuels, Contracts 153w
Nuclear power, Exports 303w
Nuclear power stations 539-40w
Nuclear power stations, Capital investment 574w
Nuclear power stations, Nuclear safety 434w
Nuclear reactors, Decommissioning 575w
Nuclear safeguards 154-5w, 400-1w
Nuclear safeguards, EC law 155w
Opencast mining, Northumberland 434w
Radioactive waste disposal, Drigg 720-1w
Radioactive wastes 724-5w
Sizewell B, Computer applications 245w
Sizewell C 646w
THORP, Japan 575w
THORP, Radioactive waste disposal 153w
Thorpe, Tom 155w
United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority 156w
United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority, Capital investment 302w
United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority, Information services 153w
United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority, Police 156w
Uranium, Nuclear fuel reprocessing 721w
Wave power 646w
Wind power, Orkney 576w

El Salvador
Electoral register 79w

Elderly
Health services 692w
Nursing homes 310w

Elections
Russia 278w

Electoral register
El Salvador 79w
Publicity 271w

Electricity
Imports 575-6w

Electricity interconnectors
575-6w

Electricity tariffs
Northern Ireland 321w

11 Downing Street
Carpets 244w

Emergency calls
Ambulance services 36-7w, 306-8w

Emergency planning
Government grants 386w
Nuclear accidents 802w

Emergency services
Local government reform 201w

Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Questions
British Coal Corporation, Privatisation 399w

Emphysema
846w

Employees' contributions
Women 328w

Employment discrimination
Northern Ireland 212w

Employment level
EC countries 70w
EC nationals 679-80w

Employment opportunities
Energy conservation 597w
Environment protection 333w

Employment opportunities—continued
Northern Ireland 792w
Northern region 131, 209w
THORP 333w
Walsall 86w
Women's employment 691w
Young people 133-4

Employment protection
Regional health authorities 837w

Employment schemes
136
European Social Fund 72w

Employment Service
Departmental forms 335-6w

Employment Service Agency
211w

Employment training
71-2w
Departmental forms 337-8w

Empty housing
Liverpool 251w

Energis
647w

Energy Advisory Panel
(20:10:93) 277-95
Public appointments 577w, 647-9w

Energy conservation
250w
Conferences 193w
Employment opportunities 597w
Energy prices 654w
Government departments 256-9w

Energy costs
401-2w
Grant maintained schools 448w

Energy prices
Energy conservation 654w
Pensioners 9, 822-3
Scotland 822-3
Social security benefits 595w
Students 560w
VAT 142, 382w, (21:10:93) 412, 422w, 447w, 560w, 676-7w, 847w

Energy research
Coal 156-7w

Energy review
245w, 433-4w, 539-40w, 576w

Energy Saving Trust
654w

Engineering Centre for Wales
162w

Engineering Employers' Federation
Environment protection 193w

English education
Curriculum 368w

English Heritage
see Historic Buildings & Monuments Commission for England

English Nature
see Nature Conservancy Council for England

English Tourist Board
470w
Government grants 562

Enright, Mr Derek
Debates etc.
Coal mining (20:10:93) 294, (27:10:93) 874, 894-8
Education (School Teachers' Pay & Conditions) (No 2) Order 1993 (26:10:93) 785
Management & Administration of Safety & Health at Mines Regulations 1993 (26:10:93) 741, 743
Priests (Ordination of Women) Measures 1993 (29:10:93) 1118

Enright, Mr Derek—continued
Questions
Arms to Iraq Inquiry 569
Rhubarb 964

Entry clearances
South Africa 146w

Environment
Business 96w
EC law 279w
Statistics 275w

Environment Agency
416w

Environment protection
964-5
Antarctic 81w
Dept of Trade & Industry 153-4w
Employment opportunities 333w
Engineering Employers' Federation 193w
Northern Ireland 787-8w
Peat 652-3w
Peat bogs 652-3w
Planning permission 320w
Scottish councils 38w
Sites of special scientific interest 652w
Standards specifications 804w
Trade promotion 574-5w

Environment Wales initiative
375w

Environmental Action Fund
530-1w

Environmental Audit
804w

Environmental Auditors Registration Association
194w

Environmental education
Business 248w
Open University 279w
Scotland 42w
Wales 819w

Environmental health officers
656w

Environmental impact assessment
Greater Manchester relief road 235w

Environmental management options scheme
574-5w

Environmental policy
255w
Departmental publications 280-1w
Scotland 686w

Environmental Pollution Royal Commission
654w

Environmental Protection Act 1990
Questions
281w

Equal opportunities
209-10w
Family doctors 27-8w
Health authorities 27w

Equine viral arteritis
Horses 275w

Essex
Assisted areas 155w

Estate Action
Expenditure 251w

Ethanol
Dental health 693w

Etherington, Mr Bill
Debates etc.
Coal mining (20:10:93) 291
Management & Administration of Safety & Health at Mines Regulations 1993 (26:10:93) 706, 718, 731, 736
Questions
Casual workers 209w

Etherington, Mr Bill—continued
Surgery 33w

Ethiopia
Development aid 242-3w

Ethnic minorities
Education 666-7w
European Social Fund 772w
Grant maintained schools 815-6w
Health services 625w
Languages education 448w
Local government finance 713w

Euratom
154-5w

EUROENVIRON
574-5w

European Coal & Steel Community
Exchange risk guarantee scheme 435w

European Commission
153w

European Commission of Human Rights
411-2w

European Communities
412w

European Convention on Human Rights
(19:10:93) 158, (20:10:93) 364-70

European Court of Human Rights
(20:10:93) 364-70, 411-2w

European Court of Justice
268w, 535w

European economic area
(20:10:93) 301-21, (21:10:93) 414-70

European Economic Area Bill (HL) 1992/93
Debates etc.
2R, Money res*, Ways & means res & rem stages (21:10:93) 414-70
Order relating to Com (18:10:93) 121, (19:10:93) 251, (20:10:93) 301-21

European Economic Community
(20:10:93) 301-21, (21:10:93) 414-70

European Free Trade Association
(20:10:93) 301-21, (21:10:93) 414-70

European Medicines Evaluation Agency
610w
Cardiff 323-4w

European Movement
Government assistance 411w

European Night Services
341w

European Parliament
Buildings 82w
Expenditure 83w
Operating costs 733w

European Parliament constituencies
Wales 589-90w

European Parliament members
Members' allowances 83w

European Police Information Centre
715w

European Regional Development Fund
Scotland 383w, 687w
Transport 234w, 299w, 383w
Wales 234w

European Social Fund
475w
EC grants & loans 332w
Employment schemes 72w
Ethnic minorities 772w

European Union (Public Information) Bill 1992/93
Questions
1w

European works councils
136-7, 211-2w

Evans, Anthony
Racial harassment 62w

Evans, Mr David
Questions
Ancient monuments, Conservation 471-2w
Party conferences 144
Sentencing, Appeals 13

Evans, Mr John
Debates etc.
Coal mining (20:10:93) 293, (27:10:93) 858, 870-3

Evans, Mr Jonathan
Debates etc.
Coal mining (27:10:93) 837
Welsh Development Agency (19:10:93) 151
Questions
EC Committee of the Regions, Public appointments 735-8w
EC external trade, South Africa 435w
European Coal & Steel Community, Exchange risk guarantee scheme 435w
Packaging, Measurement 722-3w
Seals, Nature conservation 780w

Evans, Mr Nigel
Debates etc.
Bombings, Northern Ireland (25:10:93) 589
Business questions (28:10:93) 994-5
Crime (28:10:93) 1003, 1014
Education (School Teachers' Pay & Conditions) (No 2) Order 1993 (26:10:93) 774, 777, 780, 784-7
Questions
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Overseas aid 102w
Council house sales 252w
Crime prevention 143
EC Foreign Affairs Council 206-7w

Evans, Mr Roger
Debates etc.
Pardon for Soldiers of the Great War Bill, 1R (19:10:93) 160-1
Priests (Ordination of Women) Measures 1993 (29:10:93) 1095, 1131, 1145
Questions
Bovine tuberculosis 774w
Parishes, Finance 707w

Evennett, Mr David
Questions
British National Party, Demonstrations 385
Low incomes, Family income 7

Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Debates etc.
Heating allowances (28:10:93) 1039-47, 1049, 1051-3, 1059, 1062, 1069
Police Responsibilities & Rewards Inquiry (28:10:93) 985
Questions
Fire alarms, Scotland 691-2w
Housing standards, Scotland 824
Smoke alarms, Deaf 37w, 784w

Ex gratia payments
325-6w

Exchange rate mechanism
849w

Exchange risk guarantee scheme
European Coal & Steel Community 435w

Excise duties
Aviation fuels 424w, 426w, 673w

Exclusion orders
Appeals 145w

Export Control Organisation
152-3w

Export controls
Arms exports 402w
Computers 244w
EC internal trade 154w
Police equipment 400w
Riot control weapons 201-2w

Export licensing
152-3w

Export of live animals
Horses 275w
Veal 968

Export promotion
Agricultural products 965-6
Food industry 779w

Export rebates
Agricultural products 514-8w

Exports
Art works (27:10:93) 944-52
Cereals 185w
Defence equipment 818w
Nuclear power 303w
Whisky 420w

External financing limits
London Regional Transport 342w

Extra contractual referrals
496w, 498w, 696w

Extractive industries
Minerals 532w
Planning permission 532w

Eye tests
317w
Northern Ireland 793w
Northern region 768w
Optical charges 680
Optical charges exemptions 768w
Wales 782w

F15 aircraft
Aircraft noise 490w
Low flying 53w, 56w

F16 aircraft
Aircraft noise 489w

F111 aircraft
53w

Fabricant, Mr Michael
Debates etc.
Defence estimates (19:10:93) 236
Questions
BBC, Advertising 568
BBC, Broadcasting finance 471w
Civil service, Contracts for services 494w
Motorcycle industry 974
NHS, Scotland 823-4

Factories
Workington 132

Factory closures
Iron & steel industry 137

Fairbairn, Sir Nicholas
Debates etc.
Defence estimates (19:10:93) 190, 226, 231
Heating allowances (28:10:93) 1042-3
Questions
Government buildings, Scotland 831-2w
Local enterprise companies, Expenditure 810
Local government reform, Scotland 818

Falkland Islands
Harrier aircraft 488w
Mining 82w

Family credit
Expenditure 163w
Social security recipients 780w
Wales 780w

Family doctors
Disciplinary proceedings 769-70w
Equal opportunities 27-8w
Inner London boroughs 695w
Locums 680-1
Pay 695w
Professional misconduct 769-70w

Family health services authorities
Directors 838w
Ophthalmology 606w
Opticians 606w

Family income
Low incomes 7-8

Family planning
China 662-3w
Expenditure 499w
Hong Kong 414w
Tibet 663-4w
UK contributions 663w

Family Planning Association
813w

Family Resources Survey
169-70w

Farm & conservation grants scheme
774w

Farm Animal Welfare Council
181w

Farm incomes
Marginal land 798w
Northern Ireland 530w
Wheat 172-3w

Farms
Furs 180-2w
Mink 178-9w

Fatchett, Mr Derek
Debates etc.
Assisted Areas Orders 1993 (27:10:93) 923-6
NHS administration (21:10:93) 409
Questions
Dept of Health, Relocation of employees 318w
Lorries, Licensing 431w
Motor vehicle safety, Prohibition notices 431w
PSA Building Management, Redundancy 415w
Quarry House, Contracts for services 331w
Road haulage licences 541-2w
Social Security Benefits Agency, Offices 379w
Vehicle Inspectorate, Fees & charges 432w

Faulds, Mr Andrew
Debates etc.
Defence estimates (18:10:93) 32
Questions
Business questions 392
Iraq, Marsh Arabs 971

Fences
Livestock 175-6w

Fenner, Dame Peggy
Debates etc.
Priests (Ordination of Women) Measures 1993 (29:10:93) 1111-2

Fertilisers
Industrial health & safety 374w

Fertility
Medical treatments 35w
Scotland 622w

Festivals & special occasions
World War II 728w

Field, Mr Barry
Debates etc.
Local government reform, Isle of Wight (25:10:93) 663-6
Questions
Forestry Commission 684w
Local government reform, Isle of Wight 260

Field, Mr Frank
Debates etc.
Priests (Ordination of Women) Measures 1993 (29:10:93) 1095, 1097-100, 1146
Questions
Bishops, Housing 72-8w
Church property, Birkenhead 405w
Diplomatic service, Education allowances 412-3w
Licensing laws 456w
Parole Board, Public appointments 454w
VAT, Energy prices 422w

Fife
Glasgow 384-5w

Fine defaulters
Prisoners 132-3w, 388-90w

Fire alarms
Scotland 691-2w

Fire regulations
Business premises 152w

Fires
Multiple occupation 152w

Fireworks
Imports 599w

Firing ranges
Germany 484-6w

First time buyers
255w
Mortgage relief 279w

Firth of Clyde
Nuclear accidents 802-3w

Fish
Organophosphorous pesticides 777w

Fish conservation
689-90, 774w, 784w, 962-3
EC law 778-9w

Fish farming
Overseas trade 274w
Planning permission 274w
Salmon 38w
Turkey 274w

Fisheries
EC law 373w
Norway 966-7
Pest control 797w

Fishery decommissioning scheme
466w, 960-2

Fishery protection
EC countries 371-2w

Fishing
Government grants 822w

Fishing gear
Seals 512w

Fishing offences
21w, 189-90w

Fishing vessels
Decommissioning 960-1
Decommissioning grants 466w
Licensing 21w, 190w
Prosecutions 189-90w
Shipping registration 374w
Spain 189-90w, 373w
Submarines 16-7w

5 Airborne Brigade
Military vehicles 328w, 727-8w

Flynn, Mr Paul
Debates etc.
Closed Churchyards (Wales) Bill, 1R (25:10:93) 590
Welsh Development Agency (19:10:93) 156
Questions
Access to Parliament, Disabled workers 771w
Ballistic missile defence, Russia 729w
BBC, Public appointments 638w
Business questions 396
Chemical Weapon Convention 734w
Civil service 573
Council house rents 250w
Crime, Detection rates 642w
Employment schemes 136
Fraud, Prosecutions 104w
GP fundholders 685
Independent Television Commission 470w
Nuclear test ban 734-5w
Nuclear weapons, Iraq 730w
Nuclear weapons, Russia 731w
Patent Office, Contracts for services 202w
Tornado aircraft, Nuclear weapons deployment 730w
Trident missiles, Defence procurement 729-30w

Flynn, Mr Paul—continued
Trident missiles, Nuclear weapons tests 729w
Trident submarines 729w

Folic acid
Cereal products 777w
Pregnancy 501w

Food
VAT 14-5w, 268w

Food contamination
563w
Meat 565w
Pesticide residues 797-8w
Shellfish 625-8w

Food from Britain
779w

Food imports
Organic farming 778w

Food industry
Export promotion 779w

Food inspection
Complaints 835w

Food prices
10w, 189w

Football
Millwall 471w

Footwear
767w

Ford Prison
391w

Foreign & Commonwealth Office
412-3w
Government buildings 371w, 818-9w
Official hospitality 242w

Foreign companies in UK
Land ownership & tenure 424w

Foreign investment in UK
Nissan 972-3
Scotland 691w

Foreign policy
Gibraltar 273w
India 732-3w
Kashmir 733w

Foreign relations
USA 267-8w

Forest protection
Overseas aid 102w

Forestry
683-4w
Access to countryside 815-7
Agricultural land 512-3w
Land acquisition 816
Research 816

Forestry Commission
517-8w, 561-2w, 684w
Access to countryside 958
Land acquisition 659w
Privatisation 782-3w, 959

Forestry Review Group
612-3w, 782-3w, 958

Forestry Technology Training & Management Steering Committee
517-8w

Forests
Land acquisition 561-2w
Yorkshire & Humberside 562w

Former Cabinet Ministers (Interests) Bill 1992/93
Debates etc.
1R (20:10:93) 297

Former Ministers
Privatisation (20:10:93) 297
Redundancy pay 14w, 746-8w

***Forsyth, Mr Michael**, Minister of State for Employment*
Debates etc.
Management & Administration of Safety & Health at Mines Regulations 1993 (26:10:93) 698-9, 704-11, 715, 729, 731, 740-3

Forsyth, Mr Michael*—*continued
Questions
Dept of Employment, Civil service manpower 475w
Dept of Employment, Deregulation initiative 337w
Dept of Employment, Government buildings 597w
Dept of Employment, Official hospitality 248-9w
Employment opportunities, Northern region 209w
Employment opportunities, THORP 333w
Employment Service, Departmental forms 335-6w
Environmental education, Business 248w
European Social Fund 475w
European Social Fund, EC grants & loans 332w
European Social Fund, Ethnic minorities 772w
Fireworks, Imports 599w
Health & Safety at Work Etc Act 1974 334w
Health & Safety Executive, Deregulation initiative 335-7w
Industrial accidents, Agriculture 598-9w
Industrial health & safety, Fertilisers 374w
Industrial health & safety, Inspections 334-5w
Industrial health & safety, Passive smoking 474-5w
Industrial health & safety, Small businesses 366-7w
Industrial health & safety, Smoking 475w
Industrial relations 210w
Industrial tribunals, Disclosure of information 248w
Jobclubs, North West region 209w
Jobplan workshops 208w
Low pay, East Midlands 208w
Low pay, Lancashire 129-30
Low pay, Prosecutions 477w
Low pay, Women 210w
Minimum wage 365w
Occupational health, Older workers 70w
Public sector employment, Recruitment 208w
Quota of disabled workers 338w, 353-4w
Sellafield, Radioactivity 211w
Sheltered employment 599w
Solo Appointments Hammersmith, Licensing 352-3w
Take-up of employment 207w
Trade union membership, Oil industry 69-70w
Unemployment, Basildon 132-3
Unemployment, Greater London 208w
Unemployment, Lancaster 129-30
Unemployment, West Yorkshire 134-5
Unemployment benefits, Offshore workers 69w
Vacancies 477w
Vacancies, Lancashire 598w
Wages councils 354-64w

Forsythe, Mr Clifford
Debates etc.
Northern Ireland (22:10:93) 488, 533-6
Questions
Industrial development, Northern Ireland 380-1
Planning permission, Environment protection 320w

***Forth, Mr Eric**, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education*
Questions
Centre for Young Musicians 203w
Dept for Education, House of Commons broadcasting 99w
Local education authorities, Capital investment 738-42w
Outdoor education 367w, 436w
Outdoor education, Finance 367w
Outdoor education, Safety 449w
Primary education, Cost per pupil 444-6w
Primary education, Expenditure 283-6w
Sex education 101-2w, 813w
Sex education, Curriculum 813w
Sex education, Primary education 813w
Special education 559w
Special education, Codes of practice 559-60w
Special education, Teacher training 96-8w

Foster, Mr Don
Debates etc.
Education & Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1993 (26:10:93) 762-3
Education (School Teachers Pay & Conditions) (No 2) Order 1993 (26:10:93) 781-4, 786
Questions
Funding Agency for Schools, Public appointments 668-9w
Grant maintained schools 667w
Grant maintained schools, Government grants 445-7w
Grant maintained schools, Inspections 558w
Grant Maintained Schools Centre, Manpower 442w
Parents' Opposed to Opting-Out, Government grants 441-2w
School Curriculum & Assessment Authority 558w
School population 558w
Social science & humanities students, Student numbers 443w
Special education, Educational finance 559w
Special education, Further education 443-4w
Student unions 559w
Students, Energy prices 560w
Teacher training, Primary education 558w
Technology colleges, Sponsorship 560w

Foulkes, Mr George
Debates etc.
Defence estimates (18:10:93) 41, 43
Questions
Business questions 392
Children's hearings, Scotland 612w
Children's panels, Scotland 44-6w
Community councils, Local government reform 248w
District courts, Local government reform 478w
F16 aircraft, Aircraft noise 489w
Family Resources Survey 169-70w
Firing ranges, Germany 484-6w
Forestry 683-4w
Forestry, Land acquisition 816
Guided weapons, Defence procurement 490w
Jetstream aircraft 245w
Jetstream aircraft, Defence procurement 68w
Local government reform, Scotland 332w, 479w
Low flying 486-8w
Low flying, Disclosure of information 486w
Low flying, Harrier aircraft 488w
Low flying, Night flying 486w
Low flying, Nimrod aircraft 487w
Low flying, Slimbridge 488w
Low flying, Urban areas 488-9w
Sea transport, Northern Ireland 319w
Tornado aircraft 490w
Tornado aircraft, Armed forces training 326w

Fox, Dr Liam
Questions
Overseas aid, Forest protection 102w

France
Alcoholic drinks 544-5w, 673w
Civil servants' visits abroad 247w
Nuclear weapons tests 80w, 519w
Tobacco 749w
Wheat 172-3w

Fraser, Mr John
Questions
British Rail, Privatisation 433w
Children in care, Lambeth Borough Council 603w
Courts & Legal Services Act 1990 419w
Crime prevention 13
Crown Prosecution Service, Career structure 104-5w
European Social Fund, EC grants & loans 332w
Immigration, Disclosure of information 150w
Solo Appointments Hammersmith, Licensing 352-3w
Temporary employment, Redundancy 333-4w

Fraud
104w
Prosecutions 104w

Fraud*—*continued
Tax havens 424-5w

***Freeman, Rt Hon Roger**, Minister for Public Transport*
Debates etc.
Channel tunnel, Railway network (29:10:93) 1156-60
Questions
British Rail, Privatisation 235w, 433w, 541w
British Transport Police 20w
British Transport Police Committee, Public appointments 20w
British Transport Police Federation 20-1w
Bus Promotion Working Party 22w
Bus services, Competition 299w
Bus services, Privatisation 22w
Buses, Plant power 298w
Central line, Closures 299-300w
Channel tunnel, Railway network 638-9w, 809w
Director of Passenger Rail Franchising 758w
Director of Passenger Rail Franchising, Public appointments 544w
European Night Services 341w
Heathrow Airport, Railway network 26w
Manchester Airport, Railway network 199-200w
Network SouthEast, Finance 15-6w
Railway accidents, Bournemouth 27w
Railway fares, Privatisation 25-6w
Railway network, Barking 19-20w
Railway network, East Sussex 433w
Railway transport, Bicycles 433w
Rolling stock, Leaseback arrangements 428-9w
Transport of radioactive materials, Drigg 545w
West coast railway line 429w
West Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive, Rolling stock 756w

Freemasonry
Civil servants 493w

French, Mr Douglas
Questions
Accident & emergency departments 678-9
Crime prevention 689
Information technology, Contracts for services 572-3
Occupational pensions, Personal pensions 167w
Special education 559w

Fringe benefits
NHS trusts 611-2w

Fry, Mr Peter
Questions
Business questions 391

Funding Agency for Schools
Public appointments 668-9w

Furs
Farms 180-2w

Further education
Special education 443-4w

Further education colleges
Finance 668w

Further Education Funding Council for England
559w

Fyfe, Mrs Maria
Questions
Accommodation agencies, Licensing 691w
Breast cancer, Medical research 620w
Cystic fibrosis, NHS complaints 622-3w
Cystic fibrosis, Scotland 623w
Day nurseries, Scotland 688w
Death, Scotland 624-6w
Dental services, Scotland 613-4w
Dental services, Waiting lists 613-5w
Dentists, Manpower 614w
Fertility, Scotland 622w
Health services, Ethnic minorities 625w
Heart diseases, Hospital waiting lists 619w
Homosexuality, Health services 619w

Fyfe, Mrs Maria—continued
Hospital waiting lists, Scotland 616-7w
Lead pipes, Housing 690-1w
Lost working days, Scotland 832w
Mentally handicapped, Mental health community care 691w
NHS trusts, Patients 628w
NHS trusts, Scotland 689w, 812-3
Private rented housing, Scotland 688w
Scottish Cancer Trials Office 479w
Scottish Environment Protection Agency 619-20w
Unfair trading practices, Prosecutions 383w
Women's employment, Employment opportunities 691w

Gale, Mr Roger
Debates etc.
Assisted Areas Orders 1993 (27:10:93) 924, 926, 936-7
Questions
History, Publications 771w

Gallie, Mr Phil
Debates etc.
Defence estimates (19:10:93) 178
Heating allowances (28:10:93) 1041
Questions
British Aerospace, Redundancy 809
Licensing laws, Scotland 821

Gapes, Mr Mike
Questions
Class sizes, Educational standards 99w
Social security abuse 223w

Gardiner, Sir George
Debates etc.
Police Responsibilities & Rewards Inquiry (28:10:93) 983-4

Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Debates etc.
Defence estimates (18:10:93) 55

Garnier, Mr Edward
Debates etc.
Coal mining (27:10:93) 893-5
Defence estimates (19:10:93) 168
Police Responsibilities & Rewards Inquiry (28:10:93) 987
Questions
Anglo-Irish talks 378-9

Garrett, Mr John
Debates etc.
Business questions (28:10:93) 994

Gas fired power stations
158w, 385-6w, 418w, 677w, 823w

Gas fuels
Northern Ireland 529-30w
Research 529-30w, 823w

GATT
260-1w, 590-2w, 688, 959-60
Agricultural products 959

General Dental Practitioners' Association
607w

General Medical Council
769-70w

General Synod measures
Speaker's rulings & statements (29:10:93) 1083

Genetics
Criminal investigation 215w
Curriculum 98w

Geneva conventions
407-10w
Law of war 371w

George, Mr Bruce
Debates etc.
Defence estimates (18:10:93) 71-4
Questions
Employment opportunities, Walsall 86w

German measles
Vaccination 695w

Germany
British embassies 818w
Firing ranges 484-6w
Low flying 699w, 726w
Tornado aircraft 59w

GEST
97w

Gibraltar
Foreign policy 273w
Radiation hazards 519w

Gill, Mr Christopher
Debates etc.
Defence estimates (19:10:93) 169
European Economic Area Bill (HL), Order relating to Com (20:10:93) 315-6
European Economic Area Bill (HL), 2R & Com (21:10:93) 420
Welsh Development Agency (19:10:93) 152

Gillan, Mrs Cheryl
Questions
Accountants, Government departments 269w

Glasgow
Fife 384-5w

Global positioning system
491w

Godman, Dr Norman A
Debates etc.
Business questions (18:10:93) 23
Crime (28:10:93) 1017
Defence estimates (18:10:93) 42, (19:10:93) 165, 174
European Economic Area Bill (HL), Order relating to Com (20:10:93) 303, 316-7
European Economic Area Bill (HL), 2R & Com (21:10:93) 416, 421-3, 430, 432, 436, 442-6, 451, 457
Heating allowances (28:10:93) 1042, 1052, 1070
Questions
Armed forces discharges, Pregnant women 704-6w
Business questions 397
Cervical cancer, Screening 384w
House of Commons, Telephone systems 268w
Invalidity benefits, Women 6
Inverclyde enterprise zone, Planning permission 41-2w
Mental illness specific grant, Scotland 633w
Nuclear weapons tests, Australia 325-6w
Open government, Scotland 686-7w
RENAVAL, Inverclyde 384-5w
Voluntary organisations, EC grants & loans 319w
Waste disposal, Local authority powers 633-4w
Whales, Norway 966

Godsiff, Mr Roger
Questions
Sudan, Human rights 79w
Sudan, Peace negotiations 79-80w

Golding, Mrs Llin
Questions
Pensioners, Personal income 4-5

Goode Committee
see Pension Law Review Committee

Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair, Minister of State, Foreign & Commonwealth Office
Debates etc.
Vietnamese refugees (18:10:93) 124-8
Questions
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Military aircraft 83-4w
British embassies, Germany 818w
China, Law 412w
China, Marriage 414w
Conferences, Expenditure 735w
Diplomatic service, Education allowances 412-3w
Diplomatic service, Kazakhstan 665w
EC action, Departmental publications 664w
Foreign & Commonwealth Office, Government buildings 371w, 818-9w
Foreign & Commonwealth Office, Official hositality 242w

Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair—continued
Hong Kong, Family planning 414w
Hong Kong, Ivory 240-2w
Hong Kong, Nature conservation 242w, 733-4w
Kenya, British embassies 411w
North Korea, South Korea 818w
Subsidiarity 665w

Goods vehicles
Licensing 756w
Motor vehicle safety 541-2w
Motor vehicle testing 807w
Road accidents 543w
Road haulage licences 543-4w

Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Debates etc.
Defence estimates (18:10:93) 58, 91-5
Questions
Invalidity benefits, Medical examinations 1-2

Goose Bay
Air force bases 490-1w
Armed forces training 702w
Low flying 489w

Gordon, Ms Mildred
Debates etc.
Assisted Areas Orders 1993 (27:10:93) 937-8
Questions
Bed & breakfast accommodation 694w
Housing benefits, Tower Hamlets 596w
Water supply disconnections 531-2w

Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Questions
BBC 563
Hormone treatments, Women 683
IRA, Finance 319w
Nature conservation, Parks 494w

Gorman, Billy
95w

Gorst, Mr John
Questions
Bicycles, Road safety 808w
Cycling, Road accidents 808w
RAF Hendon, Land acquisition 60-2w
RAF Hendon, Listed buildings 61w

Government buildings
Attorney General 657w
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster 725w
Civil defence 728-9w
Dept for Education 297w
Dept of Employment 597w
Dept of Health 498w, 842w
Dept of the Environment 650-1w
Dept of Trade & Industry 300-1w
Dept of Transport 432w, 809w
Foreign & Commonwealth Office 371w, 818-9w
Home Office 460w
Lord Chancellor's Dept 638w
MI6 82w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 566w
Ministry of Defence 493w, 528w
Northern Ireland 817w
Northern Ireland Office 817w
Prime Minister 267w
Scotland 831-2w
Scottish Office 832w
Treasury 746w, 847-8w
Welsh Office 821w

Government car service
720w

Government departments
Accountants 269w
Cash limits 752w
Consultants 269w
Energy conservation 256-9w
Touche Ross 269-70w

Government grants to local authorities
Community care 767w

Government grants to voluntary organisations
Refugees 713w

Government grants to voluntary organisations *—continued*
Tinnitus 605w

Government shareholding
675-6w
Public utilities 426w

GP fundholders
496-7w, 600w, 676-8, 685
Finance 496-7w, 600-1w
Wales 580-7w

Graduates
Unemployment 137-8

Graham, Mr Thomas
Debates etc.
Business questions (28:10:93) 997-8
Crime (28:10:93) 1021
Defence estimates (19:10:93) 175-7, 220-2
Heating allowances (28:10:93) 1048, 1066
Questions
Local government reform, Renfrew 819-20
Wildfowl, Pest control 383w

Grant, Sir Anthony
Debates etc.
NHS administration (21:10:93) 401
Police Responsibilities & Rewards Inquiry (28:10:93) 981
Questions
EC Social Charter 145-6
Farm & conservation grants scheme 774w

Grant, Mr Bernie
Questions
Entry clearances, South Africa 146w

Grant maintained schools
436-40w, 667w
Audit 744w
Ballots 295-6w
Conferences 745-6w
Cumbria 99-101w, 745w
Devon 814-5w
Energy costs 448w
Ethnic minorities 815-6w
Finance 744-5w
Government grants 445-7w, 814-6w
Inspections 558w
Kent (21:10:93) 471-80
School population 450-2w
VAT 447-8w

Grant Maintained Schools Centre
448w, 815w
Corporate plans 816w
Government grants 814-5w
Manpower 442w

Grants for education support & training
97w

Greater London
Accident & emergency departments 316w
Air pollution 236w
Bus services 757w
Cycleways 21w
Dental services 841w
EC grants & loans 532w
Education 766-7w
Hospital beds 36w
Hospital waiting lists 834w
Hostels 86-7w
Housing construction 259-60w
Mental patients 30-1w
Nursing homes 310w
Prison escapes 551w
Prisoner escorts 551w
Road traffic control 19w
Unemployment 208w
Young offenders 146-50w
Youth unemployment 210w

Greater Manchester Police Authority
556w

Greater Manchester relief road
Environmental impact assessment 235w

Greater Nottingham Light Rapid Transit Bill 1991/92
Debates etc.
Order to proceed in next session (28:10:93) 957

Greenway, Mr Harry
Debates etc.
Business questions (18:10:93) 21, (28:10:93) 994
Education (School Teachers Pay & Conditions) (No 2) Order 1993 (26:10:93) 773
Priests (Ordination of Women) Measures 1993 (29:10:93) 1087
Questions
Business questions 396
Curriculum, Northern Ireland 375-6
Food industry, Export promotion 779w
House of Commons voting methods 405w
Housing associations, Right to buy 266
Official engagements 203-4w, 267w, 771w
Sports, Government grants 566-7
Unemployment 140
Weeds Act 1959 570w

Greenway, Mr John
Debates etc.
Police Responsibilities & Rewards Inquiry (28:10:93) 985

Greenwich
Docklands light railway 200w
Standard spending assessments (22:10:93) 481

Greenwich Healthcare NHS Trust
Tomography 835-6w

Greenwich mean time
145w

Greenwich University
Natural Resources Institute 243w

Grendon Prison
127-8w

Griffiths, Mr Nigel
Debates etc.
Waldegrave, William, Points of order (18:10:93) 20, 25
Questions
Ancient monuments, Scotland 785w
Insolvency 648w
Insolvency Service 725w
Insolvency Service, Manpower 648w
Insolvency Service, Performance standards 648w

Griffiths, Mr Win
Debates etc.
Education (School Teachers Pay & Conditions) (No 2) Order 1993 (26.10:93) 772-5, 791-2
Welsh Development Agency (19:10:93) 157
Questions
Benefits Agency district offices, Disabled workers 231-2w
Potato marketing scheme 776w
Public holidays 352w

Grocott, Mr Bruce
Questions
BBC 565-6
Vocational training, West Midlands 139

Groundwork Foundation
494w

Group 4 Securitas
117w, 457w
Civil proceedings 129w
Complaints 128-9w
Manpower 129-30w
Prison escapes 457w
Prisoner escorts 128w

Grylls, Sir Michael
Questions
Companies Registration Office (England & Wales), Press advertising 806w

Guard dogs
Prisons 115-6w

"Guide to Making Representations"
545w

Guided weapons
Defence procurement 490w, 803w

Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn, Secretary of State for the Environment
Debates etc.
Priests (Ordination of Women) Measures 1993 (29:10:93) 1088, 1100-7, 1123, 1131, 1138, 1147
Questions
Anglian Water, Water charges 274
Council tax 282-4w
Dept of the Environment, Civil service manpower 657w
Dept of the Environment, Government buildings 650-1w
Dept of the Environment, Official hospitality 256w
Local government reform 259-61
Local government reform, Isle of Wight 260
Party conferences, Security 652w
Rents to mortgages scheme 265-6
Resources conservation 249w
Standard spending assessments 250w
Sustainable development 249w
Water charges 197-8w, 274-5
Water charges, South West region 273-4
Water charges, Yorkshire & Humberside 274

Gunnell, Mr John
Debates etc.
Business questions (28:10:93) 998
NHS administration (21:10:93) 410
Police Responsibilities & Rewards Inquiry (28:10:93) 987-8
Questions
Common agricultural policy, EC budget 969
Director of Passenger Rail Franchising, Public appointments 544w
Land use, Horses 654w
Theatres, Arts finance 472w
West Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive, Rolling stock 756w

Guy's & Lewisham NHS Trust
599w

Gypsies
Caravan sites 87-8w
Police 545-6w

Habitual offenders
133w
Bail 218-9w, 239w
Young offenders 240w

Haddington
Tourist industry 480w

Hague, Mr William, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept for Social Security
Questions
Dept of Social Security, Civil servants' visits abroad 247w
Dept of Social Security, Official cars 247w
Dept of Social Security, Official hospitality 247w
Dept of Social Security, Official visits 247
Disability living allowance, Telephone services 596-7w
Disability working allowance, Social security recipients 510w
Employees' contributions, Women 328w
Invalidity benefits, Women 6
Maxwell companies, Pension funds 594-5w
Maxwell Pensioners' Trust 508-9w
National insurance contributions 845w
National insurance contributions, Community action 225w
National insurance contributions, Tax evasion 170-1w
Occupational pensions 167w
Occupational pensions, Personal pensions 167w
Pension Law Review Committee 166w, 329-30w
Pensioners, Consumer durables 595-6w
Pensioners, Energy prices 9
Pensioners, Personal income 3-5, 8-9, 164w
Pensioners, Shareholders 168-9w
Pensioners, Standard of living 12
Pensions, EC countries 222-3w
Retirement age, Sex discrimination 5-6, 168w
Retirement pensions 331w

Hague, Mr William—continued
Retirement pensions, Social security benefits rules 671w
Retirement pensions, Women 328-30w
Social security abuse 223w
Social security abuse, Identity cards 751w
Social security claims, Medical records 595-6w
Widowers' benefits 223w

Hain, Mr Peter
Debates etc.
Bombings, Northern Ireland (25:10:93) 589
Summer Time (Amendment) Bill, 1R (27:10:93) 830-1
Welsh Development Agency (19:10:93) 156
Questions
Arts finance 565
Government shareholding, Public utilities 426w
Postal deliveries, Fees & charges 577-8w

Hall, Mr Mike
Questions
Contaminated land registers 271-2
Sports competitors, Drug abuse 469-70w

Halons
91-2w

Hambros Bank
429w

Hamilton, Rt Hon Archie
Debates etc.
Defence estimates (18:10:93) 53-60, (19:10:93) 182-4

Hamilton, Mr Neil, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs
Questions
Association of Insurance & Risk Managers in Industry & Commerce 155w
Companies Registration Office (England & Wales), Press advertising 806w
Companies Registration Office (England & Wales), Privatisation 157w
Compliance cost assessments 202w
Deregulation initiative 157-8w
Deregulation initiative, Industrial health & safety 300w
Directors, Disqualifications 722w
Dept of Trade & Industry, Doyle, Patrick 578w
EC law 303w
Insolvency 648w
Insolvency Service 725w
Insolvency Service, Manpower 648w
Insolvency Service, Performance standards 648w
Newspaper press, Distributive trade 722w
Property insurance, Terrorism 302w

Hampshire
Local government reform 273

Hampson, Dr Keith
Debates etc.
Coal mining (20:10:93) 287, (27:10:93) 915

Handicap benefits
224-5w
Expenditure 3
Low incomes 171-2w

Hanley, Mr Jeremy, Minister for the Armed Forces
Debates etc.
Defence estimates (18:10:93) 114-20, (19:10:93) 162-77
Questions
Air force, Armed forces training 57-8w
Air force bases, Goose Bay 490-1w
Ammunition 63w
Ammunition, Uranium 63w, 325w, 702w
Armed forces, Accidents 726w
Armed forces, Racial discrimination 703w
Armed forces casualties, Bosnia-Herzegovina 325w
Armed forces discharges, Pregnant women 492-3w, 704-6w
Armed forces housing, Property transfer 701w

Hanley, Mr Jeremy—continued
Armed forces officers, Armed forces noncommissioned ranks 528-9w
Armed forces strength 492w
Armed forces training, Goose Bay 702w
Armed forces training, Tornado aircraft 57w
Automated low flying enquiry & notification system 60w
B52 bombers, Airmisses 528w
Ballistic missile defence, Russia 729w
Bristol University, Armed forces training 803w
Civil defence, Government buildings 728-9w
Defence advisory notices 325w
Defence expenditure 368w
Defence land, Blyth Valley 703w
Evans, Anthony, Racial harassment 62w
F15 aircraft, Aircraft noise 490w
F16 aircraft, Aircraft noise 489w
Firing ranges, Germany 484-6w
5 Airborne Brigade, Military vehicles 727-8w
Haymand, Martin, Spectacles 699w
Helicopters, Rescue services 65-8w
Hercules aircraft, Air accidents 529w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Honours 198-9w
Jaguar aircraft 702w
Low flying 50-6w, 368-9w, 486-9w, 519-26w
Low flying, Air accidents 54w, 527w
Low flying, Air force bases 59w
Low flying, Air routes 51-2w
Low flying, Air safety 52-3w
Low flying, Alaska 58w
Low flying, Canada 522-7w, 698-9w
Low flying, Clayton 523w, 525-6w
Low flying, Codes of practice 801w
Low flying, Complaints 52w, 56w
Low flying, Disclosure of information 486w
Low flying, East Lothian 800w, 802w
Low flying, F15 aircraft 53w, 56w
Low flying, Germany 699w, 726w
Low flying, Goose Bay 489w
Low flying, Harrier aircraft 51w, 488w, 526w
Low flying, Hercules aircraft 53-4w
Low flying, Highlands of Scotland 53w, 56w
Low flying, Night flying 486w
Low flying, Nimrod aircraft 487w
Low flying, North East region 55w
Low flying, Skyguard radar 56w
Low flying, Slimbridge 488w
Low flying, South Yorkshire 489w
Low flying, Tornado aircraft 53w, 55w, 523w, 527w
Low flying, Urban areas 488-9w
Low flying, USA 524-5w
Low flying, Vulcan aircraft 489w
Low flying, Weather forecasting 522w
Military aircraft 59w
Military aircraft, Air accidents 49w, 60w
Military aircraft, Air safety 60w
Military aircraft, Codes of practice 800w
Ministry of Defence, Government buildings 493w, 528w
Ministry of Defence, Official hospitality 246w
Ministry of Defence, Property transfer 701w
Ministry of Defence police 63-4w
Ministry of Defence police, Civil service agencies 327w, 490w
Ministry of Defence police, Joint consultative committees 65w
Ministry of Defence police, Police committees 64-5w, 326-7w
Ministry of Defence Police Committee of Inquiry 326-7w
NATO, Infrastructure 68-9w
Navy, Nature conservation 327w
Nuclear accidents, Firth of Clyde 802-3w
Nuclear accidents, Transport of radioactive materials 802w
Nuclear submarines, Radiation hazards 368w
Nuclear weapons, Iraq 730w
Nuclear weapons, Road freight transport 703-4w
Nuclear weapons, Russia 731w
Nuclear weapons, Transport of radioactive materials 726-7w
Nuclear weapons policy, Defence expenditure 703w
Nuclear weapons tests, Australia 325-6w
Party conferences, Security 528w
Piers, Scotland 62w

Hanley, Mr Jeremy—continued
RAF Fylingdales, Radiation hazards 63w
RAF Hendon, Land acquisition 60-2w
RAF Hendon, Listed buildings 61w
RAF Upper Heyford 702w
Red flag exercises 527-8w
Sea King helicopters, Navigational aids 491w
Shackleton aircraft, Nuclear weapons 529w
Tornado aircraft 57-8w, 490w
Tornado aircraft, Air accidents 519w, 701w
Tornado aircraft, Armed forces training 326w
Tornado aircraft, Germany 59w
Tornado aircraft, Nuclear weapons deployment 730w
US bases, Menwith Hill 484w
Weapons, Treaties 519w
World War II, Festivals & special occasions 728w

Hannam, Sir John
Questions
Arts finance 470-1w
Water charges, South West region 690-1

Hanson, Mr David
Debates etc.
Coal mining (20:10:93) 285, (27:10:93) 886-9
Questions
Tinnitus 605w
Tinnitus, Government grants to voluntary organisations 605w

Hardy, Mr Peter
Debates etc.
Coal mining (20:10:93) 282, (27:10:93) 846, 917
Defence estimates (19:10:93) 216-8, 232
Management & Administration of Safety & Health at Mines Regulations 1993 (26:10:93) 705-6, 721-5
Mine safety, Standing Order No 20 applications (18:10:93) 24
Police Responsibilities & Rewards Inquiry (28:10:93) 983
Priests (Ordination of Women) Measures 1993 (29:10:93) 1125-7
Questions
Agricultural workers, Manpower 776w
Forestry Commission, Land acquisition 659w
Social security claims, Adjudication officers 509w

Hargreaves, Mr Andrew
Debates etc.
Defence estimates (18:10:93) 79-81

Harlow Wood Orthopaedic Hospital
602w

Harmonisation of legislation
Copyright 401w

Harrier aircraft
53-5w, 702w
Falkland Islands 488w
Low flying 51w, 488w, 526w

Harris, Mr David
Debates etc.
Priests (Ordination of Women) Measures 1993 (29:10:93) 1089
Questions
Fishery decommissioning scheme 961

Harwell
Radioactive waste disposal 826w

Haselhurst, Mr Alan
Questions
Access funds 264w
VAT, Energy prices 382w
VAT, Tax yields 381w

Hasmonean School
Voluntary schools 287w

Hawkins, Mr Nick
Debates etc.
Assisted Areas Orders 1993 (27:10:93) 931-3
Education (School Teachers Pay & Conditions) (No 2) Order 1993 (26:10:93) 787
Questions
Handicap benefits, Expenditure 3

Hawkins, Mr Nick—continued
Public Trustee, Civil service agencies 793-4w

Hayes, Mr Jerry
Debates etc.
NHS administration (21:10:93) 406
Questions
GP fundholders 685

Haymand, Martin
Spectacles 699w

Hazardous wastes
Scotland 625w
Waste disposal 531w

Heald, Mr Oliver
Debates etc.
Crime (28:10:93) 1015-6
Education (School Teachers Pay & Conditions) (No 2) Order 1993 (26:10:93) 782, 788
European Economic Area Bill (HL), 2R & Com (21:10:93) 431
Questions
Accounts Services Agency 804-5w
GP fundholders 685
Home energy efficiency scheme 536w
Social security abuse 163w
Special education 559w

Health & Safety at Work Etc Act 1974
Questions
334w

Health & Safety Executive
334-5w, 366-7w, (27:10:93) 835-922
Departmental forms 334w
Deregulation initiative 335-7w

Health authorities
Budgeting 343-4w
Charitable trusts 603w
Equal opportunities 27w
Public appointments 345w

Health centres
Armagh 465w

Health education
602-3w
Drug abuse 686w
Industrial health & safety 35w
Scotland 686w
Weils disease 692w

Health hazards
Radioactive wastes 505-6w
Uranium 834w

Health physics
Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee 826w

Health Service Commissioners Bill (HL) 1992/93
Debates etc.
Order relating to Com (29:10:93) 1151-2

Health services
Down 320w, 371
Eastern Health & Social Services Board 373
Elderly 692w
Ethnic minorities 625w
Homosexuality 619w
Mentally disturbed offenders 603-4w
Scotland 619w, 625w

Heart diseases
Hospital waiting lists 619w
Morriston Hospital 579w
Scotland 619w

Heathcoat-Amory, Mr David, Minister of State, Foreign & Commonwealth Office
Questions
China, Nuclear weapons tests 206w
Council of Europe 205w
EC Committee of the Regions, Public appointments 735-8w
European Communities 412w
European Movement, Government assistance 411w
European Parliament, Buildings 82w

Heathcoat-Amory, Mr David—continued
European Parliament, Expenditure 83w
European Parliament, Operating costs 733w
European Parliament members, Members' allowances 83w
Gibraltar, Foreign policy 273w

Heathrow Airport
Railway network 26w

Heating allowances
Opposition days (28:10:93) 1039-73

Hedges incentive scheme
538-9w

Helicopters
Low flying 53-4w
Rescue services 65-8w

Henderson, Mr Doug
Questions
Council housing, Local government expenditure 720w
Housing, Local government finance 829w
Housing capital allocations 828-30w
Local education authorities, Capital investment 738-42w
Local government finance 719-20w
Personal social services, Local government expenditure 768-9w
Standard spending assessments 271
Transport, Capital investment 757-8w

Hendron, Dr Joe
Debates etc.
Bombings, Northern Ireland (25:10:93) 579-80
Human Organ Transplants (Amendments) Bill, 1R (20:10:93) 299
National Lottery Etc Bill, Lords amendts (20:10:93) 327, 339-41
Northern Ireland (22:10:93) 505, 547
Questions
Terrorism, Northern Ireland 374-5

Hendry, Mr Charles
Questions
Income support, Mortgages 845w
Local authorities, Debts 275
Pensioners, Personal income 8

Heppell, Mr John
Debates etc.
Human Organ Transplants (Amendments) Bill, 1R (20:10:93) 298-300
Questions
Pension Law Review Committee 166w

Hercules aircraft
Air accidents 529w
Low flying 53-4w

Hicks, Mr Robert
Questions
A38, Road traffic control 808w
A38, Road works 808w

Higher education
Humanities 814w
Wales 376w

Highlands & Islands Development Board
46-50w

Highlands & Islands Enterprise
46-50w

Highlands of Scotland
Low flying 53w, 55-6w
Quarrying 683w

Highways (Traffic Calming) Regulations 1993
Questions
645w

Hill, Mr James
Debates etc.
Police Responsibilities & Rewards Inquiry (28:10:93) 986
Questions
Business questions 393
Guided weapons, Defence procurement 803w

Hill livestock allowances
779w, 798-9w
Scotland 784w, 832-3w
Wales 452-3w, 782w

Hinchliffe, Mr David
Questions
Child Migrants Trust, Finance 428w
Children, Migration 503-4w
Community care 682-3
Council house sales, Local government revenue 534w
Deregulation initiative 383
Disability living allowance, Social security appeals 510w
Disability working allowance, Social security recipients 510w
Disabled facilities grants 533-4w
European Social Fund 475w
Income support, Expenditure 510w
Income support, Residential care 225-6w
Low pay, Prosecutions 477w
M1-M62 link, Road construction 342-3w
Minimum wage 365w
Nuclear weapons, Road freight transport 703-4w
Nuclear weapons policy, Defence expenditure 703w
Paternity leave 366w
Private rented housing, Right to buy 534w
Rugby, Government grants 561
Social security claims, Medical records 595-6w
Tax yields, Immobilisation of vehicles 422w
Training & enterprise councils, Expenditure 366w
Unemployment, West Yorkshire 134-5
Wages councils 354-64w

Hip replacements
308-9w

Historic buildings
City of London 471w

Historic Buildings & Monuments Commission for England
272-3w, 472-3w

History
Publications 771w

HM Chief Inspector of Schools
see Office for Standards in Education

HM Inspectorate of Pollution
536w, 651w, 823w

HM Inspectorate of Schools
292-3w

Hodgkin's disease
624-6w

Hoey, Ms Kate
Questions
County Hall 262-3

Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas, Minister of State, Foreign & Commonwealth Office
Questions
Arab boycott 412w
Arms exports, Export controls 402w
Arms to Iraq Inquiry 573w
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Military aircraft 240w
Chemical Weapon Convention 734w
Defence equipment, Exports 818w
Draskovic, Vuk, Official visits 204w
EC action, Departmental publications 817-8w
European Commission of Human Rights 411-2w
Geneva conventions 407-10w
Geneva conventions, Law of war 371w
Hong Kong, Nuclear non proliferation 665w
Human Rights Week 411w
International Atomic Energy Agency, Conferences 205w
Iraq, UN resolutions 413-4w
Iraq, Weapons 665-6w
Israel, Hostages 573w
Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty 370w
Nuclear test ban 734-5w
Nuclear weapons, Arms control 205w

Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas—continued
Saudi Arabia, Religious discrimination 273w
Sudan, Human rights 664w, 734w
UN General Assembly, Arms control 412w
Weapons, Treaties 406w, 410-1w
Yugoslavia, Official visits 204-5w
Yugoslavia, Sanctions 204w
Yugoslavia, Water pollution 204w

Hogg, Mr Norman
Questions
Local government reform, Scotland 822
New towns development corporations, Scotland 684-6w

Holdgate, Martin
647-9w

Holidays
VAT 562

Home care services
601w

Home energy efficiency scheme
536w

Home Office
20w, 552-3w
Civil service manpower 454w
Contempt of court 641w
Doyle, Patrick 389w
Government buildings 460w
Official hospitality 240w

Home Office Immigration & Nationality Department
150w

Home Robertson, Mr John
Debates etc.
Defence estimates (18:10:93) 92, 112-5
Oral question time intervention (27:10:93) 815
Questions
A1, Dual carriageways 431-2w, 617w, 639w
A1, Road accidents 618w
A1, Road traffic 617-8w
Agricultural land, East Lothian 784w
Arable area payments scheme, Scotland 689-90w
Armed forces, Accidents 726w
B6355, Snow & ice 618w
Bus services, East Lothian 622w
Defence contracts, USA 802w
Dual carriageways, Road safety 618w
Energy review 433-4w
5 Airborne Brigade, Military vehicles 328w, 727-8w
Laser-guided bombs, Defence procurement 801w
Local government reform, Scotland 631w, 813-4
Low flying, Codes of practice 801w
Low flying, East Lothian 800w, 802w
Military aircraft, Codes of practice 800w
NHS trusts, East Lothian 689w
Nuclear accidents, Firth of Clyde 802-3w
Nuclear accidents, Transport of radioactive materials 802w
Nuclear weapons, Transport of radioactive materials 726-7w
Torness power station, Planning permission 623-4w
Touche Ross, Government departments 269-70w
Tourist boards, Borders region 622w
Tourist boards, East Lothian 479-80w
Tourist industry, Haddington 480w
Tourists, Lothian 480w
Warships, Command & control 328w

Home visits
622-3w, 680-1

Homelessness
253w, 255w, 280w
Community care 498w
Lancashire 349w
Northern Ireland 381-2
Northumberland 417w
Social security recipients 846w

Homicide
Life imprisonment 106w
Racial attacks 717w

Homicide—continued
Schizophrenia 606w

Homosexuality
Health services 619w
Prisoners 391w
Sexual offences 551-2w

Hong Kong
Animal products 77w
Family planning 414w
Human rights 414w
Ivory 240-2w
Nature conservation 242w, 733-4w
Nuclear non proliferation 665w

Honours
Iraq-Kuwait conflict 198-9w

Hood, Mr Jimmy
Debates etc.
Coal mining (20:10:93) 281, (27:10:93) 856, 873, 891-3
Questions
Development agencies, Public appointments 46-50w

Hoon, Mr Geoffrey
Questions
Fish farming, Overseas trade 274w
Fish farming, Planning permission 274w

Horam, Mr John
Debates etc.
Public Accounts Committee (25:10:93) 643-5

Hormone treatments
Creutzfeldt-Jakob dementia 312w
Prescription charges 609w
Women 683-4

Horserace Totalisator Board
(20:10:93) 322-63

Horses
Agriculture 176w
Equine viral arteritis 275w
Export of live animals 275w
Land use 654w
Lee Gap 654w

Horticulture
Agricultural marketing 774w
EC action 513w
Industrial accidents 598-9w

Hospital admissions
600w

Hospital beds
Accident & emergency departments 36w
Greater London 36w
Mental patients 30-1w
Nursing homes 758w

Hospital closures
500w, 836w
Northern Ireland 318w, 321w
Omagh 373
Royal Free Hospital 610w

Hospital consultants
Merit awards 695-6w

Hospital doctors
Clothing 317-8w
Medical equipment 317-8w

Hospital patients
692w
Expenditure 498w
Industrial accidents 601w

Hospital staff
Crimes of violence 317w

Hospital waiting lists
679, 684, 695w
Greater London 834w
Heart diseases 619w
Ophthalmology 29w, 42-4w, 92-4w, 159-60w
Scotland 615-7w
Tayside Health Board 615-6w

Hospitals
Death 499w
Down 371-2, 379-80

Hospitals—continued
Downpatrick 372
Government grants 834w
Listed buildings 472w
Northern Ireland 372-3
Surgery 495w, 500w
Tobacco 502w

Hostages
Israel 573w

Hostels
Greater London 86-7w

Hotel & catering industry
560

House condition survey
Scotland 687w

House of Commons
Telephone systems 268w

House of Commons accommodation
Day care of children 346w

House of Commons broadcasting
Dept for Education 99w
Dept of Employment 71w
Dept of Health 33w
Dept of Transport 23-4w
Members' facilities 405-6w
Scottish Office 478w

House of Commons catering
233w
Members' facilities 347-8w

House of Commons Chamber
347w, 810w

House of Commons Library
669-70w

House of Commons questions
Church Commissioners 540w

House of Commons staff
Ecclesiastical Committee 540w

House of Commons Standing orders
Private bills (26:10:93) 671

House of Commons times of sittings
Costs 347w

House of Commons voting methods
405w

House renovation grants
Lancashire 829-30w

Housing
414-5w
Bishops 72-8w
Community care 266w, 345w
Lancashire 349-50w
Lead pipes 690-1w
Local government finance 829w
Personal income 756w
Rural areas 643w
Wales 643w

Housing Act 1985
Questions
Law reform 280w

Housing & handicapped
Wales 578-9w

Housing association grant
267-8

Housing associations
Ealing 266
Housing construction 267-8
Lone parent families 348w
Right to buy 266-7

Housing benefits
Social security benefits rates 168w, 509-10w
Social security recipients 164-5w, 509w
Tower Hamlets 596w
Young people 845-6w

Housing capital allocations
828-30w

Housing construction
Community care 281w
East Sussex 261-2
Greater London 259-60w
Housing associations 267-8
Lancashire 417w
Planning permission 417w

Housing Corporation
86-7w

Housing estates
Liverpool 92w

Housing for Wales
578-9w
Finance 578w

Housing insulation
Government grants 686w
Scotland 686w

Housing investment programmes
Lancashire 536-8w

Housing standards
Dampness 820w
Multiple occupation 254w
Scotland 823-6
Wales 820w

Howard, Michael
Today Programme 272w

***Howard, Rt Hon Michael**, Secretary of State for the Home Department*
Debates etc.
Police Responsibilities & Rewards Inquiry, Ministerial statements (28:10:93) 975-89
Questions
British citizenship, War widows 222w
Exclusion orders, Appeals 145w
Home Office, Civil service manpower 454w
Home Office, Contempt of court 641w
Home Office, Doyle, Patrick 389w
Home Office, Government buildings 460w
Home Office, Official hospitality 240w
Howard, Michael, Today Programme 272w
Telephone tapping 458-9w
Terrorism 218w
Terrorism, Stop & search 220w
West Yorkshire 551w
Wymott Prison, Prison riots 271-2w

Howarth, Mr George
Questions
Owner occupied housing 266-7
Public appointments, Dept of Social Security 171w

Howe of Aberavon, RtHonLord
573w

Howell, Rt Hon David
Debates etc.
Bombings, Northern Ireland (25:10:93) 585

Howell, Sir Ralph
Questions
Agricultural production 190w
Agricultural products, Prices 187w
Agriculture, Public expenditure 182-3w
Cereals, Agricultural production 185w
Cereals, Co-responsibility levy 184-6w
Cereals, Exports 185w
Child benefit 676w
Common agricultural policy 965
Common agricultural policy, Expenditure 186-8w
Food prices 10w, 189w
Income tax, Low incomes 14w, 427w
Income tax, Tax allowances 14w
Social security benefits, Expenditure 377w
UK contributions to EC budget 14w
Wheat, Farm incomes 172-3w
Wheat, Imports 185-6w
Wheat, Prices 188w, 563-4w

Howells, Dr Kim
Debates etc.
Public Accounts Committee (25:10:93) 593, 607-8, 638-43
Welsh Development Agency (19:10:93) 155-6

***Howells, Dr Kim**—continued*
Questions
Anthrax, Treforest 820-1w
Citizen's charter 570
Coastal protection, Repairs & maintenance 775w

Hoyle, Mr Doug
Questions
Blakenhurst Prison, LSD 455w
Blakenhurst Prison, Prison discipline 455w
Blakenhurst Prison, Prison employment 456w
Blakenhurst Prison, Prison staff 455-6w
Family doctors, Equal opportunities 27-8w
Mental patients 603w
Prison population 127w
Risley Remand Centre 149-50w
Rolling stock, Leaseback arrangements 428-9w
West coast railway line 429w
Wolds Remand Prison, Prison population 126-7w

Hughes, Mr Kevin
Debates etc.
Coal mining (20:10:93) 292-3, (27:10:93) 862
Management & Administration of Safety & Health at Mines Regulations 1993 (26:10:93) 730-2, 735
Questions
Child Support Agency 753w
Child Support Agency, Performance standards 753w
Maintenance, Children 752-3w

Hughes, Mr Robert
Questions
Housing insulation, Government grants 686w
Housing standards, Scotland 823

Hughes, Mr Roy
Debates etc.
Welsh Development Agency (19:10:93) 154
Questions
Hospital patients, Industrial accidents 601w
Industrial relations 210w
Ministers' visits abroad, Costs 590w
Motorways, Road traffic 808w

Hughes, Mr Simon
Debates etc.
Business questions (18:10:93) 21
Coal mining (27:10:93) 848, 860-6, 915
Priests (Ordination of Women) Measures 1993 (29:10:93) 1112-6, 1120
Questions
Business questions 390-1
Drift nets, EC law 778-9w
Education, Ethnic minorities 666-7w
Environmental policy, Scotland 686w
Football, Millwall 471w
Guy's & Lewisham NHS Trust 599w
Prosecutions 14
Radioactive wastes, Health hazards 505-6w
Railway network, East Sussex 433w
Road works, East Sussex 430w
Sellafield, Radiation hazards 771w
Sustainable development 249w
THORP 263-4

Hull Prison
Special category prisoners 151w

Human Organ Transplants (Amendments) Bill 1992/93
Debates etc.
1R (20:10:93) 298-300

Human organs
(20:10:93) 298-300

Human rights
China 414w
Hong Kong 414w
India 80-1w
Sudan 79w, 664w, 734w

Human Rights (No 3) Bill 1992/93
Debates etc.
1R (19:10:93) 158

Human Rights Week
411w

Humanities
Higher education 814w

Humber Bridge Bill (HL) 1991/92
Debates etc.
Order to proceed in next session (28:10:93) 957

Hume, John
(22:10:93) 483-550

Hume, Mr John
Debates etc.
Northern Ireland (22:10:93) 521, 524-30
Questions
Hospital closures, Omagh 373

***Hunt, Rt Hon David**, Secretary of State for Employment*
Debates etc.
Coal mining (27:10:93) 913-8
Questions
Business start-up scheme 208w
EC Labour & Social Affairs Council 211-2w
EC Social Charter 131
Economic situation, Northern region 131-2
Employment opportunities, Northern region 131
Employment Service Agency 211w
European works councils 136-7
Factories, Workington 132
Iron & steel industry, Factory closures 137
Manufacturing industries, Manpower 130-1
Public holidays 352w
Unemployment 140
Unemployment, Blyth Valley 140-1
Vocational training 139
Vocational training, West Midlands 139
Vocational training, Young people 138-9
Working hours 208-9w
Youth unemployment 139-40

Hunter, Mr Andrew
Debates etc.
Bombings, Northern Ireland (25:10:93) 583
Northern Ireland (22:10:93) 512-4
Questions
Training for work 210w

Hurd, Douglas
708w

***Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas**, Secretary of State for Foreign & Commonwealth Affairs*
Questions
Aid financed trade 812w
Aid financed trade, Expenditure 732w
EC Foreign Affairs Council 206-7w
Iraq, Chemical weapons 666w
Malaysia, Aid financed trade 732w
MI6, Government buildings 82w
Special Operations Executive, Public records 242w

Hutton, Mr John
Debates etc.
Defence estimates (18:10:93) 95-9
Questions
Civil defence, Government buildings 728-9w
Defence procurement 728w
Grant maintained schools, Cumbria 99-101w
Grant maintained schools, Finance 745w
Kirbie Kendal School, Special education 746w
Pupil-teacher ratios 743-4w

Hydrochlorofluorocarbons
90-1w

Hydro-Electric
see Scottish Hydro Electric

Hygiene
Dental services 693w

Hypothermia
Death 842w

Identity cards
714w, 971
Social security abuse 751w

Illsley, Mr Eric
Debates etc.
Coal mining (20:10:93) 291-2
Management & Administration of Safety & Health at Mines Regulations 1993 (26:10:93) 710-1, 716, 723, 727, 732-5

Illsley, Mr Eric—continued
Questions
House of Commons catering, Members' facilities 347-8w
Residential care 601w
Sheltered employment 599w

Immigrant detainees
Political refugees 458w

Immigration
Disclosure of information 150w

Immigration applications
Administrative delays 85w
Indian subcontinent 85w
Political refugees 239w

Immobilisation of vehicles
Tax yields 422w

Import duties
Agricultural products 514-6w

Import of live animals
564w
Disease control 564-5w
Ostriches 563-4w

Imports
Coal 576w
Electricity 575-6w
Fireworks 599w
Wheat 185-6w
Wild animals 414w
Wines 421w

Ince B power station
651w

Incinerators
Clinical wastes 654w
Waste disposal 654-5w, 824w

Income support
Cunninghame 168w
Expenditure 510w
Mortgages 845w
Residential care 225-6w, 787w, 789w, 791-2w, 846w
Social security benefits reductions 226w
Social security recipients 164-5w, 168w, 780-1w
Take-up 5
Voluntary unemployment 226w
Wales 780-1w
Young people 5

Income Support (General) Amendment No 3 Regulations 1993
Debates etc.
(25:10:93) 590

Income tax
Actors 675w
Debts written off 750w
Low incomes 14w, 427w
Self-employed 675-6w
Tax allowances 14w
Tax rates & bands 571-2w, 749-51w
Tax thresholds 377w
Tax yields 422-3w, 427w, 673-4w, 849-50w

Income tax on investment incomes
10-1w

Independent Living 1993 Fund
Local government functions 594w

Independent Living Extension Fund
594w

Independent Television Commission
470w

India
Foreign policy 732-3w
Human rights 80-1w
Overseas aid 812w

Indian subcontinent
Immigration applications 85w

Industrial accidents
Agriculture 598-9w
Horticulture 598-9w

Industrial accidents—continued
Hospital patients 601w

Industrial development
Northern Ireland 380-1

Industrial disablement benefits
Social security claims 511w

Industrial health & safety
Deregulation initiative 300w
Fertilisers 374w
Health education 35w
Inspections 334-5w
Passive smoking 474-5w
Pesticide residues 177w
Small businesses 366-7w
Smoking 475w

Industrial injuries scheme
Shipbuilding 846w

Industrial relations
210w

Industrial tribunals
Disclosure of information 248w

Infanticide
China 664w
Tibet 664w

Infectious diseases
Serbia 265-6w

Inflation
972

Information services
Scottish Office 783w
United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority 153w

Information technology
Contracts for services 572-3
London Ambulance Service 312w

Infrastructure
NATO 68-9w

Ingram, Mr Adam
Questions
Hospital closures, Northern Ireland 318w
New towns development corporations, Scotland 821-2

Injuries
Police 387w

Inland Revenue
150w

Inner London boroughs
Family doctors 695w
Primary health care 695w

Insolvency
648w

Insolvency Service
725w
Manpower 648w
Performance standards 648w

Institute for European Environmental Policy
279-80w

Institute of Environmental Assessment
194w

Insurance
Chronically sick 14w

Integrated administration & control system
689-90w

Integrated pollution control
Fees & charges 536w

"Interaction of the Body with Radio Emissions from Hand Held Transceivers"
574w

Interception warrants
458-9w

Interest payments
845w

Intergovernmental conference
THORP 467w

International Atomic Energy Agency
154-5w, 400-1w
Conferences 205w
Nuclear weapons 700w

International classification of diseases
838-9w

International cooperation
Nuclear accidents 436w

International Labour Organisation
69w
Agriculture 777w

International Planned Parenthood Federation
UK contributions 662-3w

International Plutonium Management Study Committee
575w

International Whaling Commission
276w

Interpreters
British embassies 78w

Intervention prices
Cereals 567w
Sugar 192w

Intervention stocks
Beef 372-3w
Butter 568w
Cereals 567-8w, 817w
Milk 568w

Invalidity benefits
3
Edinburgh 225w
Expenditure 510w
Medical examinations 1-2, 223-4w, 230-1w
Northern Ireland 790w
Research 378w
Social security appeals 224w
Social security claims 790w
Social security recipients 168w, 224-5w, 670-1w
Voluntary work 846w
Women 6

Inverclyde
RENAVAL 384-5w

Inverclyde District Council
Waste disposal 633-4w

Inverclyde enterprise zone
Planning permission 41-2w

Inverclyde Royal Hospital
Cervical cancer 384w

Investment income
10-1w

Ionica L3
647w

IRA
(22:10:93) 483-550, (25:10:93) 577-90
Finance 319w

Iran
Bahai sect 84-5w

Iraq
Arms trade 143
Chemical weapons 666w
Marsh Arabs 971
Nuclear weapons 730w
UN resolutions 413-4w
Weapons 665-6w

Iraq-Kuwait conflict
Honours 198-9w
Radiation hazards 85w

Irish Sea
Pollution monitoring 87w
Radioactive waste disposal 87w

Iron & steel Employees' readaptation benefits scheme
804w

Iron & steel industry
Factory closures 137
Rotherham 137

Irvine Development Corporation
684-6w

Isle of Man
Driving 146w, 460w

Isle of Wight
Local government reform 260, (25:10:93) 663-70
Mink 177-9w, 181-2w

Islington Health Authority
Contracts for services 316w

Israel
Hostages 573w

Ivory
Hong Kong 240-2w

***Jack, Mr Michael**, Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries & Food*
Questions
Agricultural land, Alternative energy 274w
Agricultural production 190w
Agricultural products, Import duties 514-6w
Agricultural products, Prices 187w
Agricultural workers, Manpower 776w
Agriculture, Public expenditure 182-3w
Apples, Agricultural marketing 780w
Arable area payments scheme 515-6w
Beef premiums 515w
Bristol Channel, Sewage 566-7w
Butter, Intervention stocks 568w
Cereals, Agricultural production 185w
Cereals, Co-responsibility levy 184-6w
Cereals, Exports 185w
Cereals, Intervention prices 567w
Cereals, Intervention stocks 567-8w
Cetaceans, Nature conservation 569-70w
Cetaceans, North Sea 275w
Common agricultural policy, Expenditure 186-8w, 372w
Common fisheries policy 961-2
Dairy farming 772w
Dolphins, Drift nets 660-1w
Drift nets, EC law 778-9w
EC Fisheries Council 277w
Environment, Statistics 275w
Farm & conservation grants scheme 774w
Fish conservation 774w, 962-3
Fish farming, Overseas trade 274w
Fish farming, Planning permission 274w
Fisheries, EC law 373w
Fisheries, Norway 966-7
Fishery decommissioning scheme 960-2
Fishery protection, EC countries 371-2w
Fishing vessels, Decommissioning 960-1
Fishing vessels, Licensing 190w
Fishing vessels, Prosecutions 189-90w
Food industry, Export promotion 779w
Food prices 189w
Forestry, Agricultural land 512-3w
Forestry Commission, Land acquisition 659w
Forests, Land acquisition 561-2w
Hill livestock allowances 779w
Horses, Agriculture 176w
Horticulture, Agricultural marketing 774w
Horticulture, EC action 513w
International Labour Organisation, Agriculture 777w
Livestock, Fences 175-6w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food, Civil service agencies 173-5w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food, Contracts for services 176w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food, Departmental publications 173w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food, Doyle, Patrick 373w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food, Government buildings 566w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food, Non-departmental public bodies 261w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food, Official hospitality 661w
***Jack, Mr Michael**—continued*
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food, Small businesses 176-7w
Peat, Nature conservation 566w
Potato marketing scheme 776w
Processed food 773w
Radioactive waste disposal, Sea pollution 661w
School milk, EC grants & loans 182w, 274-5w
Sea pollution, Radioactive waste disposal 512w
Seals, Fishing gear 512w
Sellafield, Radiation hazards 771w
Sellafield, Sea pollution 661w
Set-aside schemes 567w, 659-60w
Set-aside schemes, Nature conservation 203w, 659w
Set-aside schemes, Peat bogs 566w
Sheep premiums 772w
Slaughterhouses 182w
Stoke Park Wood, Land acquisition 567w
Sugar, Intervention prices 192w
THORP 260w
UN Economic Commission for Europe, Agriculture 189w
Water resources, Nitrates 773w
Weeds Act 1959 570w
Whales, Nature conservation 276w, 772w
Whales, Norway 276w, 966-7
Wheat, Farm incomes 172-3w
Wheat, Imports 185-6w
Wheat, Prices 188w, 563-4w
Worth Moor pumping station 190-2w

Jackson, Ms Glenda
Debates etc.
Priests (Ordination of Women) Measures 1993 (29:10:93) 1141-2
Questions
Home care services 601w

Jackson, Mrs Helen
Questions
"A-Z of Quality: a Guide to Quality Initiatives in the NHS" 35w
Equal opportunities 209-10w
Hormone treatments, Prescription charges 609w
Hospitals, Downpatrick 372
Local government reform 260
Severn Trent Water, Water meters 534w
Water meters 534w, 826w
Water supply disconnections 828-9w

Jaguar aircraft
53-5w, 702w

Jamaica
Capital punishment 96w

Jamieson, Mr David
Debates etc.
Defence estimates (18:10:93) 102-5
Questions
Grant maintained schools, Energy costs 448w
Grant maintained schools, Government grants 447w, 814-6w
Grant maintained schools, VAT 447-8w
MFV Pescado, Shipping accidents 640w
Outdoor education, Safety 449w
Uniform business rate, Government grants 814w

Janner, Mr Greville
Questions
Palestine Liberation Organisation, Overseas aid 18

Japan
Ministers' visits abroad 96w
THORP 575w

Jenkin, Mr Bernard
Debates etc.
European Economic Area Bill (HL), 2R & Com (21:10:93) 416, 432-4, 437, 455
Questions
Compliance cost assessments 202w
Diplomatic service, Kazakhstan 665w
Economic situation 386
European works councils 136-7
***Jenkin, Mr Bernard**—continued*
Invalidity benefits, Research 378w
Iron & steel Employees' readaptation benefits scheme 804w
Maintenance, Children 10
Subsidiarity 665w
Tourist industry, Deregulation initiative 559

Jenkins Committee
see NHS Management Functions & Manpower Review

Jessel, Mr Toby
Questions
BBC 564
Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art, Annual reports 573w

Jetstream aircraft
245w
Defence procurement 68w

Jobclubs
North West region 209w

Jobplan workshops
208w

Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Debates etc.
Defence estimates (18:10:93) 38, (19:10:93) 205-7

Johnston, Sir Russell
Questions
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Military aircraft 83-4w, 240w
NHS trusts, Scotland 688w

Joint consultative committees
Ministry of Defence police 65w

Joint Environmental Markets Unit
574-5w

Joint ventures
274w

Jones, Mr Barry
Debates etc.
Defence estimates (19:10:93) 171-2
Welsh Development Agency (19:10:93) 154-5
Questions
GP fundholders 600w
Water resources, Nitrates 773w

***Jones, Mr Gwilym**, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Welsh Office*
Questions
Ambulance services, Manpower 323w
Ambulance services, Performance standards 322-4w
Anthrax, Treforest 820-1w
Asbestos, Land pollution 158w
Dental services, Wales 579w
Diabetes, Wales 580w
European Medicines Evaluation Agency, Cardiff 323-4w
Eye tests, Wales 782w
Housing & handicapped, Wales 578-9w
Housing for Wales, Finance 578w
Housing standards, Dampness 820w
Local government constituencies, Wales 579-80w
Morriston Hospital, Heart diseases 579w
NHS internal market, Wales 158w
NHS trusts, Annual reports 580w
NHS trusts, Wales 580-7w
Ophthalmology, Hospital waiting lists 159-60w
Urban investment grant, Wales 587-8w
Waste disposal, Local authority powers 820w
Water pollution, Cardiff Bay 161-2w
Water supply disconnections, Wales 451-2w
Wrexham Maelor Hospital, Expenditure 163w
Wylfa power station, Radiation hazards 162-3w

Jones, Gwyn
(19:10:93) 147-58, (25:10:93) 591-662

Jones, Mr Ieuan Wyn
Questions
Community care, Care assessment 498w
Community care, Homelessness 498w
Community care, Housing 266w, 345w

Jones, Mr Ieuan Wyn—*continued*
Health services, Elderly 692w
Horses, Agriculture 176w
Housing for Wales, Finance 578w
Life expectancy 605w
Livestock, Fences 175-6w
Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty 370w
Nuclear safeguards 400-1w
Older workers, Training 476w
Public sector employment, Age discrimination 476w
Residential care 601w
Sheep premiums 772w
Transport of animals, Animal welfare 660w, 773w
Travel, Surveys 431w
Youth training, Wales 645w

Jones, Dr Lynne
Questions
BBC, Radio engineering 102w
Birmingham Education Authority 558w
Employees' contributions, Women 328w
Know-how Fund 661-2w
Local government constituencies, Metropolitan districts 88w
Low pay, Women 210w
Mental illness specific grant 31w
Retirement pensions, Social security benefits rules 671w
Retirement pensions, Women 328-30w
Social Security Appeal Tribunals 330w
Social security appeals 377w
Take-up of employment, West Midlands 71-2w
Vacancies 477w
Vacancies, Birmingham 597-8w
Youth employment, Birmingham 772w

Jones, Mr Martyn
Questions
Conservative Party, Companies political contributions 384-5

Jones, Mr Robert B
Questions
Standard spending assessments 270-1

Jowell, Ms Tessa
Debates etc.
NHS administration (21:10:93) 410
Questions
Centre for Young Musicians 203w
European Social Fund, Ethnic minorities 772w
Mental patients, Hospital beds 30-1w
Pakistan, Capital punishment 411w

Jubilee line
(28:10:93) 995-6
Construction 341w, 641w, 810w

Judges
637w
Crown courts 6w
Pay 6w

Judgments
West Midlands Police 578w

Junior hospital doctors
Working hours 609w, 766-7w, 834-5w

Juries
219w

Justices clerks
418-9w

Kashmir
Foreign policy 733w

Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Debates etc.
Defence estimates (18:10:93) 33, 52, (19:10:93) 194-9
Questions
Jamaica, Capital punishment 96w

Kazakhstan
Diplomatic service 665w

Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Debates etc.
Business questions (28:10:93) 993
Crime (28:10:93) 1[illegible]
Defence estimates (19:10:93) 167, 174, 236

Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine—*continued*
Education (School Teachers Pay & Conditions) (No 2) Order 1993 (26:10:93) 778, 780, 784
Oral question time intervention (20:10:93) 272
Priests (Ordination of Women) Measures 1993 (29:10:93) 1130, 1146
Questions
Arms to Iraq Inquiry 571-2
GP fundholders 677-8
THORP 263
Unemployment, Lancaster 129-30

Kent
Education (21:10:93) 471-80
Grant maintained schools (21:10:93) 471-80
Probation committees 454w

Kent County Council
(21:10:93) 471-80

Kenya
British embassies 411w
British residents abroad 370w
Children 662w
Overseas aid 731w
Refugees 731w

Key, Mr Robert, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept of Transport
Debates etc.
Wing bypass (19:10:93) 255-8
Questions
A1, Dual carriageways 431-2w, 639w
A1-M1 Link, Road construction 639w
A38, Road traffic control 808w
A38, Road works 808w
Bicycles, Road safety 808w
Birmingham relief road 430w
Buses, Motor vehicle safety 544w
Cars, Repairs & maintenance 541w
Cycling, Road accidents 808w
Cycling, Road safety education 22w
Drinking & driving 556w
Driving instruction, Motorways 22w
Driving licences, Mental health 16w
Goods vehicles, Road haulage licences 543-4w
Greater Manchester relief road, Environmental impact assessment 235w
"Guide to Making Representations" 545w
Laybys, Litter 430w
Lorries, Axle weights 27w
Lorries, Licensing 431w
Lorry drivers, Working hours 25w
M20, Road construction 807w
M25, Motorways 18-9w
M25, Road works 18w
Motor vehicle safety, Prohibition notices 431w
Motor vehicle testing, Goods vehicles 807w
Motor vehicles, Alcoholic drinks 544-5w
Motorway service areas, Aids for handicapped 298-9w
Motorways, Porous asphalt 431w
Motorways, Road traffic 808w
Orange badge scheme 21w
Parking offences 22w
Road accidents, Casualties 16w
Road construction, Pennines 807w
Road haulage licences 541-2w, 756w
Road safety 16w
Road safety, Research 809w
Road tolls 429w
Road transport workers, Driving licences 542-3w, 639-40w, 757w
Road works, East Sussex 430w
Roads, Expenditure 26-7w
Sowerby bridge, Road accidents 545w
Tractors, Road accidents 17w
Tractors, Road safety 17-8w
Tractors, Road tax 17w
Traffic areas, Civil service agencies 545w
Transport & Road Research Laboratory, Privatisation 809w
Transport of hazardous materials, Labelling 299w
Travel, Surveys 431w
Vehicle Inspectorate, Fees & charges 432w
Village Speed Control Working Group 428w

Khabra, Mr Piara S
Questions
Dentists, Pay 610w

Khan, Amanullah
396

Kidderminster
Vocational training 137

Kidney patients
610w

Kilfedder, Sir James
Debates etc.
Bombings, Northern Ireland (25:10:93) 582
Northern Ireland (22:10:93) 501-3
Residential care, Public petitions (22:10:93) 482
Questions
Anglo-Irish talks 377

Kilfoyle, Mr Peter
Debates etc.
National Lottery Etc Bill, Lords amendts (20:10:93) 326-7, 331

King's Cross Railways Bill 1991/92
Debates etc.
Order to proceed in next session (28:10:93) 957

Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Debates etc.
Defence estimates (18:10:93) 30

Kirbie Kendal School
Special education 746w

Kirkstall Valley
Planning permission 282w

Kirkwood, Mr Archy
Debates etc.
Business questions (28:10:93) 992
Questions
Arable area payments scheme, Scotland 631-3w
Local government reform, Berwickshire 630-1w, 815
Scotland's Travelling People Advisory Committee 482w
Scotland's Travelling People Advisory Committee, Public appointments 482w
Scottish Environment Protection Agency 629-30w
Sheep premiums, Scotland 482-3w, 630w
Travelling people, Caravan sites 480-2w
Travelling people, Scotland 480w

Knapman, Mr Roger
Debates etc.
Business questions (28:10:93) 996
European Economic Area Bill (HL), Order relating to Com (20:10:93) 317
Questions
EC action, Departmental publications 664w
Pensioners, Personal income 9
Security Facilities Executive 194w
Social security benefits 164w

Knight, Mrs Angela
Questions
Legal aid scheme, Expenditure 265w
Personal pensions 225w
Prosecutions 14
USA, Citizen's charter 569
Young offenders, Sentencing 383

Knight, Dame Jill
Debates etc.
NHS administration (21:10:93) 403
St Philip's College Birmingham (26:10:93) 800-1
Questions
Hospital waiting lists 679
Medical profession, Pay 693-4w
Opticians, Family health services authorities 606w
Opticians, Pay 606w, 608w

Know-how Fund
16, 661-2w

Knox, Sir David
Questions
Council house sales 252w
Dairy farming 772w
European Regional Development Fund, Scotland 687w
NHS finance 602w
Primary education, Cost per pupil 444-6w
Stoke on Trent City Council, Commissions for local administration 822-3w

KONVER programme
303-4w, 645w, 700-1w, 803w

Kosovo
204w

Kynoch, Mr George
Debates etc.
Heating allowances (28:10:93) 1056-9, 1064
Questions
Forestry Commission, Privatisation 783w
NHS, Performance standards 602w
NHS trusts, Scotland 811-2
Radon gas, Deeside 825
Take-up of employment 207w

Labelling
Transport of hazardous materials 299w

Labour Party
239-40w

Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Debates etc.
Assisted Areas Orders 1993 (27:10:93) 930-1
Questions
Ozone layer, Air pollution control 253w
Tourist industry, Deregulation initiative 559-60

Lambeth Borough Council
Children in care 603w

Lamont, Norman
(25:10:93) 591-662

Lanarkshire
Economic situation 687w

Lancashire
Council house waiting lists 349w
Council housing 348-9w
Homelessness 349w
House renovation grants 829-30w
Housing 349-50w
Housing construction 417w
Housing investment programmes 536-8w
Local government revenue 348-9w
Low pay 129-30, (28:10:93) 1074-80
Vacancies 598w

Lancaster
Unemployment 129-30

Land acquisition
Forestry 816
Forestry Commission 659w
Forests 561-2w
RAF Hendon 60-2w
Stoke Park Wood 567w

Land ownership & tenure
Foreign companies in UK 424w
Northern Ireland 530w
Optical fibres 574w

Land pollution
Asbestos 158w
Civil liability 278w

Land Registry Office
Contracts for services 797w
Ordnance Survey 416w

Land use
Horses 654w

Landlords
Private rented housing 415w

***Lang, Rt Hon Ian**, Secretary of State for Scotland*
Questions
British Aerospace, Redundancy 809
Convention of Scottish Local Authorities 813

***Lang, Rt Hon Ian**—continued*
Economic situation, Scotland 809-11
Forestry Commission, Privatisation 782-3w
Government buildings, Scotland 831-2w
Local enterprise companies, Expenditure 810
Local government constituencies, Scotland 682w
Local government reform, Aberdeen 819
Local government reform, Ayrshire 820
Local government reform, Berwickshire 819
Local government reform, Renfrew 819-20
Local government reform, Scotland 682w, 813-4, 818-20, 822
New towns development corporations, Scotland 684-6w, 821-2
Official hospitality, Scottish Office 483w
Open government, Scotland 686-7w
"Scotland in the Union Partnership for Good" 683w
"Scotland in the Union Partnership for Good, Publicity 624w
Scottish Office, Civil service manpower 785w
Scottish Office, Government buildings 832w
Scottish Office, House of Commons broadcasting 478w
Scottish Office, Information services 783w
Shellfish, Food contamination 625-8w
Unemployment, Scotland 810
Working hours, Agricultural workers 613w

Langlands review
see NHS Management Functions & Manpower Review

Languages education
Ethnic minorities 448w

Lappel Bank
534-5w

Laser-guided bombs
Defence procurement 801w

Law
China 412w

Law of war
Geneva conventions 371w

Law Officers' Dept
see Attorney General

Law reform
Housing Act 1985 280w
Tenant farmers 773w

Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Debates etc.
Crime (28:10:93) 1018-22
National Lottery Etc Bill, Lords amendts (20:10:93) 330, 341-3, 352, 362-3
Police Responsibilities & Rewards Inquiry (28:10:93) 982
Questions
Air travel, Security 640w
British citizenship, War widows 222w
Business questions 392
Copyright, Harmonisation of legislation 401w
Wymott Prison, Prison riots 271-2w

Laybys
Litter 430w

Lead free petrol
Official cars 720w

Lead pipes
Housing 690-1w
Scotland 690-1w

Lead pollution
Pollution control 532w

Leader of the House of Commons
Parliamentary questions 811w

Leaseback arrangements
Rolling stock 428-9w

Leasehold housing
Advisory services 194w, 831w

Leasehold Reform Housing & Urban Development Act 1993
Questions
194w, 831w

Lee Gap
Horses 654w

Leeds
NHS Management Executive 696w
Social Security Benefits Agency 379w

Leeds Development Corporation
282w

Legal aid scheme
797w
Expenditure 265w, 637w

Legal costs
Contempt of court 641w

Legg, Mr Barry
Questions
Local government services, Contracts for services 256w

Lehman Brothers
594-5w

***Lennox-Boyd, Mr Mark**, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Foreign & Commonwealth Office*
Questions
Aid financed trade 16-8, 102w
Aid financed trade, Codes of practice 811w
Angola, Peace negotiations 812w
Antarctic, Environment protection 81w
Asia, Nuclear non proliferation 81w
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Overseas aid 102w
British embassies, Cyprus 84w
British embassies, Interpreters 78w
China, Family planning 662-3w
China, Infanticide 664w
China, Prisoners 80w
Commonwealth Institute, Finance 811w
El Salvador, Electoral register 79w
Ethiopia, Development aid 242-3w
Falkland Islands, Mining 82w
Family planning, UK contributions 663w
France, Nuclear weapons tests 80w
Hong Kong, Animal products 77w
Immigration applications, Administrative delays 85w
India, Foreign policy 732-3w
India, Human rights 80-1w
International Planned Parenthood Federation, UK contributions 662-3w
Iran, Bahai sect 84-5w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Radiation hazards 85w
Kashmir, Foreign policy 733w
Kenya, British residents abroad 370w
Kenya, Children 662w
Kenya, Refugees 731w
Know-how Fund 16, 661-2w
Natural Resources Institute, Greenwich University 243w
Nicaragua, Overseas aid 103w
Overseas aid 17-20, 811-2w
Overseas aid, Forest protection 102w
Pakistan, Capital punishment 411w
Pakistan, Overseas aid 812w
Palestine Liberation Organisation, Overseas aid 18
Partnership for change, Conferences 265w
Serbia, Infectious diseases 265-6w
Serbia, Sanctions 266w
Subsidiarity 82w
Sudan, Human rights 79w
Sudan, Overseas aid 102w
Sudan, Peace negotiations 79-80w
Thailand, Visas 85w
Tibet, Family planning 663-4w
Treaty on European Union 79w
UN High Commissioner for Refugees, UK contributions 103w
UN Mission for a Referendum in Western Sahara 80w
Vanunu, Mordechai 79w
Yugoslavia, Overseas aid 103w, 418w

Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation Bill 1992/93
Debates etc.
Order to proceed in next session (26:10:93) 671-4, (27:10:93) 805-8, (28:10:93) 953-6

Lewis, Mr Terry
Questions
Greater Manchester relief road, Environmental impact assessment 235w
Pensioners, Personal income 164w

Lewisham
Crimes of violence 144w
Criminal statistics 143-4w
Docklands light railway 200w
Young offenders 146-50w

Libraries
Wolds Remand Prison 117-8w

Libyan Arab Republic
730w

Licensing laws
456w
Scotland 820-1

Lidington, Mr David
Debates etc.
Wing bypass (19:10:93) 254-5
Questions
Forestry, Access to countryside 815-6
Pensioners, Personal income 164w
Special education, Codes of practice 559-60w
Tenant farmers, Law reform 773w

Life expectancy
605w
Police 386w, 546w

Life imprisonment
Homicide 106w
Prisoners' release 105w

***Lilley, Rt Hon Peter**, Secretary of State for Social Security*
Questions
Handicap benefits, Expenditure 3
Invalidity benefits 3
Invalidity benefits, Medical examinations 1-2
Personal pensions 11-2
Social security abuse 163w

Listed buildings
Hospitals 472w
RAF Hendon 61w

Literacy
101w, 813w
Government grants 738w

Litter
Laybys 430w
Northern Ireland 789-90w

Liverpool
Empty housing 251w
Housing estates 92w
Ministers' domestic visits 89-90w

Livestock
Fences 175-6w

Livingston Development Corporation
684-6w

Livingstone, Mr Ken
Debates etc.
Northern Ireland (22:10:93) 489, 547-8
Questions
Animal welfare, Transport of animals 968

***Lloyd, Mr Peter**, Minister of State, Home Office*
Debates etc.
National Lottery Etc Bill, Lords amendts (20:10:93) 332, 334, 350-1, 357-62
Questions
Blakenhurst Prison, Crimes of violence 105w
Blakenhurst Prison, Inspections 716w
Blakenhurst Prison, LSD 455w
Blakenhurst Prison, Prison discipline 237w, 455w
Blakenhurst Prison, Prison employment 456w
Blakenhurst Prison, Prison riots 715-6w
Blakenhurst Prison, Prison staff 455-6w, 716w
Category A prisoners 213w
Computer privacy 716-7w

***Lloyd, Mr Peter**—continued*
Crimes of violence, Prison population 642w
Electoral register, Publicity 271w
Emergency planning, Government grants 386w
Ethnic minorities, Local government finance 713w
European Parliament constituencies, Wales 589-90w
Fine defaulters, Prisoners 132-3w, 388-90w
Group 4 Securitas, Civil proceedings 129w
Group 4 Securitas, Manpower 129-30w
Group 4 Securitas, Prison escapes 457w
Group 4 Securitas, Prisoner escorts 128w
Hull Prison, Special category prisoners 151w
Licensing laws 456w
Life imprisonment, Homicide 106w
Life imprisonment, Prisoners' release 105w
Manchester Strangeways Prison Riot Inquiry 134-6w
Mentally disturbed offenders 132w
Open prisons 387w
Parole Board, Public appointments 454w
Police Responsibilities & Rewards Inquiry, Travelling expenses 386w
Prison accommodation 121w, 125-6w
Prison discipline 130-1w
Prison employment 107-12w
Prison escapes 457w
Prison medical services, Dental services 149w
Prison Officers' Association, Penal reform 132-3w
Prison ombudsman, Public appointments 106w
Prison overcrowding 121w, 126w
Prison population 118-27w
Prison sentences, Costs 133w
Prison Service, Management consultants 131-2w
Prison Service Agency, Performance standards 458w
Prison staff, Crimes of violence 130-1w, 460-1w
Prison staff, Manpower 395-400w
Prisoner escorts 129w
Prisoner escorts, Complaints 128-9w
Prisoner escorts, Contracts for services 128w
Prisoners, Blood donors 399w
Prisoners, Drug abuse 221w
Prisoners, Homosexuality 391w
Prisoners, Per capita costs 389-91w
Prisoners' release, Take-up of employment 387w
Prisoners' transfers, Northern Ireland 270w
Prisons 213-4w
Prisons, Construction 112-4w, 214-6w, 388w
Prisons, Guard dogs 115-6w
Risley Remand Centre 149-50w
Summertime 145w, 388w
Therapeutic Regime Prison Services Task Force 127-8w
Wolds Remand Prison 116-7w
Wolds Remand Prison, Codes of practice 116w
Wolds Remand Prison, Contracts for services 117w
Wolds Remand Prison, Crimes of violence 116w
Wolds Remand Prison, Criminal Justice Liaison Committees 116w
Wolds Remand Prison, Libraries 117-8w
Wolds Remand Prison, Manpower 133-4w
Wolds Remand Prison, Prison administration 118w
Wolds Remand Prison, Prison population 126-7w
Wolds Remand Prison, Segregation of prisoners 117w
Wymott Prison, Prison riots 115w
Wymott Prison, Prisoners' transfers 113-4w
Young offenders 393-5w, 714-5w
Young offenders, Crimes of violence 393w
Young offenders, Prison population 459-60w
Young offenders, Prison sentences 462w
Young offenders, Prisoners on remand 391-3w
Young offenders, Suicide 717w

Lloyd, Mr Tony
Questions
Youth unemployment 139-40

Llwyd, Mr Elfyn
Debates etc.
Assisted Areas Orders 1993 (27:10:93) 935-6
Police Responsibilities & Rewards Inquiry (28:10:93) 988
Questions
Arms exports, Export controls 402w
International Atomic Energy Agency, Nuclear weapons 700w
Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty 370w
Outdoor education 367w, 436w
Outdoor education, Finance 367w
Police, Gypsies 545-6w
Regional planning & development, Wales 376w
Road traffic control, Wales 645w
Weapons, Treaties 519w

Lobsters
512w

Local authorities
Debts 275-6, 788w
Northern Ireland 788w

Local authority powers
Multiple occupation 88-9w
Waste disposal 633-4w, 820w

Local education authorities
Capital investment 738-42w

Local enterprise companies
72w, 809
Expenditure 810

Local Government Commission for England
88w, (25:10:93) 663-70
Expenditure 533w

Local government constituencies
Metropolitan districts 88w
Scotland 682w
Wales 579-80w

Local government expenditure
Council housing 720w
Personal social services 768-9w
Unemployment 14w

Local government finance
719-20w
Ethnic minorities 713w
Housing 829w
Wales 642-4w

Local government functions
Independent Living 1993 Fund 594w

Local government reform
259-61, 272-3, 416w
Aberdeen 819
Argyll & Bute 385w
Ayrshire 820
Berwickshire 630-1w, 814-5, 819
Community councils 248w
District courts 478w
East Lothian 630-1w
Emergency services 201w
Hampshire 273
Isle of Wight 260, (25:10:93) 663-70
Midlothian 691w
Northern Ireland 792w
Relocation of employees 39-40w
Renfrew 819-20
Scotland 39-41w, 201w, 332w, 479w, 631w, 682w, 813-4, 817-20, 822, 832w
Southport 276
West Lothian 691w

Local government revenue
89w, 255-6w
Council house sales 251w, 534w
Lancashire 348-9w

Local government services
Contracts for services 249-50w, 256w, 272-3
Scotland 687w

Locate in Scotland
684-6w

Lockerbie
Bombings 592w

Locums
Family doctors 680-1

London Ambulance Service
311w, 316w, 681-2
Computers 312w
Information technology 312w

London boroughs
Refugees 825w

London Boroughs' Association
532w

London Broadcasting Corporation
396

London docklands
251-2w

London Docklands Development Corporation
251-2w

London Docklands Development Corporation Bill (HL) 1992/93
Debates etc.
Order to proceed in next session (28:10:93) 957

London initiative zone
695w

London Local Authorities Bill (HL) 1991/92
Debates etc.
Order to proceed in next session (26:10:93) 671-4, (27:10:93) 805-8, (28:10:93) 953-6

London Local Authorities (No 2) Bill (HL) 1992/93
Debates etc.
Order to proceed in next session (28:10:93) 957

London Regional Transport
External financing limits 342w
Investment (29:10:93) 1082
Public petitions (29:10:93) 1082

London Transport
757w

London Underground
386, 810w, (29:10:93) 1082
Underground railways 757w

London Underground (Green Park) Bill 1991/92
Debates etc.
Order to proceed in next session (26:10:93) 671-4, (27:10:93) 805-8, (28:10:93) 953-6

London's Health Service Medical Education & Research Inquiry
316w

Lone parent families
Council housing 253-4w, 348w
Housing associations 348w

Lone parents
Social security benefits 594w
Social security recipients 330-1w, 506-8w

Long, George
Convictions 453-4w

Lord Chancellor's Dept
Government buildings 638w
Official hospitality 234w

Lorries
Axle weights 27w
Licensing 431w

Lorry drivers
Working hours 25w

Lost working days
Scotland 832w

Lothian
Tourists 480w

Lotteries
(20:10:93) 322-63

Low flying
50-6w, 368-9w, 486-9w, 519-26w
Air accidents 54w, 527w
Air force bases 59w
Air routes 51-2w
Air safety 52-3w
Alaska 58w
Canada 522-7w, 698-9w
Clayton 523w, 525-6w
Coastal areas 487w
Codes of practice 801w
Complaints 52w, 56w
Disclosure of information 486w
East Lothian 800w, 802w
F15 aircraft 53w, 56w
Germany 699w, 726w
Goose Bay 489w
Harrier aircraft 51w, 488w, 526w
Helicopters 53-4w
Hercules aircraft 53-4w
Highlands of Scotland 53w, 55-6w
Night flying 486w
Nimrod aircraft 487w
North East region 55w
Skyguard radar 56w
Slimbridge 488w
South Yorkshire 489w
Tornado aircraft 53w, 55w, 523w, 527w
Urban areas 488-9w
USA 524-5w
Vulcan aircraft 489w
Weather forecasting 522w

Low incomes
166w
Family income 7-8
Handicap benefits 171-2w
Income tax 14w, 427w

Low pay
East Midlands 208w
Lancashire 129-30, (28:10:93) 1074-80
Prosecutions 477w
West Midlands 210w
Women 210w

Loyden, Mr Eddie
Questions
Business questions 394-5
National savings 426w
Trade union membership, Oil industry 69-70w

LSD
Blakenhurst Prison 455w

Luff, Mr Peter
Questions
Estate Action, Expenditure 251w
European Medicines Evaluation Agency 610w

Lupins
Advisory Committee on Novel Foods & Processes 183-4w

Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas, Attorney-General
Questions
Arms to Iraq Inquiry 13-4
Arms to Iraq Inquiry, Civil servants' secondment 104w
Attorney General, Government buildings 657w
Crime prevention 13
Crown Prosecution Service 657-8w
Crown Prosecution Service, Career structure 104-5w
Crown Prosecution Service, Manpower 15
Fraud 104w
Fraud, Prosecutions 104w
Nadir, Asil 103-4w
Prosecutions 14-5
Racial incitement, Prosecutions 708w
Sentencing, Appeals 13
Treason, Treaty on European Union 708w
War crimes, Criminal investigation 707w
Young offenders, Prosecutions 103w

Lynne, Ms Liz
Debates etc.
Crime (28:10:93) 1006
NHS administration (21:10:93) 404
Questions
Council house sales, Local government revenue 251w
Dentists, Medical equipment 29w
GP fundholders 676-7
Maintenance, Children 7
Prison medical services, Dental services 149w
Veterinary drugs, EC law 773w

M1-M62 link
Road construction 200w, 342-3w

M11
Road construction 341w

M20
Road construction 807w

M25
Motorways 18-9w
Road works 18w

McAllion, Mr John
Debates etc.
Civil service unions, Points of order (27:10:93) 827
Questions
Civil service, Contracts for services 494w
Civil service agencies, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 173-5w
Contracts for services, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 176w
Economic situation, Scotland 809-10
Hospital waiting lists, Scotland 615w
House condition survey, Scotland 687w
Pensioners, Personal income 4
Tayside Health Board, Hospital waiting lists 615-6w

McAvoy, Mr Thomas
Questions
Local government constituencies, Scotland 682w
Local government reform, Scotland 818-9

McCartney, Mr Ian
Questions
Community health councils 675-6
KONVER programme 803w
Rugby 562

McCrea, Rev William
Debates etc.
Northern Ireland (22:10:93) 505, 517, 522, 524, 527, 540-5
Questions
Cereals, Intervention stocks 817w
Curriculum, Ministerial policy advisors 680-1w
Employment opportunities, Northern Ireland 792w
Excise duties, Aviation fuels 426w
Land ownership & tenure, Northern Ireland 530w
Local authorities, Debts 788w
Local government reform, Northern Ireland 792w
Myalgic encephalomyelitis, Northern Ireland 788w
Northern Ireland Dept of Agriculture, Manpower 681w
Peat bogs, Nature conservation 789w
Terrorism, Northern Ireland 374
VAT, Publications 570w

Macdonald, Mr Calum
Debates etc.
Defence estimates (18:10:93) 32, 84-6, 118

McFall, Mr John
Debates etc.
Assisted Areas Orders 1993 (27:10:93) 933
Coal mining (27:10:93) 868
Police Responsibilities & Rewards Inquiry (28:10:93) 986
Questions
Air force bases, Goose Bay 490-1w
Ammunition, Uranium 702w

McFall, Mr John—continued
Armed forces training, Goose Bay 702w
Customs, Body searches 570w
Forestry, Access to countryside 817
Hercules aircraft, Air accidents 529w
Jaguar aircraft 702w
Low flying, Canada 527w
Low flying, Germany 699w, 726w
RAF Upper Heyford 702w
Shackleton aircraft, Nuclear weapons 529w
Tornado aircraft, Air accidents 701w

McGrady, Mr Eddie
Debates etc.
Northern Ireland (22:10:93) 532, 537, 543
Questions
Access to countryside, Northern Ireland 787w
Anglo-Irish talks 973-4
Areas of outstanding natural beauty, Planning permission 787w
Business questions 395-6
Community care, South Down 465w
Defective housing, Rural areas 94-5w
Employment discrimination, Northern Ireland 212w
Environment protection, Northern Ireland 788w
Fish conservation 962-3
Hospitals, Down 379-80
Invalidity benefits, Social security claims 790w
Litter, Northern Ireland 789-90w
Multiple sclerosis, Respite care 464w
Northern Ireland Dept of Health & Social Services, Disability living allowance 790-1w
Recycling, Northern Ireland 789w
Residential care, Income support 787w, 789w, 791-2w
Residential care, Northern Ireland 792w
Road works, South Down 213w
Social Fund, Social security claims 791w
Widowers' benefits 223w

***MacGregor, Rt Hon John**, Secretary of State for Transport*
Questions
Airlines, EC action 298w
British Rail Telecommunications 297-8w
EC Transport Council 297w
European Regional Development Fund, Transport 299w
Jubilee line, Construction 810w
M1-M62 link, Road construction 200w, 342-3w
Transport, Capital investment 757-8w
Transport Security Division, Annual reports 810w

McKelvey, Mr William
Questions
A77, Motorways 687w
Local government reform, Ayrshire 820

Mackinlay, Mr Andrew
Debates etc.
Pardon for Soldiers of the Great War Bill, 1R (19:10:93) 159-60
Priests (Ordination of Women) Measures 1993 (29:10:93) 1128, 1130-2
Questions
Alcoholic drinks duties 421w
Assisted areas, Essex 155w
Assisted areas, Southend-on-Sea 402-4w
Belfast Airport, Privatisation 319w
British Rail, Privatisation 235w
British Transport Police 20w
British Transport Police Committee, Public appointments 20w
British Transport Police Federation 20-1w
China, Prisoners 80w
Common agricultural policy, Expenditure 964-5
Crown Estate Commissioners, Annual reports 380w
Driving, Disqualifications 146w, 460w
Gibraltar, Foreign policy 273w
Ministry of Defence police 63-4w
Ministry of Defence police, Civil service agencies 327w, 490w
Ministry of Defence police, Joint consultative committees 65w

Mackinlay, Mr Andrew—continued
Ministry of Defence police, Police committees 64-5w, 326-7w
Ministry of Defence Police Committee of Inquiry 326-7w
Northern Ireland Airports Police 94w
Northern Ireland Airports Police, Police committees 94w
Parliamentary furnishings 347w
Royal Parks Constabulary 473-4w
Royal Ulster Constabulary, Conditions of employment 94w
Saudi Arabia, Religious discrimination 273w
Science & technology policy 494w
Transport, Stranraer 478-9w
Travel-to-work areas, Southend-on-Sea 70w
United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority 156w
United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority, Police 156w
Whisky, Alcoholic drinks duties 420-1w
Whisky, Consumption 419-20w
Whisky, Exports 420w
Whisky, Manpower 419w
Whisky, Prices 420w
Whisky, Retail trade 420w
Wines, Imports 421w

***Maclean, Mr David**, Minister of State, Home Office*
Questions
"Analysing Offending" 453w
Bail 216-7w, 221w
Bail, Habitual offenders 218-9w, 239w
Benton, Anthony 270-1w
Community service orders 217w
Crime, Detection rates 642w
Crime victims 218w
Crimes of violence, South London 144w
Criminal Cases Review Authority 220-1w
Criminal injuries compensation 548w
Criminal injuries compensation, Administrative delays 547-8w
Criminal injuries compensation, Merseyside 547w
Criminal Injuries Compensation Board 547w
Criminal injuries compensation scheme 217w, 221w
Criminal law, Sex discrimination 457w
Criminal statistics 142-3w, 239w
Criminal statistics, Lewisham 143-4w
Drinking & driving 144-5w, 556w
Drinking & driving, Legislation 555w
Drinking & driving, Road accidents 555w
Driving, Disqualifications 146w
Drug abuse, Young people 222w
Habitual offenders 133w
Juries 219w
Long, George, Convictions 453-4w
Miscarriages of justice 551w
Miscarriages of justice, Civil service manpower 553w
Miscarriages of justice, Departmental responsibilities 552-3w
National Council of Victim Support, Government grants 272w
Police cautions 237-8w, 546w
Police cautions, Codes of practice 216w
Police cautions, Departmental circulars 546w
Prison sentences 136-42w
Probation committees, Kent 454w
Racial attacks, Homicide 717w
Racial harassment 716w
Rape 454w, 713w
Rape, Criminal proceedings 222w
Rape, Privacy 708-9w
Rape, Prosecutions 709-14w
Right of silence 142w, 219w
Secure accommodation 219-20w
Sentencing, Appeals 221w
Sexual offences, Compulsorily detained mental patients 553-4w
Sexual offences, Homosexuality 551-2w
Squatting, Civil proceedings 218w
Theft 238-40w
Victim support schemes, Finance 557w
Young offenders, Greater London 146-50w
Young offenders, Habitual offenders 240w
Youth custody 548-52w, 557w

McLeish, Mr Henry
Debates etc.
Heating allowances (28:10:93) 1053-6
Questions
Local government reform, Scotland 820

Maclennan, Mr Robert
Debates etc.
Crime (28:10:93) 999-1005, 1008, 1026
Police Responsibilities & Rewards Inquiry (28:10:93) 981
Public Accounts Committee (25:10:93) 595, 615-8
Questions
BBC 564
Police Responsibilities & Rewards Inquiry 271w

***McLoughlin, Mr Patrick**, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept of Trade & Industry*
Debates etc.
European Economic Area Bill (HL), 2R & Com (21:10:93) 438, 455-8, 462-4, 466-7, 470
Questions
Beer, Measurement 724w
Copyright, Harmonisation of legislation 401w
Dept of Trade & Industry, Environment protection 153-4w
EC Trade Marks Office 805-6w
Interaction of the Body with Radio Emissions from Hand Held Transceivers 574w
Optical fibres, Land ownership & tenure 574w
Packaging, Measurement 722-3w
Patent Office, Contracts for services 202w
Post Office, Pension funds 645-6w
Post Office, Performance appraisal 577w
Post Office, Privatisation 577w
Postal deliveries, Fees & charges 577-8w
Standards specifications, Environment protection 804w
Telecommunications industry, Licensing 647w
Telephone systems 648w
Telephones 646-7w
Teleworking 400w
Timesharing 157w
Trade promotion, Environment protection 574-5w

McMaster, Mr Gordon
Questions
Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill (HL) 1992/93 427w
Local government services, Scotland 687w

McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Debates etc.
Coal mining (20:10:93) 286
Questions
EC Fisheries Council 277w

McNamara, Mr Kevin
Debates etc.
Bombings, Northern Ireland (25:10:93) 578-9
Northern Ireland (22:10:93) 493-501, 508, 549
Questions
Anglo-Irish talks 379

Madden, Mr Max
Debates etc.
Business questions (28:10:93) 994
Commonwealth Prime Minister's Conference, Points of order (27:10:93) 827
Questions
Broadcasting Act 1990 470w
Business questions 396
Health services, Down 320w

Maddock, Diana
Members' oath & affirmation (19:10:93) 158

Maddock, Diana
Debates etc.
Crime (28:10:93) 1022-5
Oath & affirmation, Maddock, Diana (19:10:93) 158

Maginnis, Mr Ken
Debates etc.
Defence estimates (18:10:93) 58-9, (19:10:93) 202-5
Education & Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1993 (26:10:93) 758-60
Northern Ireland (22:10:93) 489-90, 496-7, 508, 510, 527-9
Police Responsibilities & Rewards Inquiry (28:10:93) 982-3
Questions
Anglo-Irish agreement 374

Magistrates
Court's charter 575-6

Mahon, Mrs Alice
Debates etc.
NHS administration (21:10:93) 405
Questions
European Police Information Centre 715w
Income support, Young people 5
Junior hospital doctors, Working hours 834-5w
Optical fibres, Land ownership & tenure 574w
West Yorkshire 551w

Maintenance
377-8w
British residents abroad 592-3w
Children 7, 9-11, 226-8w, 592-4w, 752-5w, 844-5w, 847w
Scotland 170w
Social security benefits disqualification 594w
Social security benefits reductions 170w, 844w

Maitland, Lady Olga
Debates etc.
Bombings, Northern Ireland (25:10:93) 586-7
Defence estimates (18:10:93) 101, 103
Questions
Army in Northern Ireland 375
Business questions 395
Dearing review 667w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict, Honours 198-9w
Sex education 813w
Sex education, Curriculum 813w
Sex education, Primary education 813w

***Major, Rt Hon John**, Prime Minister, First Lord of the Treasury and Minister for the Civil Service*
Questions
Anglo-Irish talks 143, 973-4
Arafat, Yasser 590w
Bilsthorpe colliery, Mine accidents 687
Bombings, Reading 970-1
British Rail, Privatisation 969-70
Bureaucracy 141-2
Chlorofluorocarbons, Refrigerators 96w
Commonwealth 590-2w
Conservative Party, Finance 144
Crime prevention 143, 689
Departmental correspondence, Administrative delays 95-6w
Departmental correspondence, Performance standards 95w
Doyle, Patrick 592w
EC Social Charter 145-6
Economic & monetary union 971-2
Economic recession 144
Environment, Business 96w
Fish conservation 689-90
GATT 688
History, Publications 771w
Identity cards 971
Inflation 972
Iraq, Arms trade 143
Iraq, Marsh Arabs 971
Jamaica, Capital punishment 96w
Lockerbie, Bombings 592w
Ministers' visits abroad, Costs 590w
Ministers' visits abroad, Japan 96w
Motorcycle industry 974
Motorways, Road construction 690
Nissan, Foreign investment in UK 972-3
Official engagements 203-4w, 771w
Party conferences 144
Police 969

***Major, Rt Hon John**—continued*
Retirement pensions 664w
Tax avoidance 141
Terrorism, Northern Ireland 687-8
THORP 771w
Unemployment 687, 691-2
Unemployment, Cunninghame 689
VAT, Energy prices 142
Water charges, South West region 690-1

Malaysia
Aid financed trade 732w
Ministers' visits abroad 309-10w

Mallon, Mr Seamus
Debates etc.
Bombings, Northern Ireland (25:10:93) 582-3
National Lottery Etc Bill, Lords amendts (20:10:93) 341-3
Questions
Anglo-Irish talks 378

Malvern Hills Bill (HL) 1992/93
Debates etc.
Order to proceed in next session (28:10:93) 957

Management & Administration of Safety & Health at Mines Regulations 1993
Debates etc.
(26:10:93) 698-747

Management consultants
Prison Service 131-2w

Managers
NHS trusts 310w

Manchester Airport
Railway network 199-200w

Manchester Strangeways Prison Riot Inquiry 134-6w

Mandelson, Mr Peter
Questions
Bankruptcy 423w
Foreign companies in UK, Land ownership & tenure 424w
Income tax, Debts written off 750w
Income tax, Tax yields 849w
Offshore trusts 424w
Subsidiarity 82w
Tax avoidance 141, 381w
Tax havens 423-6w, 672-3w
Tax havens, Fraud 424-5w
Tax repayments 9-10w
Tax yields 423w

Mans, Mr Keith
Debates etc.
Defence estimates (19:10:93) 168
NHS administration (21:10:93) 406
Questions
Beaches, Sea pollution 269-70

Manufacturing industries
Manpower 130-1, 208w
South West region 130-1
Wales 208w

Marek, Dr John
Debates etc.
Welsh Development Agency (19:10:93) 155
Questions
Public records 3w
Public records, Codes of practice 3-4w
Royal Free NHS Trust, Public records 4-5w
Wrexham Maelor Hospital, Expenditure 163w

Marginal land
Farm incomes 798w

Marland, Mr Paul
Questions
Forestry Commission, Access to countryside 958

Marlow, Mr Tony
Questions
Armed forces discharges, Pregnant women 492-3w
Criminal law, Sex discrimination 457w
EC budget contributions 848-50w

***Marlow, Mr Tony**—continued*
European Communities 412w
Rape 454w
Rape, Privacy 708-9w
UK contributions to EC budget 422w
VAT, Clothing 572w, 752w
VAT zero rating 572w

Marriage
China 414w

Marsh Arabs
Iraq 971

Marshall, Mr David
Questions
Buses, Motor vehicle safety 544w
Energy prices, Pensioners 822-3
Road transport workers, Driving licences 542-3w, 639-40w

Marshall, Mr Jim
Debates etc.
Northern Ireland (22:10:93) 513-4, 536-40
Questions
Northern Ireland 690
Regional health authorities 675

Marshall, Mr John
Debates etc.
Heating allowances (28:10:93) 1045, 1049
Management & Administration of Safety & Health at Mines Regulations 1993 (26:10:93) 699-700
Priests (Ordination of Women) Measures 1993 (29:10:93) 1086, 1105
Questions
Alcohol advertising 968
Barnet Borough Council, Revenue support grant 720w
Barnet Health Authority 601w
BBC 564-5
Butter, Intervention stocks 568w
Child benefit, EC countries 169w
Common agricultural policy, Expenditure 372w
County Hall 263
Defence expenditure 368w
Employment level, EC countries 70w
European Parliament, Buildings 82w
European Parliament, Expenditure 83w
European Parliament, Operating costs 733w
European Parliament members, Members' allowances 83w
Hasmonean School, Voluntary schools 287w
Know-how Fund 16
Legal aid scheme, Expenditure 637w
Literacy 101w
NHS trusts, Scotland 812
Pensions, EC countries 222-3w
Personal equity plans, Tax allowances 13w
Publishing, Manpower 352w
Schizophrenia 36w
Schizophrenia, Homicide 606w
Sports facilities, Rate rebates 89w
Student numbers, Northern Ireland 320w
Sunday trading, Scotland 686w
Unemployment 7
Unemployment, EC countries 71w
VAT, Publications 243-4w

Martin, Mr David
Debates etc.
Defence estimates (18:10:93) 70-1
NHS administration (21:10:93) 405
Questions
EC Agriculture Council 260-1w
PSA Building Management, Privatisation 351-2w

Martin, Mr Michael J
Questions
Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, Offices 233w
House of Commons, Telephone systems 268w
Local government reform, Scotland 818

Martlew, Mr Eric
Debates etc.
Defence estimates (18:10:93) 57, 100, 119, (19:10:93) 190, 221, 232-6
Heating allowances (28:10:93) 1051, 1059-61, 1071

Martlew, Mr Eric—continued
Questions
Agricultural products, Export rebates 516-8w
Agricultural products, Import duties 514-6w
Arable area payments scheme 515-6w
Arable area payments scheme, Northern Ireland 469w
Arable area payments scheme, Scotland 634-6w
Arable area payments scheme, Wales 453w
Development plans, Defence land 416w

Maternity services
37w

Mawhinney, Dr Brian, Minister for Health
Questions
Accident & emergency departments, Greater London 316w
Chemists shops, Prescriptions 841w
Chronically sick, Prescription charges 606w
Community health councils 497w, 837w
Contact lenses, Optical charges 679-80
Creutzfeldt-Jakob dementia 607w
Dental charges, Income 317w
Dental health 841w
Dental Practice Board 607w
Dental Remuneration Review 317w
Dental services 504-5w
Dental services, Greater London 841w
Dental services, Hygiene 693w
Dental services, NHS 697-8w
Deprivation indicators 311w
Dept of Health, Government buildings 498w
Doctors' list of patients 843w
Ealing Hospital NHS Trust 310w
Extra contractual referrals 498w
Eye tests 317w
Eye tests, Northern Region 768w
Eye tests, Optical charges 680
Eye tests, Optical charges exemptions 768w
Family doctors, Locums 680-1
Family doctors, Professional misconduct 769-70w
Family health services authorities, Directors 838w
GP fundholders 496-7w, 600w
GP fundholders, Finance 496-7w, 600-1w
Guy's & Lewisham NHS Trust 599w
Health education 602-3w
Hormone treatments, Prescription charges 609w
Hospital closures 500w
Hospital consultants, Merit awards 695-6w
Hospital doctors, Clothing 317-8w
Hospital waiting lists 695w
Hospital waiting lists, Greater London 834w
Islington Health Authority, Contracts for services 316w
Junior hospital doctors, Working hours 609w, 766-7w, 834-5w
Medical profession, Pay 693-4w
Ministers' visits abroad, Thailand 309-10w
Newcastle Health Authority, North Tyneside Health Authority 843w
NHS, Performance standards 602w
NHS, Public appointments 309w
NHS administration 310w, 837-8w
NHS charges exemptions, Pensioners 317w
NHS complaints 495w
NHS Management Executive 836w
NHS Management Executive, Leeds 696w
NHS Management Functions & Manpower Review, Community health councils 838w
NHS Policy Board, Public appointments 696w, 840-1w
NHS trusts, Corporate plans 761-2w
NHS trusts, Directors 762w
NHS trusts, Fringe benefits 611-2w
NHS trusts, Managers 310w
NHS trusts, Public appointments 345w
Nicotine patches, Prescriptions 767w
Nursing homes, Elderly 310w
Opticians, Family health services authorities 606w
Opticians, Pay 606w, 608w
Patient's Charter 602w
"Patient's Charter News" 501w
Prescription charges exemptions 680
Prescriptions 343w

Mawhinney, Dr Brian—continued
Primary health care, Inner London boroughs 695w
Regional health authorities 758w, 836w
Regional health authorities, Employment protection 837w
Regional health authorities, NHS administration 836w
Regional health authorities, Public appointments 344w, 611w
Regional health authorities, Redundancy 837w
Sheffield Community & Priority Care Services NHS Trust, Public appointments 344w
South & East Cheshire Health Authority, Public appointments 502w
Surgery, Hospitals 495w
War casualties, Bosnia-Herzegovina 500w
Wessex Regional Health Authority, Resignations 612w

Maxton, Mr John
Debates etc.
Public Accounts Committee (25:10:93) 640, 649-51, 655
Questions
Licensing laws, Scotland 820-1
Sports 567

Maxwell companies
508-9w
Pension funds 594-5w

Maxwell Pensioners' Trust
508-9w, 594-5w

Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland
Debates etc.
Bombings, Ministerial statements (25:10:93) 577-90
Northern Ireland (22:10:93) 483-93
Questions
Anglo-Irish agreement 320w
Anglo-Irish talks 318-20w, 376-9
Chief Electoral Officer for Northern Ireland, Annual reports 530w
Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1993 375
Gorman, Billy 95w
Inquiries, Northern Ireland 92w
Intergovernmental conference, THORP 467w
Northern Ireland government 320w
Police informers, Northern Ireland 677w
Terrorism, Codes of practice 681-2w

McCloy Committee
see Northern Ireland Curriculum Council

McGoogan Inquiry
see Cervical Smear Test Inquiry

Meacher, Mr Michael
Questions
Arms to Iraq Inquiry 570-1
Non-departmental public bodies, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 261w
Overseas aid 17

Meale, Mr Alan
Questions
Bilsthorpe colliery, Mine accidents 687

Means tested benefits
Social security recipients 845w

Measurement
Beer 724w
Packaging 722-3w

Meat
Food contamination 565w

Medical certificates
Social security recipients 232w, 246-7w

Medical education
Expenditure 28-9w

Medical equipment
Dentists 29w
Diabetes 693w
Hospital doctors 317-8w
VAT 382w

Medical examinations
Driving licences 639-40w
Invalidity benefits 1-2, 223-4w, 230-1w
Social security benefits 36w

Medical profession
Pay 693-4w

Medical records
Privacy 840w
Social security claims 595-6w

Medical rehabilitation
Astley Ainslie Hospital 626w
Brain 626w

Medical research
Breast cancer 346w, 620-2w
Myalgic encephalomyelitis 606-7w

Medical Research Council
621-2w

Medical treatments
Breast cancer 620-1w
Fertility 35w

Members' allowances
European Parliament members 83w

Members' facilities
House of Commons accommodation 233w
House of Commons broadcasting 405-6w
House of Commons catering 347-8w

Members' Interests Select Committee
(29:10:93) 1152

Members' oath & affirmation
Maddock, Diana (19:10:93) 158

Members' pensions
Prime Ministers 425w

Members' relatives
Members' staff 406w

Members' staff
Contracts of employment 406w
Members' relatives 406w

Mental health
Driving licences 16w

Mental Health Act 1959
Questions
553-4w

Mental health community care
Mentally handicapped 691w

Mental health services
Deaf 501w

Mental illness specific grant
31w
Scotland 633w

Mental patients
603w
Greater London 30-1w
Hospital beds 30-1w

Mentally Disordered Offenders Advisory Committee
603-4w

Mentally Disordered Offenders Services Review
603-4w

Mentally disturbed offenders
132w
Health services 603-4w

Mentally handicapped
Mental health community care 691w
Powers of attorney 419w
Scotland 691w

Menwith Hill
US bases 484w

Merit awards
Hospital consultants 695-6w

Merseyside
Criminal injuries compensation 547w
EC grants & loans 245-6w

Metal detectors
(27:10:93) 944-52

Methane
Coal mining 804w

Methicillin resistant
843w

Metropolitan districts
Local government constituencies 88w

Metropolitan Police
551w

MFS Communications
647w

MFV Pescado
Shipping accidents 640w

MI6
Government buildings 82w

Michael, Mr Alun
Debates etc.
Crime (28:10:93) 1007, 1012-8
Questions
Bail 216-7w, 221w
Bail, Habitual offenders 218-9w, 239w
Community service orders 217w
Crime victims 218w
Criminal Cases Review Authority 220-1w
Criminal injuries compensation scheme 217w, 221w
Criminal statistics 239w
Drug abuse, Young people 222w
Genetics, Criminal investigation 215w
Juries 219w
Parish constables 215w, 220w
Police 215w
Police cautions 237-8w
Police cautions, Codes of practice 216w
Prisoners, Drug abuse 221w
Prisons, Construction 214-6w, 388w
Rape, Criminal proceedings 222w
Right of silence 219w
Safer cities scheme 217-8w
Secure accommodation 219-20w
Sentencing, Appeals 221w
Squatting, Civil proceedings 218w
Terrorism 218w
Terrorism, Stop & search 220w
Theft 238-40w
Trespass, Police powers 222w
Victim support schemes, Finance 557w
Young offenders, Habitual offenders 240w

Michie, Mr Bill
Questions
Discretionary student grants, Expenditure 560-1w
Further education colleges, Finance 668w
School administration, Sheffield 368w

Michie, Mrs Ray
Debates etc.
Defence estimates (19:10:93) 165
Heating allowances (28:10:93) 1063-4
Questions
Beef premiums 515w
Breast cancer, Medical research 346w, 621-2w
Breast cancer, Medical treatments 620-1w
Electoral register, Publicity 271w
Fisheries, EC law 373w
Fishery protection, EC countries 371-2w
Local government reform, Argyll & Bute 385w
Piers, Scotland 62w
Scottish Cancer Trials Office 479w
Sheep premiums, Scotland 247-8w
Toys & games, Smoking 484w
Water supply disconnections, Scotland 629w
Water supply industry, Scotland 629w

Midlothian
Local government reform 691w
NHS trusts 689w

Midwives
Career structure 30w
Community nurses 37w

Migration
Children 503-4w

Milburn, Mr Alan
Debates etc.
Assisted Areas Orders 1993 (27:10:93) 938-40
Questions
Computer privacy 716-7w
Eye tests, Northern Ireland 793w
Eye tests, Northern Region 768w
Eye tests, Optical charges exemptions 768w
Eye tests, Wales 782w
Housing benefits, Social security recipients 164-5w
National insurance contributions, Tax evasion 170-1w
NHS, Administrative costs 770w
NHS trusts, Directors 762w
NHS trusts, Government grants 762-6w
Northern Ireland health & social services trusts 467-8w
Ophthalmology, Hospital waiting lists 29w, 42-4w, 92-4w, 159-60w

Military aircraft
59w
Air accidents 49w, 60w
Air safety 60w
Bosnia-Herzegovina 83-4w, 240w
Canada 699w
Codes of practice 800w
Defence research 60w

Military bands
Deal Barracks 386-8

Military vehicles
5 Airborne Brigade 328w, 727-8w

Milk
Intervention stocks 568w

Milk Marketing Board
373-4w

Milk marketing scheme
373-4w

Milk Marque
373-4w

Miller, Mr Andrew
Questions
Disability living allowance, Telephone services 596-7w

Milligan, Mr Stephen
Questions
Homelessness 253w
Hospital waiting lists 684
Local government reform, Hampshire 273
Maintenance, British residents abroad 592-3w
Social security abuse 163-4w
Stoke Park Wood, Land acquisition 567w
Surgery, Hospitals 500w
United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority, Capital investment 302w

Mills, Mr Iain
Questions
Alcoholic drinks duties, Inspections 673w
Company cars, Taxation 381-2w
EC Trade Marks Office 805-6w
Maintenance, Children 593w
Motor vehicles, Alcoholic drinks 544-5w
Tobacco duties, Tax evasion 749w

Millwall
Football 471w

Mine accidents
304w
Bilsthorpe colliery 687

Mine safety
304w
Coal mining (18:10:93) 24
Standing Order No 20 applications (18:10:93) 24

Minerals
Extractive industries 532w

Mines
Arms trade 402w

Minesweepers
Defence procurement 700w

Mineworkers' pension scheme
433w

Minimum wage
354-65w

Mining
Falkland Islands 82w
Planning compensation 653w
Planning permission 653w

Ministerial & Other Pensions & Salaries Act 1991
Questions
425w

Ministerial policy advisors
Curriculum 439-40w, 680-1w

Ministerial statements
Bombings (25:10:93) 577-90
Coal mining (20:10:93) 277-95
NHS administration (21:10:93) 398-412
Police Responsibilities & Rewards Inquiry (28:10:93) 975-89
Welsh Development Agency (19:10:93) 147-58

Ministers' domestic visits
Liverpool 89-90w
Rampton Hospital 499-500w

Ministers' visits abroad
Costs 590w
Japan 96w
Malaysia 309-10w
Thailand 309-10w

Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food
279w
Civil service agencies 173-5w
Contracts for services 176w
Departmental publications 173w
Doyle, Patrick 373w
Government buildings 566w
Non-departmental public bodies 261w
Official hospitality 661w
Small businesses 176-7w

Ministry of Defence
(19:10:93) 162-251, (25:10:93) 591-662, 728-9w
Civil service manpower 492w
Doyle, Patrick 369w
Government buildings 493w, 528w
Manpower 492w, 803w
Official hospitality 246w
Property transfer 701w

Ministry of Defence police
63-4w
Civil service agencies 327w, 490w
Joint consultative committees 65w
Police committees 64-5w, 326-7w

Ministry of Defence Police Committee of Inquiry
326-7w

Mink
Animal welfare 178-81w
Appin 177w
Botulism 178w
Farms 178-9w
Isle of Wight 177-9w, 181-2w
Transport of animals 177w

Miscarriages of justice
551w
Civil service manpower 553w
Departmental responsibilities 552-3w

Mitchell, Mr Austin
Debates etc.
European Economic Area Bill (HL), 2R & Com (21:10:93) 439, 443
Questions
Economic & monetary union 971-2
Fishery decommissioning scheme 960-1
Forests, Land acquisition 561-2w

Mitchell, Sir David
Questions
Airport tax, Tax yields 381w
Corporation tax, Small businesses 12w
Rating of Plant & Machinery Review 531w

Moate, Sir Roger
Questions
GP fundholders 676

Modern Security Systems
(22:10:93) 552-8

Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Questions
Army in Northern Ireland 382-3
Terrorism, Northern Ireland 321w

Monro, Sir Hector, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Scottish Office
Questions
Agricultural land, East Lothian 784w
Ancient monuments, Architectural conservation 786w
Ancient monuments, Scotland 785w
Arable area payments scheme, Scotland 631-6w, 689-90w
Architectural conservation, EC grants & loans 43-4w
Dounreay, Radioactive waste disposal 628w
Environmental policy, Scotland 686w
Fish conservation 784w
Forestry 683-4w
Forestry, Access to countryside 815-7
Forestry, Land acquisition 816
Forestry, Research 816
Forestry Commission 684w
Forestry Commission, Privatisation 783w
Forestry Review Group 612-3w
Forestry Technology Training & Management Steering Committee 517-8w
Hazardous wastes, Scotland 625w
Hill livestock allowances, Scotland 784w, 832-3w
Quarrying, Highlands of Scotland 683w
Radioactivity, Solway Firth 628w
Recycling, Domestic wastes 39w
Recycling, Scotland 40w
Salmon, Fish farming 38w
Scottish councils, Environment protection 38w
Scottish Environment Protection Agency 619-20w, 629-30w
Seals, Nature conservation 780w
Sheep premiums, Scotland 247-8w, 482-3w, 630w, 833w
Waste disposal, Local authority powers 633-4w
Water supply disconnections, Scotland 613w, 629w
Water supply industry, Scotland 629w
Wildfowl, Pest control 383w

Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Debates etc.
Police Responsibilities & Rewards Inquiry (28:10:93) 988
Questions
Fishing vessels, Decommissioning 960
Jobclubs, North West region 209w

Moonie, Dr Lewis
Questions
Technology foresight programme 574

Morgan, Mr Rhodri
Debates etc.
Public Accounts Committee (25:10:93) 594-5, 629, 634, 637, 645-9
Welsh Development Agency (19:10:93) 157-8
Questions
Birds 260w
Church in Wales, Finance 162w
Companies Registration Office (England & Wales), Privatisation 157w
Engineering Centre for Wales 162w
European Medicines Evaluation Agency, Cardiff 323-4w
European Night Services 341w
Income tax, Tax rates & bands 750-1w
Nature conservation, EC law 535w
NHS internal market, Wales 158w
NHS trusts, Wales 580-7w
North East Wales Training & Enterprise Council, Offices 588-9w
Probate Registry Cardiff 419w
Road safety, Urban areas 161w

Morgan, Mr Rhodri—continued
Severn Estuary, Special protection areas 535-6w
Team care valleys project 375w
Training & enterprise councils, Accounting 163w
Training & enterprise councils, Annual reports 819-20w
Urban investment grant, Wales 587-8w
VAT, Construction 587w
Water pollution, Cardiff Bay 161-2w
Welsh Development Agency, Accounting 781w
Welsh Development Agency, Business expenses 781w
Welsh Development Agency, Company cars 781-2w
Welsh Development Agency, Conflict of interests 781w
Welsh Development Agency, Public appointments 781w
Welsh Office Drawing Office, Contracts for services 161w

Morley, Mr Elliot
Debates etc.
Assisted Areas Orders 1993 (27:10:93) 927, 939
Questions
Advisory Committee on Novel Foods & Processes, Public appointments 568-9w
Animal experiments, Tobacco 641-2w
Beef, Intervention stocks 372-3w
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy 261-2w
Cetaceans, Death 650w
Dolphins, Drift nets 660-1w
Fireworks, Imports 599w
Fish conservation 963
Forestry Review Group 613w
Furs, Farms 180-2w
Import of live animals 564w
Import of live animals, Disease control 564-5w
Meat, Food contamination 565w
Mink, Animal welfare 178-9w
Mink, Botulism 178w
Mink, Farms 178-9w
Mink, Isle of Wight 177-9w, 181w
Ostriches, Import of live animals 563-4w
Pigs, Slaughterhouses 568w
Porcine somatotropin 563w
Rabies, EC action 273w
Seals, Fishing gear 512w
Set-aside schemes, Nature conservation 203w
Slaughterhouses 182w
Transport of animals, Animal welfare 512w
UK Ecolabelling Board, Public appointments 824w
Warble fly 775-6w
Wild animals, Imports 414w
Worth Moor pumping station 190-2w

Morocco
Armed forces training 57w

Morris, Rt Hon Alfred
Questions
Accident & emergency departments 679
Business questions 391
Manchester Airport, Railway network 199-200w
Police 556w
Retirement pensions 664w
Television licences 474w
Training 667w
VAT, Air fares 571w, 752w

Morris, Ms Estelle
Debates etc.
Education (School Teachers Pay & Conditions) (No 2) Order 1993 (26:10:93) 784-5
St Philip's College Birmingham (26:10:93) 799-800
Questions
Housing benefits, Young people 845-6w
Post Office, Pension funds 645-6w
Post Office, Privatisation 577w

Morris, Rt Hon John
Questions
Crown courts, Trials 793w
Crown Prosecution Service 657-8w
Police cautions 546w
Police cautions, Departmental circulars 546w

Morriston Hospital
Heart diseases 579w

Mortgage relief
First time buyers 279w

Mortgages
Income support 845w

Moss, Mr Malcolm
Debates etc.
Coal mining (27:10:93) 889-91

Motor vehicle safety
Buses 544w
Goods vehicles 541-2w
Prohibition notices 431w

Motor vehicle testing
Goods vehicles 807w
Northern Ireland 95w
Public service vehicles 807w

Motor vehicles
Alcoholic drinks 544-5w

Motorcycle industry
974

Motorway service areas
Aids for handicapped 298-9w

Motorways
A77 687w
Driving instruction 22w
M25 18-9w
Porous asphalt 431w
Road construction 690
Road traffic 808w

Mowlam, Ms Marjorie
Questions
BBC 564
Blackwood, Orville, Death 29w
Driving licences, Mental health 16w
Public records, Nuclear weapons tests 495-6w
Public service 659w

Mullin, Mr Chris
Debates etc.
Police Responsibilities & Rewards Inquiry (28:10:93) 982
Questions
Civil servants, Freemasonry 493w
Long, George, Convictions 453-4w
National Rivers Authority, Manpower 415w
Terrorism, Dublin 320w
UN General Assembly, Arms control 412w
Weapons, Treaties 410-1w
West Midlands Police, Judgments 578w
West Midlands Police, Police discipline 556w

Multiple occupation
Fires 152w
Housing standards 254w
Local authority powers 88-9w
Student accommodation 263-4w

Multiple sclerosis
Down 464w
Respite care 464w

Myalgic encephalomyelitis
607w
Medical research 606-7w
Northern Ireland 788w

Nadir, Asil
103-4w

National Accreditation Council for Certification Bodies
804w

National Coaching Foundation
Government grants 566-7

National Coal Board
see British Coal Corporation

National Council of Victim Support
557w
Government grants 272w

National Curriculum Council
558w

National Finance
see Treasury

National Heritage Act 1983
Questions
573w

National income
380w

National insurance contributions
383-4, 845w
Community action 225w
Tax evasion 170-1w

National Insurance Contributions Unit
see Social Security Contributions Agency

National lottery
(18:10:93) 21-2, (20:10:93) 322-63, 469w

National Lottery Charities Board
(20:10:93) 322-63

National Lottery Etc Bill 1992/93
Debates etc.
Business questions (18:10:93) 22
Lords amendts (20:10:93) 322-63
Royal Assent (21:10:93) 413

National Museum of Science & Industry
see Science Museum

National Power
426w

National Rivers Authority
161-2w, 177-8w
Manpower 415w
Northumberland 415w

National savings
426w

National vocational qualifications
138-9, 366w

NATO
(18:10:93) 27-120, 59w
Infrastructure 68-9w

Natural Resources Institute
Greenwich University 243w

Nature Conservancy Council for England
177-8w

Nature conservation
Cetaceans 350-1w, 569-70w
EC law 535w
Hong Kong 242w, 733-4w
Navy 327-8w
Parks 494w
Peat 566w
Peat bogs 789w
River Medway 534-5w
Seals 780w
Set-aside schemes 203w, 659w
Tributyl tin 826w
Whales 276w, 772w

Navigational aids
Sea King helicopters 491w

Navy
Nature conservation 327-8w

***Needham, Mr Richard**, Minister for Trade*
Questions
Arms embargoes, Radar 575w
Computers, Export controls 244w
EC external trade, South Africa 435w
EC internal trade, Export controls 154w
Export licensing 152-3w
Police equipment, Export controls 400w
Public utilities, Procurement 301-2w
Riot control weapons 201w
Riot control weapons, Export controls 201-2w

Neighbourhood watch schemes
(28:10:93) 999-1038

***Nelson, Mr Anthony**, Economic Secretary to the Treasury*
Questions
EC budget contributions 848-50w
Exchange rate mechanism 849w
Food prices 10w
Insurance, Chronically sick 14w
National income 380w
National savings 426w
Premium bonds 11-2w
Securities & Investments Board 6w
Tax havens 425w
Treasury, Official hospitality 244w
UK contributions to EC budget 14w
Whisky, Exports 420w
Whisky, Manpower 419w
Whisky, Prices 420w
Wines, Imports 421w
Written questions, Costs 6w

Nerve damage
Patients 605w

Network SouthEast
19-20w, 428w
Finance 15-6w

Neubert, Sir Michael
Questions
Apples, Agricultural marketing 780w
Building industry 256w
Jubilee line, Construction 810w
Youth unemployment 133

New towns
Scotland 684-6w

New towns development corporations
Scotland 684-6w, 821-2

Newcastle Health Authority
North Tyneside Health Authority 843w

Newspaper press
Distributive trade 722w
Northern Ireland 722w

***Newton, Rt Hon Tony**, Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons*
Debates etc.
Business statements (18:10:93) 21-3, (28:10:93) 990-8
European Economic Area Bill (HL), Order relating to Com (20:10:93) 301-2, 317-9
Order relating to Com (20:10:93) 301-21
Priests (Ordination of Women) Measures 1993 (29:10:93) 1083
Questions
Assaults on police 384
British National Party, Demonstrations 385
Business questions 390-7
Business statements 389-90
Cabinet committees, Departmental publications 427w
Child Migrants Trust, Finance 428w
Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill (HL) 1992/93 427w
Community care, Housing 266w
Conservative Party, Companies political contributions 384-5
Deregulation initiative 383
Economic situation 386
House of Commons broadcasting, Members' facilities 405-6w
House of Commons Chamber 810w
House of Commons voting methods 405w
Leader of the House of Commons, Parliamentary questions 811w
London Underground 386
Members' staff, Contracts of employment 406w
Members' staff, Members' relatives 406w
Military bands, Deal Barracks 386-8
National insurance contributions 383-4
NHS reform 385
Official engagements 267w
Parliamentary questions 406w
Prime Minister, Government buildings 267w
Prime Minister, Official hospitality 428w
Prime Minister, Operating costs 266-7w
Privy Council, Official hospitality 233w

***Newton, Rt Hon Tony**—continued*
Russia, Elections 278w
THORP, Departmental correspondence 267w
University College of Swansea 811w
USA, Foreign relations 267-8w
Written questions, Costs 427w
Young offenders, Sentencing 383

NHS
Abortion 835w
Administrative costs 770w
Dental services 697-8w
Performance standards 602w
Public appointments 309w
Scotland 823-4
Smoking 315w

NHS administration
310w, 836-8w
Ministerial statements (21:10:93) 398-412
Regional health authorities 836-7w

NHS charges exemptions
34w
Pensioners 33-4w, 317w

NHS complaints
495w
Cystic fibrosis 622-3w

NHS finance
501w, 602w

NHS internal market
35w, 498w, 692w, 696w, 766w
Wales 158w

NHS Management Executive
(21:10:93) 398-412, 836w
Expenditure 608w
Leeds 696w
Publications 312-4w

NHS Management Functions & Manpower Review
Community health councils 838w

NHS Overseas Enterprises
309-10w

NHS Policy Board
(21:10:93) 398-412
Public appointments 696w, 840-1w

NHS reform
385

NHS Supplies Authority
315w

NHS Tribunal
770w

NHS trusts
758-61w
Accounting 316w
Annual reports 580w
Contracts for services 345w
Corporate plans 761-2w
Directors 762w, 837w
East Lothian 689w
Finance 310w, 761w
Fringe benefits 611-2w
Government grants 762-6w
Managers 310w
Midlothian 689w
Patients 628w
Public appointments 345w
Scotland 628w, 688-9w, 811-3
South East Thames Regional Health Authority 496w
Wales 580-7w

Nicaragua
Overseas aid 103w

Nicholls, Mr Patrick
Debates etc.
Business questions (28:10:93) 992-3
Crime (28:10:93) 1000, 1012, 1032, 1034
Questions
EC Social Charter 131

Nicholson, Mr David
Questions
Cider 964
Coal, Imports 576w
Electricity, Imports 576-6w

Nicholson, Mr David—continued
Ethiopia, Development aid 242-3w
Income tax, Tax rates & bands 749-50w
Literacy 813w
Natural Resources Institute, Greenwich University 243w
Tobacco duties, Tax evasion 748-9w
Water charges, South West region 273-4

Nicholson, Miss Emma
Debates etc.
Priests (Ordination of Women) Measures 1993 (29:10:93) 1132-4

Nicotine patches
Prescriptions 767w

Night flying
Low flying 486w

Nimrod aircraft
Low flying 487w

Nissan
Foreign investment in UK 972-3

Nitrate sensitive areas
161-2w

Nitrates
Water resources 773w

Noel Employment
333-4w, 352-3w

Noise
Complaints 281w

Noise control
278-9w

Non-departmental public bodies
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 261w

Non-fossil fuel obligation
245w

Norris, Mr Steve, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept of Transport
Questions
Air travel, Security 640w
Bus services, Greater London 757w
Crossrail, Road traffic 27w
Cycleways, Greater London 21w
Dept of Transport, Doyle, Patrick 342w
Dept of Transport, Government buildings 432w, 809w
Dept of Transport, House of Commons broadcasting 23-4w
Dept of Transport, Official hospitality 235w
East London river crossing 25w
Fishing vessels, Licensing 21w
Fishing vessels, Shipping registration 374w
Jubilee line, Construction 341w, 641w
London Regional Transport, External financing limits 342w
London Underground, Underground railways 757w
M11, Road construction 341w
MFV Pescado, Shipping accidents 640w
Road traffic control, Greater London 19w
Submarines, Fishing vessels 16-7w
Taxis, Competition 638w
Water transport 342w

North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
see NATO

North East region
Low flying 55w

North East Wales Training & Enterprise Council
Offices 588-9w

North Korea
South Korea 818w

North Sea
Cetaceans 275w, 350-1w

North Tyneside Health Authority
Newcastle Health Authority 843w

North West region
Jobclubs 209w
Water pollution 251w

North West Water
251w

North Yorkshire
Social Security Benefits Agency 169w
Social Security Contributions Agency 169w

Northern Development Company
131

Northern Ireland
Access to countryside 787w
Ambulance services 321-2w
Arable area payments scheme 469w
Civil servants 793w
Curriculum 375-6, 680-1w
Defective housing 94-5w
EC nationals 679-80w
Economic situation 380
Electricity tariffs 321w
Employment discrimination 212w
Employment opportunities 792w
Environment protection 787-8w
Eye tests 793w
Farm incomes 530w
Gas fuels 529-30w
Government buildings 817w
Homelessness 381-2
Hospital closures 318w, 321w
Hospitals 372-3
Industrial development 380-1
Inquiries 92w
Invalidity benefits 790w
Land ownership & tenure 530w
Litter 789-90w
Local authorities 788w
Local government reform 792w
Motor vehicle testing 95w
Myalgic encephalomyelitis 788w
Newspaper press 722w
Nurses 678w
Ophthalmology 92-4w
Overseas students 786-7w
Peat bogs 789w
Police informers 677w
Potatoes 678-9w
Prisoners' transfers 270w
Prisons 467w
Privatisation 381
Public sector housing 465-6w
Public service vehicles 95w
Recycling 789w
Residential care 787w, 789w, 791-2w
Schools (26:10:93) 748-71
Sea transport 319w
Student grants 679w
Student numbers 320w, 679w
Television licences 568-9
Terrorism 321w, 373-5, 687-8
VAT 570w

Northern Ireland Airports Police
94w
Police committees 94w

Northern Ireland Airports Police Association
94w

Northern Ireland Audit Review Group
235w

Northern Ireland Council for the Curriculum Examinations Etc
(26:10:93) 748-71

Northern Ireland Council of Voluntary Organisations
319w

Northern Ireland Curriculum Council
(26:10:93) 748-71

Northern Ireland Dept of Agriculture
Manpower 681w

Northern Ireland Dept of Health & Social Services
Disability living allowance 790-1w

Northern Ireland education & library boards
(26:10:93) 748-71

Northern Ireland Electricity
426w

Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1991
Questions
Codes of practice 681-2w

Northern Ireland government
320w

Northern Ireland health & social services trusts
467-8w

Northern Ireland Housing Executive
465-6w

Northern Ireland Office
793w
Ancient monuments 677w
Doyle, Patrick 322w
Government buildings 817w
Official hospitality 235w

Northern Ireland School Examinations & Assessment Council
(26:10:93) 748-71

Northern region
Economic situation 131-2
Employment opportunities 131, 209w
Eye tests 768w

Northumberland
Homelessness 417w
National Rivers Authority 415w
Opencast mining 434w
Standard spending assessments 270

Northumbria Ambulance NHS Trust
Accounting 311w

Norway
Fisheries 966-7
Whales 276w, 966-7

Nuclear accidents
Emergency planning 802w
Firth of Clyde 802-3w
International cooperation 436w
Transport of radioactive materials 802w

Nuclear Electric
153w, 574-5w, 646w
Simpkin Partnership (22:10:93) 552-8

Nuclear fuel reprocessing
EC countries 153w
Uranium 721w

Nuclear fuels
Contracts 153w

Nuclear Installations Inspectorate
434w, 575w

Nuclear non proliferation
Asia 81w
Hong Kong 665w

Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty
370w, 400-1w

Nuclear power
Exports 303w

Nuclear power review
539-40w

Nuclear power stations
539-40w
Capital investment 574w
Nuclear safety 434w

Nuclear reactors
Decommissioning 575w

Nuclear safeguards
154-5w, 400-1w
EC law 155w

Nuclear safety
Nuclear power stations 434w
Republic of Ireland 436w

Nuclear submarines
Radiation hazards 368w

Nuclear test ban
734-5w

Nuclear weapons
Arms control 205w
International Atomic Energy Agency 700w
Iraq 730w
Road freight transport 703-4w
Russia 731w
Shackleton aircraft 529w
Transport of radioactive materials 726-7w
USA 205w

Nuclear weapons deployment
Tornado aircraft 730w

Nuclear weapons policy
Defence expenditure 703w

Nuclear weapons tests
699-700w
Australia 325-6w
China 206w
France 80w, 519w
Public records 495-6w
Trident missiles 729w

Nursery nurses
Wales 376w

Nurses
Career structure 30w, 314-5w
Northern Ireland 678w
Uniforms 311w

Nursing homes
Elderly 310w
Greater London 310w
Hospital beds 758w
Private sector 497w

O'Brien, Mr Mike
Debates etc.
Police Responsibilities & Rewards Inquiry (28:10:93) 984
Questions
Arms to Iraq Inquiry 13-4
Business premises, Fire regulations 152w
Multiple occupation, Fires 152w
Multiple occupation, Housing standards 254w
Multiple occupation, Local authority powers 88-9w

O'Brien, Mr William
Debates etc.
Coal mining (20:10:93) 294, (27:10:93) 852
Questions
Health services, Eastern Health & Social Services Board 373
National lottery 469w
Planning permission, Extractive industries 532w
Tape recorded evidence 458w
Wakefield & Pontefract Community Health NHS Trust 682
Young offenders, Prosecutions 103w

Occupational health
Older workers 70w

Occupational pensions
167w
Personal pensions 167w

Occupational therapists
Community care 686

Office for Standards in Education
558w, 813-4w

Office of Fair Trading
6w, 157w

Office of Population Censuses & Surveys
697w

Office of Public Service & Science
571-3

Office of Telecommunications
646-7w

Office of the National Lottery
(20:10:93) 322-63

Office of the President of Social Security Appeal Tribunals
see Social Security Appeal Tribunals

Office of Water Services
197-8w, 826w

Offices
Commonwealth Parliamentary Association 233w
North East Wales Training & Enterprise Council 588-9w
Social Security Benefits Agency 379w
Welsh Development Agency 588-9w

Official cars
Dept of Social Security 247w
Lead free petrol 720w

Official engagements
203-4w, 267w, 771w

Official hospitality
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster 236w
Dept for Education 262w
Dept of Employment 248-9w
Dept of Health 235w
Dept of National Heritage 273w
Dept of Social Security 247w
Dept of the Environment 256w
Dept of Trade & Industry 244-5w
Dept of Transport 235w
Expenditure 233-6w
Foreign & Commonwealth Office 242w
Home Office 240w
Lord Chancellor's Dept 234w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 661w
Ministry of Defence 246w
Northern Ireland Office 235w
Prime Minister 428w
Privy Council 233w
Scottish Office 483w
Treasury 244w
Welsh Office 234w

Official visits
Dept of Social Security 247w
Draskovic, Vuk 204w
Yugoslavia 204-5w

Offshore trusts
424-5w

Offshore workers
Unemployment benefits 69w

O'Hara, Mr Edward
Questions
Anglo-Irish talks 318-9w

Oil industry
Trade union membership 69-70w

Older workers
Occupational health 70w
Training 476w

Olner, Mr Bill
Questions
Agricultural Training Board 775w
Holidays, VAT 562
Hospitals, Down 371-2
Local government reform 272-3

Omagh
Hospital closures 373

£1 coins
852w

O'Neill, Mr Martin
Debates etc.
Coal mining (20:10:93) 295, (27:10:93) 847-8, 874
Management & Administration of Safety & Health at Mines Regulations 1993 (26:10:93) 709-10, 738-40
Questions
Alternative energy 245w
British Coal Corporation, Redundancy pay 435w
Energy review 245w
Mine accidents 304w
Mine safety 304w
Non-fossil fuel obligation 245w
Sizewell B, Computer applications 245w

Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Debates etc.
Coal mining (20:10:93) 282
Questions
Abortion, NHS 835w

Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley—continued
Boating, Government grants 822w
British embassies, Germany 818w
Coal mining, Methane 804w
Fisheries, Pest control 797w
Fishing, Government grants 822w
Food inspection, Complaints 835w
Humanities, Higher education 814w
Refreshment Dept, Modernisation 810w
Water supply, EC law 827w

Open government
1-2w, 658-9w
Codes of practice 1-2w
Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration 2w
Scotland 686-7w

Open prisons
387w

Open University
Environmental education 279w

Opencast mining
Durham County 434w
Northumberland 434w
Planning permission 539w

Ophthalmology
Family health services authorities 606w
Hospital waiting lists 29w, 42-4w, 92-4w, 159-60w
Northern Ireland 92-4w
Scotland 42-4w
Wales 159-60w

Oppenheim, Mr Phillip
Debates etc.
Coal mining (27:10:93) 873-7

Opposition days
Coal mining (27:10:93) 835-922
Crime (28:10:93) 999-1038
Heating allowances (28:10:93) 1039-73

Optical charges
Contact lenses 679-80
Eye tests 680
Spectacles 34-5w

Optical charges exemptions
Eye tests 768w
Spectacles 29-30w

Optical fibres
Land ownership & tenure 574w

Opticians
Family health services authorities 606w
Pay 606w, 608w

Orange badge scheme
21w

Orders & regulations
Civil service agencies (26:10:93) 695-7

Ordination of Women (Financial Provisions) Measure 1993
Debates etc.
(29:10:93) 1083-151

Ordnance Survey
797w
Land Registry Office 416w

Organ donors
(20:10:93) 298-300, 610-1w

Organic farming
778w
EC countries 778w
Food imports 778w

Organisation for Economic Cooperation & Development
Science & technology research 268w

Organophosphorous pesticides
Birds 777-8w
Fish 777w

Orimulsion
Licensing 651w

Orkney
Wind power 576w

Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Debates etc.
Assisted Areas Orders 1993 (27:10:93) 931
National Lottery Etc Bill, Lords amendts (20:10:93) 330-1

Ostriches
Import of live animals 563-4w

Ottaway, Mr Richard
Debates etc.
Defence estimates (18:10:93) 50, 99-102

Outdoor education
367w, 436w
Finance 367w
Safety 449w

Overseas aid
17-20, 811-2w
Bosnia-Herzegovina 102w
Forest protection 102w
India 812w
Kenya 731w
Nicaragua 103w
Pakistan 812w
Palestine Liberation Organisation 18
Sudan 102w
Yugoslavia 103w, 418w

Overseas Development
see Foreign & Commonwealth Office

Overseas Development Administration
412-3w

Overseas students
EC countries 786-7w
Northern Ireland 786-7w

Overseas trade
Fish farming 274w

Owner occupied housing
266-7

Oxford University
Radioactive wastes 823w

Ozone layer
Air pollution control 253w

PA Consulting Group
804-5w

Packaging
195-6w
EC action (28:10:93) 1073
Measurement 722-3w

Page, Mr Richard
Debates etc.
Public Accounts Committee (25:10:93) 612-5, 652-3
Questions
Fish conservation 784w
Maxwell Pensioners' Trust 508-9w
Motorways, Porous asphalt 431w

Paice, Mr James
Debates etc.
Coal mining (27:10:93) 841
National Lottery Etc Bill, Lords amendts (20:10:93) 333-4
Questions
Contracts for services 573
Primary education, Expenditure 283-6w

Paisley, Rev Ian
Debates etc.
Bombings, Northern Ireland (25:10:93) 580-1
Defence estimates (18:10:93) 38-9, (19:10:93) 218-20
Education & Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1993 (26:10:93) 748, 750, 755-8, 766
Northern Ireland (22:10:93) 519-24, 526
Priests (Ordination of Women) Measures 1993 (29:10:93) 1131, 1136-9
Questions
Anglo-Irish talks 143

Pakistan
Capital punishment 411w
Overseas aid 812w

Palace of Westminster
771w

Palestine Liberation Organisation
Overseas aid 18

Paramedical staff
Ambulance services 681-2

Parcelforce
577w

Pardon for Soldiers of the Great War Bill 1992/93
Debates etc.
1R (19:10:93) 159-61

Parents Opposed to Opting-Out
Government grants 441-2w

Parish constables
215w, 220w

Parish wardens
220w

Parishes
Finance 707w

Parking offences
22w

Parks
Nature conservation 494w

Parliamentary building maintenance & repair
669w

Parliamentary buildings
Asbestos 669-70w

Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration
Open government 2w

Parliamentary furnishings
347w

Parliamentary questions
406w
Leader of the House of Commons 811w

Parliamentary Works Office
Manpower 669w

Parole Board
Public appointments 454w

Parry, Mr Robert
Questions
Angola, Peace negotiations 812w
Arafat, Yasser 590w
Criminal injuries compensation 548w
Criminal injuries compensation, Administrative delays 547-8w
Criminal injuries compensation, Merseyside 547w
Criminal Injuries Compensation Board 547w
Deportation, Departmental correspondence 799-800w
India, Foreign policy 732-3w
Kashmir, Foreign policy 733w
North Korea, South Korea 818w

Partnership for change
Conferences 193w, 265w

Party conferences
144
Conservative Party 528w, 652w
Security 239-40w, 528w, 652w

Passive smoking
Industrial health & safety 474-5w

Passports
Serafimowicz, Siemion 715w

Patchett, Mr Terry
Debates etc.
Coal mining (27:10:93) 854-5, 914

Patent Office
Contracts for services 202w

Paternity leave
366w

Patients
Nerve damage 605w
NHS trusts 628w

Patient's Charter
36w, 501w, 602-3w

"Patient's Charter News"
501w

Patten, John
558w

Patten, Rt Hon John, Secretary of State for Education
Questions
Birmingham Education Authority 558w

Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Debates etc.
Defence estimates (18:10:93) 65-7

Pawsey, Mr James
Debates etc.
NHS administration (21:10:93) 409
Police Responsibilities & Rewards Inquiry (28:10:93) 989
Questions
Grant maintained schools 436w
Standard spending assessments 250w

Pay
130
Dentists 610w
Family doctors 695w
Judges 6w
Medical profession 693-4w
Opticians 606w, 608w
Teachers (26:10:93) 772-96

PAYE
Debts written off 750w

Peace negotiations
Angola 812w
Sudan 79-80w

Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Debates etc.
Coal mining (20:10:93) 282, (27:10:93) 879-82
Questions
Hospitals, Tobacco 502w
Industrial health & safety, Passive smoking 474-5w
Industrial health & safety. Smoking 475w
M1-M62 link, Road construction 200w
Office of Population Censuses & Surveys 697w
Water charges, Yorkshire & Humberside 274

Peat
Ecolabelling 652w
Environment protection 652-3w
Nature conservation 566w

Peat bogs
Environment protection 652-3w
Nature conservation 789w
Northern Ireland 789w
Set-aside schemes 566w
Wales 644-5w

Pedestrians
Road accidents 808w

Penal reform
Prison Officers' Association 132-3w

Pendle
Prescriptions 841w

Pendry, Mr Tom
Debates etc.
National Lottery Etc Bill, Lords amendts (20:10:93) 323-4, 330, 332-3, 337-9, 346, 351-2, 355-7, 361
Questions
Tourist industry, Deregulation initiative 560

Pennines
Road construction 807w

Pension funds
Maxwell companies 594-5w
Post Office 577w, 645-6w

Pension Law Review Committee
166w, 329-30w

Pension Schemes Bill (HL) 1992/93
Debates etc.
Order relating to Com (29:10:93) 1151-2

Pension Schemes (Northern Ireland) Bill (HL) 1992/93
Debates etc.
Order relating to Com (29:10:93) 1151-2

Pensioners
Consumer durables 595-6w
Energy prices 9, 822-3
NHS charges exemptions 33-4w, 317w
Personal income 3-5, 8-9, 164w
Shareholders 168-9w
Standard of living 12

Pensions
EC countries 222-3w

Performance appraisal
Post Office 577w

Personal equity plans
Tax allowances 13w

Personal income
166-7w
Housing 756w
Pensioners 3-5, 8-9, 164w

Personal pensions
11-2, 225w, 848w
Occupational pensions 167w

Personal social services
Local government expenditure 768-9w

Pest control
Fisheries 797w
Wildfowl 383w

Pesticide residues
Food contamination 797-8w
Industrial health & safety 177w

Pesticides
798w

Petrol
Scarisbrick (29:10:93) 1081

Pharmaceutical price regulation scheme
694-5w

Pickthall, Mr Colin
Debates etc.
Low pay, Lancashire (28:10:93) 1078
Scarisbrick, Public petitions (29:10:93) 1081
Questions
Road transport workers, Driving licences 757w
Timesharing 157w

Piers
Scotland 62w

Pig Disease Eradication Fund
Finance 799w

Pigs
Slaughterhouses 568w

Pike, Mr Peter L
Debates etc.
Low pay, Lancashire (28:10:93) 1074-9
Oral question time point of order (19:10:93) 130
Questions
Child Support Agency 331w
Council housing, Lancashire 348-9w
Council housing, Lone parent families 253-4w, 348w
Council tax, Single people 264
Driving instruction, Motorways 22w
First time buyers 255w
Gypsies, Caravan sites 87-8w
Homelessness, Lancashire 349w
House renovation grants, Lancashire 829-30w
Housing, Lancashire 349-50w
Housing investment programmes, Lancashire 536-8w

Pike, Mr Peter L—continued
Local government revenue, Lancashire 348-9w
Low pay, Lancashire 129
Maintenance 377-8w
Mortgage relief, First time buyers 279w
Motorway service areas, Aids for handicapped 298-9w
Myalgic encephalomyelitis 607w
Myalgic encephalomyelitis, Medical research 606-7w
NHS trusts 758-61w
Noise, Complaints 281w
Noise control 278-9w
Parking offences 22w
Planning permission, Housing construction 417w
Regional health authorities 758w
Sex education 101-2w
Social security recipients, Lone parents 330-1w

Planning compensation
Mining 653w

Planning permission
Areas of outstanding natural beauty 787w
Environment protection 320w
Extractive industries 532w
Fish farming 274w
Housing construction 417w
Inverclyde enterprise zone 41-2w
Kirkstall Valley 282w
Mining 653w
Opencast mining 539w
Torness power station 623-4w

Plant power
Buses 298w

Plastic surgery
Queen Victoria Hospital 502w

Plumstead
Police 557w

Police
215w, 556w, 969
Channel tunnel 546w
Gypsies 545-6w
Injuries 387w
Life expectancy 386w, 546w
Manpower 546w
Plumstead 557w
Protective clothing 715w
United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority 156w

Police authorities
Detection rates 642w

Police cautions
146-50w, 237-8w, 546w, 551-4w
Codes of practice 216w
Departmental circulars 546w

Police committees
65w
Ministry of Defence police 64-5w, 326-7w
Northern Ireland Airports Police 94w

Police custody
127w

Police discipline
West Midlands Police 556w

Police equipment
Export controls 400w

Police Federation of England & Wales
473-4w

Police informers
Northern Ireland 677w

Police powers
Trespass 222w

"Police Reform White Paper"
64w, 156w

Police Responsibilities & Rewards Inquiry
64w, 94w, 151w, 156w, 271w, 386-7w, 473-4w, 546w, (28:10:93) 994

Police Responsibilities & Rewards Inquiry—continued
Ministerial statements (28:10:93) 975-89
Public appointments 386w
Travelling expenses 386w

Political refugees
Immigrant detainees 458w
Immigration applications 239w

Pollution control
Lead pollution 532w

Pollution monitoring
Irish Sea 87w

Polychlorinated terphenyls
90-1w

Pool Reinsurance Company
302w

Porcine somatotropin
563w

Porous asphalt
Motorways 431w

Porpoises
570w

Porter, Mr Barry
Debates etc.
Northern Ireland (22:10:93) 510
Questions
Family credit, Expenditure 163w

Porter, Mr David
Questions
Alzheimer's disease 503w
Business questions 392
Curriculum, Educational assessment 448w
Forestry, Agricultural land 512-3w
Horticulture, EC action 513w
Pig Disease Eradication Fund, Finance 799w
Powers of attorney, Mentally handicapped 419w
Probation committees, Kent 454w
Regional health authorities, Public appointments 611w
Standards specifications, Environment protection 804w

Portillo, Rt Hon Michael, Chief Secretary to the Treasury
Questions
Cash limits, Government departments 752w
Local government expenditure, Unemployment 14w
Members' pensions, Prime Ministers 425w
Treasury, Doyle, Patrick 382w

Portrush Hotel & Catering College
Student numbers 680w

Post Office
Pension funds 577w, 645-6w
Performance appraisal 577w
Privatisation 577w

Post Office Counters
577w

Post traumatic stress disorder
33w
Counselling 463w

Postal deliveries
Fees & charges 577-8w

Potato marketing scheme
776w

Potatoes
Northern Ireland 678-9w

Poultry
Animal welfare 777w

Powell, Mr Ray
Questions
Access to Parliament, Disabled workers 771w
House of Commons accommodation, Members' facilities 233w
House of Commons Chamber 347w

Powell, Mr Ray—continued
Parliamentary building maintenance & repair 669w
Parliamentary furnishings 347w
Refreshment Dept, Modernisation 810w

PowerGen
426w

Powers of attorney
Mentally handicapped 419w

Pregnancy
Folic acid 501w

Pregnant women
Armed forces discharges 492-3w, 704-6w

Premium bonds
11-2w

Prentice, Mrs Bridget
Debates etc.
NHS administration (21:10:93) 408
Questions
Crimes of violence, South London 144w
Criminal statistics, Lewisham 143-4w
Nurses, Career structure 30w
Smoking 31w
Smoking, Death 32w
Smoking, Women 31-2w
Smoking, Young people 32w
Unemployment benefits, Expenditure 6
Young offenders, Greater London 146-50w

Prentice, Mr Gordon
Questions
Chemists shops, Prescriptions 841w
Citizen's Charter, Compensation 494-5w
Commissioner for the Rights of Trade Union Members 669w
Contact lenses, Optical charges 679-80
Directors, Disqualifications 722w
Ethnic minorities, Local government finance 713w
Local Government Commission for England, Expenditure 533w
Local government reform 416w
NHS Policy Board, Public appointments 696w
Road construction, Pennines 807w
Vacancies, Lancashire 598w
VAT, Publications 751w

Prescription charges
Chronically sick 606w
Hormone treatments 609w

Prescription charges exemptions
680

Prescription drugs
Disclosure of information 318w

Prescriptions
343w
Chemists shops 841w
Nicotine patches 767w
Pendle 841w

Press advertising
Companies Registration Office (England & Wales) 806w

Prices
Agricultural products 187w
Bread 188w
Wheat 188w, 563-4w
Whisky 420w

Priests (Ordination of Women) Measure 1993
Debates etc.
(29:10:93) 1083-151

Primarolo, Ms Dawn
Debates etc.
NHS administration (21:10:93) 411
Questions
Cereal products, Folic acid 777w
Community nurses, Manpower 37w
Deaf, Mental health services 501w
Extra contractual referrals 696w
Family doctors, Pay 695w
Folic acid, Pregnancy 501w

Primarolo, Ms Dawn—continued
Footwear 767w
German measles, Vaccination 695w
GP fundholders 678
Hospital consultants, Merit awards 695-6w
Hospital waiting lists 695w
Hospitals, Government grants 834w
Junior hospital doctors, Working hours 609w, 766-7w
NHS finance 501w
NHS Management Executive, Expenditure 608w
NHS Management Executive, Leeds 696w
Personal income, Housing 756w
Pharmaceutical price regulation scheme 694-5w
Primary health care, Inner London boroughs 695w
RU486 609w
Smoking, Young people 694w
Surgery, Death 766w

Primary education
Cost per pupil 444-6w
Expenditure 283-6w
Science education 574
Sex education 813w
Teacher training 558w

Primary health care
Inner London boroughs 695w

Prime Minister
Government buildings 267w
Official hospitality 428w
Operating costs 266-7w

Prime Ministers
Members' pensions 425w

Prison accommodation
119-21w, 125-6w

Prison administration
Wolds Remand Prison 118w

Prison conditions
134-6w

Prison discipline
130-1w
Blakenhurst Prison 237w, 455w

Prison employment
107-12w
Blakenhurst Prison 456w

Prison escapes
457w
Greater London 551w
Group 4 Securitas 457w

Prison medical services
Dental services 149w

Prison Officers' Association
Penal reform 132-3w

Prison ombudsman
Public appointments 106w

Prison overcrowding
121w, 126w

Prison population
118-27w
Blakenhurst Prison 126-7w
Crimes of violence 642w
Wolds Remand Prison 126-7w
Young offenders 459-60w

Prison riots
Blakenhurst Prison 715-6w
Wymott Prison 115w, 271-2w

Prison sentences
136-42w
Costs 133w
Young offenders 462w

Prison Service
132-3w, 213-4w, 551w
Contracts for services 131-2w
Management consultants 131-2w

Prison Service Agency
134-6w
Performance standards 458w

Prison staff
Blakenhurst Prison 455-6w, 716w
Crimes of violence 105w, 130-1w, 460-1w
Manpower 395-400w

Prisoner escorts
129w
Complaints 128-9w
Contracts for services 128w
East Midlands 128-30w
Greater London 551w
Group 4 Securitas 128w

Prisoners
Blood donors 399w
China 80w
Drug abuse 132w, 221w
Fine defaulters 132-3w, 388-90w
Homosexuality 391w
Per capita costs 389-91w

Prisoners on remand
122-6w
Young offenders 391-3w

Prisoners' release
Life imprisonment 105w
Take-up of employment 387w

Prisoners' transfers
Northern Ireland 270w
Wymott Prison 113-4w

Prisons
213-4w
Construction 112-4w, 214-6w, 388w
Contracts for services 115w
Guard dogs 115-6w
Northern Ireland 467w
Operating costs 389-91w

Privacy
Medical records 840w
Rape 708-9w

Private bills
House of Commons standing orders (26:10:93) 671

Private rented housing
Landlords 415w
Right to buy 534w
Scotland 688w

Private sector
Nursing homes 497w

Privatisation
Belfast Airport 319w
British Coal Corporation 399w
British Rail 25-6w, 235w, 433w, 541w, 758w, 969-70
Bus services 22w
Companies Registration Office (England & Wales) 157w
Forestry Commission 782-3w, 959
Former Ministers (20:10:93) 297
Northern Ireland 381
Post Office 577w
PSA Building Management 351-2w
Railway fares 25-6w
Skillcentres 138, 366w
Transport & Road Research Laboratory 809w

Privy Council
Official hospitality 233w

Probate Registry Cardiff
419w

Probation committees
Kent 454w
Suffolk 454w

Probation Service Bill (HL) 1992/93
Debates etc.
Order relating to Com (29:10:93) 1151-2

Processed food
773w

Procurement
Computers in National Health Service 345w
Public utilities 301-2w

Professional misconduct
Family doctors 769-70w

"Progress of Nations"
812w

Prohibition notices
Motor vehicle safety 431w

Property insurance
Terrorism 302w

Property transfer
Armed forces housing 701w
Ministry of Defence 701w
Redundant churches 202-3w

Prosecutions
14-5
Fishing vessels 189-90w
Fraud 104w
Low pay 477w
Racial incitement 708w
Radioactive Substances Act 1960 656-8w
Rape 709-14w
Unfair trading practices 383w
Young offenders 103w

Protective clothing
Police 715w

Provisional IRA
see IRA

Provisional Sinn Fein
see Sinn Fein

PSA Building Management
Privatisation 351-2w
Redundancy 415w

PSA Services
(25:10:93) 591-662

PSV operators licences
544w

Public Accounts Committee
(19:10:93) 147-58, (25:10:93) 591-662, 781w

Public appointments
Advisory Committee on Novel Foods & Processes 568-9w
BBC 638w
British Transport Police Committee 20w
Dept of Social Security 171w
Development agencies 46-50w
Director of Passenger Rail Franchising 544w
District health authorities 345w
EC Committee of the Regions 735-8w
Energy Advisory Panel 577w, 647-9w
Funding Agency for Schools 668-9w
Health authorities 345w
NHS 309w
NHS Policy Board 696w, 840-1w
NHS trusts 345w
Parole Board 454w
Police Responsibilities & Rewards Inquiry 386w
Prison ombudsman 106w
Regional health authorities 344w, 611w
Scotland's Travelling People Advisory Committee 482w
Sheffield Community & Priority Care Services NHS Trust 344w
South & East Cheshire Health Authority 502w
UK Ecolabelling Board 824w
Welsh Development Agency 781w
Welsh Language Board 821-2w
West Midlands Regional Health Authority 344w

Public bodies
Wales 643-4w

Public expenditure
Agriculture 182-3w

Public holidays
352w

Public meetings
Civil servants 369-70w

Public order policing
British National Party 557w

Public petitions
London Regional Transport (29:10:93) 1082
Residential care (22:10:93) 482

Public petitions—continued
Scarisbrick (29:10:93) 1081
Standard spending assessments (22:10:93) 481

Public Record Office
3-4w

Public records
3w
Codes of practice 3-4w
Nuclear weapons tests 495-6w
Royal Free NHS Trust 4-5w
Special Operations Executive 242w

Public relations
Dept for Education 262w

Public sector employment
Age discrimination 476w
Disabled workers 353-4w
Recruitment 208w

Public sector housing
Northern Ireland 465-6w

Public service
659w

Public service vehicles
Motor vehicle testing 807w
Northern Ireland 95w

Public Trustee
Civil service agencies 793-4w

Public utilities
Government shareholding 426w
Procurement 301-2w

Publications
History 771w
NHS Management Executive 312-4w
VAT 243-4w, 352w, 570w, 677w, 751w

Publicity
Citizen's Charter 571
Electoral register 271w
"Scotland in the Union Partnership for Good" 624w

Publishing
Manpower 352w

Pupil-teacher ratios
743-4w

Purchase, Mr Ken
Questions
Community care, Occupational therapists 686
Inflation 972

Quarry House
318w
Contracts for services 331w

Quarrying
Highlands of Scotland 683w

Queen Victoria Hospital
Plastic surgery 502w

Quin, Ms Joyce
Questions
Unemployment, Basildon 132-3
VAT, Energy prices 847w

Quota of disabled workers
338w, 353-4w

Rabies
EC action 273w

Racial attacks
716w, (28:10:93) 999-1038
Homicide 717w

Racial discrimination
Armed forces 703w

Racial harassment
716w
Evans, Anthony 62w

Racial incitement
Prosecutions 708w

Radar
Arms embargoes 575w

Radiation hazards
Gibraltar 519w
Iraq-Kuwait conflict 85w
Nuclear submarines 368w
RAF Fylingdales 63w
Sellafield 771w
Wylfa power station 162-3w

Radio engineering
BBC 102w

Radioactive materials
303w

Radioactive Substances Act 1960
Questions
Prosecutions 656-8w

Radioactive waste disposal
AWE Aldermaston 800w
Dounreay 628w
Drigg 720-1w
Harwell 826w
Irish Sea 87w
Russia 661w
Sea pollution 512w, 661w
Sellafield 252-3w
THORP 153w, 252w

Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee
252-3w
Health physics 826w

Radioactive wastes
724-5w
AWE Aldermaston 62w
EC countries 153w
Health hazards 505-6w
Oxford University 823w

Radioactivity
Sellafield 211w
Solway Firth 628w

Radon gas
Deeside 825

RAF Aston Down
Bovine tuberculosis 566w

RAF Fylingdales
Radiation hazards 63w

RAF Hendon
Land acquisition 60-2w
Listed buildings 61w

RAF Inspectorate of Flight Safety
60w

RAF Museum
61w

RAF Upper Heyford
702w

RAF West Drayton
522w

Railtrack
20w, 235w

Railway accidents
Bournemouth 27w

Railway fares
Privatisation 25-6w

Railway network
Barking 19-20w
Channel tunnel 638-9w, 809w, (29:10:93) 1153-60
East Sussex 433w
Heathrow Airport 26w
Manchester Airport 199-200w

Railway transport
Bicycles 433w

Railway travel
East Lothian 622w
South London 433w

Railways Bill 1992/93
Questions
390-1

Rampton Hospital
Ministers' domestic visits 499-500w

Ramsar Convention
534-5w

Rape
454w, 713w
Criminal proceedings 222w
Privacy 708-9w
Prosecutions 709-14w

Rate rebates
Sports facilities 89w

Rathbone, Mr Tim
Questions
Curriculum, Northern Ireland 376
Health education, Drug abuse 686w
Housing construction, East Sussex 261-2
Science & technology policy 493w
South East Arts Board 471w
Vocational training 138

Rating of Plant & Machinery Review
531w, 721w

Raynsford, Mr Nick
Debates etc.
London Regional Transport, Public petitions (29:10:93) 1082
Standard spending assessments, Public petitions (22:10:93) 481
Questions
Citizen's Charter, Publicity 571
Docklands light railway, Construction 254w
Docklands light railway, Greenwich 200w
Dreadnought Seamen's Hospital 36w
Energy costs 401-2w
Environmental policy, Departmental publications 281w
Homelessness 255w, 280w
Housing association grant 267
Housing benefits, Social security benefits rates 168w
Housing construction, Community care 281w
Leasehold housing, Advisory services 194w, 831w
Local government revenue 255-6w
Low incomes, Family income 7-8
NHS trusts, South East Thames Regional Health Authority 496w
Youth unemployment, Greater London 210w

Rea Committee
see Northern Ireland School Examinations & Assessment Council

Reading
Bombings 970-1
Buses 298w

"Realising Our Potential White Paper"
493-4w

Recruitment
Public sector employment 208w

Recycling
195w
Domestic wastes 39w
Northern Ireland 789w
Scotland 39-40w

Red flag exercises
527-8w

Redmond, Mr Martin
Debates etc.
Business questions (18:10:93) 22
Questions
Air force, Armed forces training 57-8w
Ancient monuments, Architectural conservation 272-3w, 376w, 677w, 786w, 822w
Ancient monuments, Northern Ireland Office 677w
Armed forces training, Tornado aircraft 57w
Automated low flying enquiry & notification system 60w
B52 bombers, Airmisses 528w
Brodsworth Hall, Architectural conservation 472-3w
Bus services, Competition 299w

Redmond, Mr Martin—continued
Caesarean sections 499w
Central line, Closures 299-300w
Children's Homes Staff Selection Inquiry 604w
Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, Offices 233w
Community health councils 497w
Computers in National Health Service, Procurement 345w
11 Downing Street, Carpets 244w
Emergency planning, Government grants 386w
Exchange rate mechanism 849w
Extra contractual referrals 498w
F15 aircraft, Aircraft noise 490w
Family planning, Expenditure 499w
Gas fired power stations 385-6w, 418w, 677w, 823w
Gas fuels, Research 529-30w, 823w
Government buildings, Attorney General 657w
Government buildings, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster 725w
Government buildings, Dept for Education 297w
Government buildings, Dept of Employment 597w
Government buildings, Dept of Health 498w
Government buildings, Dept of the Environment 650-1w
Government buildings, Dept of Trade & Industry 300-1w
Government buildings, Dept of Transport 432w
Government buildings, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 371w
Government buildings, Home Office 460w
Government buildings, Lord Chancellor's Dept 638w
Government buildings, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 566w
Government buildings, Ministry of Defence 528w
Government buildings, Prime Minister 267w
Government buildings, Scottish Office 832w
Government buildings, Treasury 746w
Group 4 Securitas, Prison escapes 457w
Haymand, Martin, Spectacles 699w
Hazardous wastes, Scotland 625w
Hazardous wastes, Waste disposal 531w
Health authorities, Charitable trusts 603w
Home Office, Contempt of court 641w
Hospital patients 692w
Hospital patients, Expenditure 498w
Hospitals, Death 499w
Industrial health & safety, Fertilisers 374w
Interaction of the Body with Radio Emissions from Hand Held Transceivers 574w
Judges 637w
Low flying 50-6w, 489w, 519-26w
Low flying, Air accidents 54w, 527w
Low flying, Air force bases 59w
Low flying, Air routes 51-2w
Low flying, Air safety 52-3w
Low flying, Alaska 58w
Low flying, Canada 522-7w, 698-9w
Low flying, Clayton 523w, 525-6w
Low flying, Complaints 52w, 56w
Low flying, F15 aircraft 53w, 56w
Low flying, Goose Bay 489w
Low flying, Harrier aircraft 51w, 526w
Low flying, Hercules aircraft 53-4w
Low flying, Highlands of Scotland 53w, 56w
Low flying, North East region 55w
Low flying, Skyguard radar 56w
Low flying, South Yorkshire 489w
Low flying, Tornado aircraft 53w, 55w, 523w, 527w
Low flying, USA 524-5w
Low flying, Vulcan aircraft 489w
Low flying, Weather forecasting 522w
Mentally disturbed offenders, Health services 603-4w
Military aircraft 59w
Military aircraft, Air accidents 49w, 60w
Military aircraft, Air safety 60w
Minesweepers, Defence procurement 700w
Miscarriages of justice 551w

Redmond, Mr Martin—continued
Miscarriages of justice, Civil service manpower 553w
Miscarriages of justice, Departmental responsibilities 552-3w
Nerve damage, Patients 605w
NHS complaints 495w
NHS trusts, Public appointments 345w
Nuclear power stations 539-40w
Nuclear power stations, Capital investment 574w
Nuclear weapons tests 699-700w
Nursing homes, Hospital beds 758w
Nursing homes, Private sector 497w
Open prisons 387w
Orimulsion, Licensing 651w
Oxford University, Radioactive wastes 823w
Police, Life expectancy 546w
Police informers, Northern Ireland 677w
Police Responsibilities & Rewards Inquiry 271w, 386-7w
Police Responsibilities & Rewards Inquiry, Public appointments 386w
Police Responsibilities & Rewards Inquiry, Travelling expenses 386w
Political refugees, Immigrant detainees 458w
Prescriptions 343w
Prime Minister, Operating costs 266-7w
Prison escapes 457w
Prison Service Agency, Performance standards 458w
Prisoners' release, Take-up of employment 387w
Prisons, Northern Ireland 467w
Quota of disabled workers 353-4w
RAF Aston Down, Bovine tuberculosis 566w
Rampton Hospital, Ministers' domestic visits 499-500w
Red flag exercises 527-8w
Regional health authorities, Charitable trusts 499w
Regional health authorities, Public appointments 344w
Sexual offences, Compulsorily detained mental patients 553-4w
Sexual offences, Homosexuality 551-2w
Sheffield Community & Priority Care Services NHS Trust, Public appointments 344w
Social security recipients, Lone parents 506-8w
Surgery, Hospitals 495w
Telephone tapping 458-9w
THORP, Departmental correspondence 267w
Tornado aircraft 57-8w
Tornado aircraft, Air accidents 519w
Tornado aircraft, Germany 59w
Trawsfynydd power station, Tourism 376w
University College of Swansea 811w
Valuation Office, Councillors 281-2w
War casualties, Bosnia-Herzegovina 500w
Water supply disconnections, Scotland 613w
Water supply disconnections, Wales 451-2w
Water transport 342w
Weils disease, Health education 692w
Young offenders, Prison population 459-60w

Redundancy
British Aerospace 809
PSA Building Management 415w
Regional health authorities 837w
Temporary employment 333-4w

Redundancy pay
British Coal Corporation 435w
Former Ministers 14w, 746-8w

Redundant churches
Property transfer 202-3w

***Redwood, Rt Hon John**, Secretary of State for Wales*
Debates etc.
Welsh Development Agency (19:10:93) 147-8, 150-8
Welsh Development Agency, Ministerial statements (19:10:93) 147-58
Questions
Arable area payments scheme, Wales 453w
Arable farming, Wales 821w
Church in Wales, Finance 162w
Engineering Centre for Wales 162w

Redwood, Rt Hon John—continued
Environment Wales initiative 375w
Family credit, Social security recipients 780w
Hill livestock allowances, Wales 452-3w, 782w
Housing, Rural areas 643w
Income support, Social security recipients 780-1w
Local government finance, Wales 642-4w
Peat bogs, Wales 644-5w
Public bodies, Wales 644w
Regional planning & development, Wales 376w
Team care valleys project 375w
Urban investment grants, Caerphilly 324-5w
Valleys initiative 234w
Welsh Development Agency, Accounting 781w
Welsh Development Agency, Business expenses 781w
Welsh Development Agency, Company cars 781-2w
Welsh Development Agency, Conflict of interests 781w
Welsh Development Agency, Public appointments 781w
Welsh Office, Expenditure 453w
Welsh Office, Government buildings 821w
Welsh Office, Official hospitality 234w
Welsh Office Drawing Office, Contracts for services 161w

Reed Committee
see Mentally Disordered Offenders Services Review

Refreshment Dept
347-8w
Modernisation 810w

Refrigerators
Chlorofluorocarbons 96w

Refugees
Bosnia-Herzegovina 713w
Council housing 825-6w
Government grants to voluntary organisations 713w
Kenya 731w
London boroughs 825w
Standard spending assessments 825-6w

Reg(EEC)345/92
778-9w

Reg(EEC)1836/93
804w

Reg(EURATOM)3227/76
155w

Regional health authorities
675, 758w, 836w
Charitable trusts 499w
Employment protection 837w
NHS administration 836-7w
Public appointments 344w, 611w
Redundancy 837w

Regional planning & development
Wales 376w

Rehabilitation centres
Alcoholism 499w, 605w

Reid, Dr John
Debates etc.
Defence estimates (18:10:93) 35-6, (19:10:93) 170-1, 177-87
Questions
Economic situation, Lanarkshire 687w

Reinsurance (Acts of Terrorism) Act 1993
Questions
302w

Religious discrimination
Saudi Arabia 273w

Relocation of employees
Dept of Health 318w
Local government reform 39-40w

Remand in custody
Young offenders 549w

Remploy
599w

RENAVAL
Inverclyde 384-5w

Renfrew
Local government reform 819-20

Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Debates etc.
National Lottery Etc Bill, Lords amendts (20:10:93) 324-6
Priests (Ordination of Women) Measures 1993 (29:10:93) 1092
Questions
Queen Victoria Hospital, Plastic surgery 502w
Wind power, Countryside 415w

Rents to mortgages scheme
252w, 255w, 265-6

Republic of Ireland
Nuclear safety 436w

Rescue services
Helicopters 65-8w

Research
Forestry 816
Gas fuels 529-30w, 823w
Invalidity benefits 378w
Road safety 809w

Residential care
601w
Bangor Co Down (22:10:93) 482
Deregulation initiative 309w
Eastern Health & Social Services Board 463-4w
Income support 225-6w, 787w, 789w, 791-2w, 846w
Northern Ireland 787w, 789w, 791-2w
Public petitions (22:10:93) 482

Resignations
Wessex Regional Health Authority 612w

Resources conservation
249w

Respite care
Multiple sclerosis 464w

Retail trade
Whisky 420w

Retirement age
Sex discrimination 5-6, 168w

Retirement pensions
331w, 664w
Social security benefits rules 671w
Women 328-30w

Revenue support grant
Barnet Borough Council 720w
Wandsworth Borough Council 720w

Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art
Annual reports 573w

Rhubarb
964

Richards, Mr Rod
Debates etc.
Coal mining (27:10:93) 838-9
Early day motions, Points of order (27:10:93) 834
Welsh Development Agency (19:10:93) 152
Questions
Arable farming, Wales 821w
Valleys initiative 234w
Vocational training, Young people 138-9
Welsh Language Board, Public appointments 821-2w

Richborough power station
651w

Riddick, Mr Graham
Debates etc.
Coal mining (27:10:93) 836, 842
Northern Ireland (22:10:93) 488, 500, 530-3, 547

Riddick, Mr Graham—continued
Questions
Beer, Measurement 724w
Foreign investment in UK, Scotland 691w

Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm, Secretary of State for Defence
Debates etc.
Defence estimates (18:10:93) 27-44, 47-9, (19:10:93) 192

Right of repair
250w

Right of silence
142w, 219w

Right to buy
Housing associations 266-7
Private rented housing 534w

Riot control weapons
201w, 272w
Export controls 201-2w

Risley Remand Centre
149-50w

River Calder (Welbeck Site) Bill (HL) 1990/91
Debates etc.
Order to proceed in next session (28:10:93) 957

River Medway
Nature conservation 534-5w

River Severn
535-6w

Road accidents
A1 618w
Casualties 16w, 313-4w
Cycling 808w
Drinking & driving 555w
Goods vehicles 543w
Pedestrians 808w
Sowerby bridge 545w
Summertime 683w
Tractors 17w

Road construction
A1-M1 Link 639w
M1-M62 link 200w, 342-3w
M11 341w
M20 807w
Motorways 690
Pennines 807w

Road freight transport
Nuclear weapons 703-4w

Road haulage licences
541-2w, 756w
Goods vehicles 543-4w

Road safety
16w
Bicycles 808w
Dual carriageways 618w
Research 809w
Tractors 17-8w
Urban areas 161w

Road safety education
Cycling 22w

Road signs
Tourism 470w
Tourist information 567-8

Road tax
Tractors 17w

Road tolls
429w
Scotland 478w
Wales 374-5w

Road traffic
A1 617-8w
Crossrail 27w
Motorways 808w

Road traffic control
A38 808w
Greater London 19w

Road traffic control—continued
Wales 645w

Road transport workers
Driving licences 542-3w, 639-40w, 757w

Road works
A38 808w
East Sussex 430w
M25 18w
South Down 213w

Roads
Expenditure 26-7w

Robathan, Mr Andrew
Debates etc.
Defence estimates (18:10:93) 62, (19:10:93) 166, 222-4
Northern Ireland (22:10:93) 494-5, 497, 518
Questions
Army in Northern Ireland 382
Beaches, Sea pollution 268-9
Working hours 208-9w

Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn, Minister of State for Wales
Questions
Environmental education, Wales 819w
European Regional Development Fund, Transport 234w
North East Wales Training & Enterprise Council, Offices 588-9w
Nursery nurses, Wales 376w
Public bodies, Wales 643w
Road safety, Urban areas 161w
Road tolls, Wales 374-5w
Road traffic control, Wales 645w
Training & enterprise councils, Accounting 163w
Training & enterprise councils, Annual reports 819-20w
Trawsfynydd power station, Tourism 376w
VAT, Construction 587w
Welsh Language Board, Finance 578w
Welsh Language Board, Public appointments 821-2w
Welsh Office, Doyle, Patrick 324w
Youth training, Wales 645w

Robertson, Mr George
Questions
Economic situation, Scotland 811
Local government reform, Scotland 814

Robertson, Mr Raymond S
Questions
Brain, Medical rehabilitation 626w
Convention of Scottish Local Authorities 813
Fishery decommissioning scheme 962
Local government reform, Aberdeen 819
Scottish Office Education Dept, Civil service agencies 384w
Transport, Scotland 688w

Robinson, Mr Mark
Debates etc.
Welsh Development Agency (19:10:93) 152
Questions
Tree planting 958-9

Robinson, Mr Peter
Debates etc.
Bombings, Northern Ireland (25:10:93) 584
Education & Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1993 (26:10:93) 761
Northern Ireland (22:10:93) 522, 549
Questions
Anglo-Irish talks 378
Chief Electoral Officer for Northern Ireland, Annual reports 530w
Civil servants, Northern Ireland 793w
Government buildings, Northern Ireland 817w
Motor vehicle testing, Northern Ireland 95w
Public service vehicles, Northern Ireland 95w

Roche, Mrs Barbara
Questions
Arab boycott 412w
Economic recession 144
Languages education, Ethnic minorities 448w
Royal Free Hospital, Hospital closures 610w

Roe, Mrs Marion
Debates etc.
NHS administration (21:10:93) 402
Questions
Pensioners, Standard of living 12
Regional health authorities 675

Rogers, Mr Allan
Debates etc.
Public Accounts Committee (25:10:93) 638-9
Valleys initiative, Points of order (19:10:93) 157, (20:10:93) 296
Welsh Development Agency (19:10:93) 154

Rolling stock
Leaseback arrangements 428-9w
West Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive 756w

Rooker, Mr Jeff
Debates etc.
St Philip's College Birmingham (26:10:93) 800
Questions
Prosecutions 15

Ross, Mr Ernie
Debates etc.
Assisted Areas Orders 1993 (27:10:93) 933-4
Questions
Scottish Enterprise, Finance 683w

Ross, Mr William
Questions
Anglo-Irish talks 377-8
Employment level, EC nationals 679-80w
Farm incomes, Northern Ireland 530w
Income tax, Tax yields 422-3w
Newspaper press, Distributive trade 722w
Nurses, Northern Ireland 678w
Overseas students, EC countries 786-7w
Portrush Hotel & Catering College, Student numbers 680w
Potatoes, Northern Ireland 678-9w
Student numbers, Northern Ireland 679w
VAT, Tax yields 380-1w

Rotherham
Iron & steel industry 137

Rowe, Mr Andrew
Debates etc.
Priests (Ordination of Women) Measures 1993 (29:10:93) 1096, 1105, 1121
Public Accounts Committee (25:10:93) 596-7, 606-9
Questions
Accommodation Agencies Act 1953 650w
Family doctors, Locums 680-1
Science education, Primary education 574
Tourist information, Road signs 567-8

Rowlands, Mr Ted
Debates etc.
Coal mining (27:10:93) 853
Public Accounts Committee (25:10:93) 609-12, 659
Welsh Development Agency (19:10:93) 153-4
Questions
Coal mining, Investment 434w
Social security, Computers in government departments 377w
Welsh Language Board, Finance 578w

Royal Auxiliary Air Force
(18:10:93) 27-120

Royal Charters
654w

Royal Edinburgh Hospital
626w

Royal Free Hospital
Hospital closures 610w

Royal Free NHS Trust
Public records 4-5w

Royal Naval Auxiliary Service
(18:10:93) 27-120

Royal Naval College
368w

Royal Parks Constabulary
473-4w

Royal Regiment of Wales
62w

Royal Ulster Constabulary
382, 677w, (28:10:93) 975-89
Conditions of employment 94w

RU486
609w, 843w

Ruddock, Ms Joan
Questions
Blakenhurst Prison, Crimes of violence 105w
Blakenhurst Prison, Inspections 716w
Blakenhurst Prison, Prison discipline 237w
Blakenhurst Prison, Prison riots 715-6w
Blakenhurst Prison, Prison staff 716w
Category A prisoners 213w
Civil servants, Public meetings 369-70w
Departmental correspondence, Administrative delays 95-6w
Fine defaulters, Prisoners 132-3w, 388-90w
Group 4 Securitas, Civil proceedings 129w
Group 4 Securitas, Manpower 129-30w
Group 4 Securitas, Prisoner escorts 128w
Habitual offenders 133w
Life imprisonment, Homicide 106w
Life imprisonment, Prisoners' release 105w
Manchester Strangeways Prison Riot Inquiry 134-6w
Mentally disturbed offenders 132w
Prison accommodation 121w, 125-6w
Prison discipline 130-1w
Prison employment 107-12w
Prison ombudsman, Public appointments 106w
Prison overcrowding 121w, 126w
Prison population 118-26w
Prison sentences 136-42w
Prison sentences, Costs 133w
Prison Service, Management consultants 131-2w
Prison staff, Crimes of violence 105w, 130-1w, 460-1w
Prison staff, Manpower 395-400w
Prisoner escorts 129w
Prisoner escorts, Complaints 128-9w
Prisoner escorts, Contracts for services 128w
Prisoners, Blood donors 399w
Prisoners, Homosexuality 391w
Prisoners, Per capita costs 389-91w
Prisons 213-4w
Prisons, Construction 112-4w, 388w
Prisons, Guard dogs 115-6w
Racial attacks, Homicide 717w
Racial harassment 716w
Rape 713w
Rape, Prosecutions 709-14w
Therapeutic Regime Prison Services Task Force 127-8w
Wolds Remand Prison 116-7w
Wolds Remand Prison, Codes of practice 116w
Wolds Remand Prison, Contracts for services 117w
Wolds Remand Prison, Crimes of violence 116w
Wolds Remand Prison, Criminal Justice Liaison Committees 116w
Wolds Remand Prison, Libraries 117-8w
Wolds Remand Prison, Manpower 133-4w
Wolds Remand Prison, Prison administration 118w
Wolds Remand Prison, Segregation of prisoners 117w
Wymott Prison, Prison riots 115w
Wymott Prison, Prisoners' transfers 113-4w
Young offenders 393-5w
Young offenders, Crimes of violence 393w
Young offenders, Prison sentences 462w
Young offenders, Prisoners on remand 391-3w
Young offenders, Suicide 717w
Youth custody 549-52w, 557w

Rugby
562
Government grants 561
Sportsgrounds 561

Rugby Football League
561

Rugby Football Union
561

Runciman Committee
see Criminal Justice Royal Commission

Rural areas
Defective housing 94-5w
Housing 643w

Rural development areas
278w

Rural Development Commission
278w

Russia
Ballistic missile defence 729w
Elections 278w
Nuclear weapons 731w
Radioactive waste disposal 661w

Sackville, Mr Tom, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept of Health
Questions
Abortion, NHS 835w
Accident & emergency departments 678-9
Accident & emergency departments, Hospital beds 36w
Ambulance services, Emergency calls 36-7w, 306-8w
Ambulance services, Paramedical staff 681-2
Asthma, Air pollution 236w
"A-Z of Quality: a Guide to Quality Initiatives in the NHS" 35w
Barnet Health Authority 601w
Bed & breakfast accommodation 694w
Breast cancer, Medical research 346w
Caesarean sections 499w
Cervical cancer, Screening 696-7w
Community care 682-3
Community nurses, Manpower 37w
Computers in National Health Service, Procurement 345w
Creutzfeldt-Jakob dementia 697w
Dental health, Cancer 693w
Dentists, Medical equipment 29w
Dentists, Pay 610w
Depo-medrone 315-6w
Dept of Health, Doyle, Patrick 346w
Dept of Health, Government buildings 842w
Dept of Health, House of Commons broadcasting 33w
Dept of Health, Official hospitality 235w
Dept of Health, Relocation of employees 318w
Diabetes 607w
Diabetes, Medical equipment 693w
Diseases, Classification schemes 838-40w
Dreadnought Seamen's Hospital 36w
East Yorkshire Health Authority, Construction 842w
Extra contractual referrals 696w
Family doctors, Equal opportunities 27-8w
Family doctors, Pay 695w
Family planning, Expenditure 499w
Fertility, Medical treatments 35w
Folic acid, Pregnancy 501w
Food inspection, Complaints 835w
Footwear 767w
German measles, Vaccination 695w
Greenwich Healthcare NHS Trust, Tomography 835-6w
Harlow Wood Orthopaedic Hospital 602w
Health authorities, Budgeting 343-4w
Health authorities, Charitable trusts 603w
Health hazards, Uranium 834w
Health services, Elderly 692w
Hospital closures 836w
Hospital patients, Expenditure 498w
Hospital patients, Industrial accidents 601w
Hospital staff, Crimes of violence 317w
Hospital waiting lists 679
Hospitals, Death 499w
Hospitals, Government grants 834w
Hospitals, Tobacco 502w
Hypothermia, Death 842w
Industrial health & safety, Health education 35w

Sackville, Mr Tom—continued
London Ambulance Service 311w, 681-2
London Ambulance Service, Computers 312w
London Ambulance Service, Information technology 312w
Maternity services 37w
Medical education, Expenditure 28-9w
Medical examinations, Social security benefits 36w
Medical records, Privacy 840w
Methicillin resistant 843w
Myalgic encephalomyelitis 607w
Myalgic encephalomyelitis, Medical research 606-7w
Nerve damage, Patients 605w
NHS, Administrative costs 770w
NHS charges exemptions 34w
NHS charges exemptions, Pensioners 33-4w
NHS finance 501w, 602w
NHS Management Executive, Expenditure 608w
NHS Management Executive, Publications 312-4w
NHS Supplies Authority 315w
NHS trusts 758-61w
NHS trusts, Accounting 316w
NHS trusts, Contracts for services 345w
NHS trusts, Directors 837w
NHS trusts, Finance 310w, 761w
NHS trusts, Government grants 762-6w
NHS trusts, South East Thames Regional Health Authority 496w
Northumbria Ambulance NHS Trust, Accounting 311w
Nurses, Career structure 30w, 314-5w
Nurses, Uniforms 311w
Office of Population Censuses & Surveys 697w
Ophthalmology, Hospital waiting lists 29w
Optical charges, Spectacles 34-5w
Optical charges exemptions, Spectacles 29-30w
Personal social services, Local government expenditure 768-9w
Pharmaceutical price regulation scheme 694-5w
Prescription drugs, Disclosure of information 318w
Queen Victoria Hospital, Plastic surgery 502w
Regional health authorities, Charitable trusts 499w
Road accidents, Casualties 313-4w
Royal Free Hospital, Hospital closures 610w
RU486 609w, 843w
Smoking 31w
Smoking, Death 32w
Smoking, NHS 315w
Smoking, Women 31-2w
Smoking, Young people 32w, 694w
Surgery 33w, 308-9w
Surgery, Death 766w
Surgery, Hospitals 500w
Tinnitus 605w
Tinnitus, Government grants to voluntary organisations 605w
Transplant surgery 610-1w
Vaccination, Children 605-6w
Wakefield & Pontefract Community Health NHS Trust 682
Weils disease, Health education 692w
Worcester Health Authority 838w
Youth unemployment, Yorkshire & Humberside 305-6w

Safer cities scheme
217-8w, (28:10:93) 999-1038

Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim, Minister for Industry
Debates etc.
Assisted Areas Orders 1993 (27:10:93) 926-8, 940
European Economic Area Bill (HL), 2R & Com (21:10:93) 414-9, 424
Questions
Assisted areas 723-4w
Assisted areas, Essex 155w
Assisted areas, Southend-on-Sea 402-4w
EC grants & loans, Merseyside 245-6w

Sainsbury, Rt Hon Tim—continued
European Coal & Steel Community, Exchange risk guarantee scheme 435w
Iron & steel Employees' readaptation benefits scheme 804w
Jetstream aircraft 245w
KONVER programme 303-4w, 645w, 803w
Swan Hunter Shipbuilders, Shipbuilding Intervention Fund 246w

St Pancras
638-9w

St Philip's College Birmingham
(26:10:93) 797-804

Salmon
Fish farming 38w
Scotland 38w

Salmond, Mr Alex
Debates etc.
Assisted Areas Orders 1993 (27:10:93) 930, 936
Heating allowances (28:10:93) 1048, 1057, 1063-7, 1069
Questions
Economic situation, Scotland 809
Environmental education, Scotland 42w
Local government reform, Emergency services 201w
Local government reform, Relocation of employees 39-40w
Local government reform, Scotland 40-1w
Recycling, Domestic wastes 39w
Recycling, Scotland 40w
Scottish councils, Environment protection 38w
Securities & Investments Board 6w
Tractors, Road accidents 17w
Tractors, Road safety 17-8w
Tractors, Road tax 17w

Sanctions
Serbia 265-6w
Yugoslavia 204w

Saudi Arabia
Religious discrimination 273w

Scarisbrick
Petrol (29:10:93) 1081
Public petitions (29:10:93) 1081

Schizophrenia
36w
Homicide 606w
Suicide 606w

School administration
Sheffield 368w

School Curriculum & Assessment Authority
368w, 439-40w, 558w

School Examinations & Assessment Council
558w

School milk
EC grants & loans 182w, 274-5w

School population
558w
Grant maintained schools 450-2w

Schools
Inspections 292-3w, 813-4w
Northern Ireland (26:10:93) 748-71

Science & technology
Expenditure 236w

Science & technology policy
493-4w, 573

Science & technology research
574-5
Organisation for Economic Cooperation & Development 268w

Science education
Primary education 574

Science Museum
573w

Scotcare Brain Injury Rehabilitation Unit
626w

Scotland
A1 617-8w
Accommodation agencies 691w
Agricultural land 784w
Ambulance services 483-4w
Ancient monuments 785-6w
Arable area payments scheme 631-6w, 689-90w
Architectural conservation 43-4w
Breast cancer 620-2w
British Aerospace 809
Children's hearings 612w
Children's panels 44-6w
Community councils 248w
Cystic fibrosis 622-3w
Day nurseries 688w
Death 624-6w
Dental services 613-5w
Dentists 614w
Development agencies 46-50w
District courts 478w
Economic situation 809-11
Energy prices 822-3
Environmental education 42w
Environmental policy 686w
European Regional Development Fund 383w, 687w
Fertility 622w
Fire alarms 691-2w
Foreign investment in UK 691w
Government buildings 831-2w
Hazardous wastes 625w
Health education 686w
Health services 619w, 625w
Heart diseases 619w
Hill livestock allowances 784w, 832-3w
Hospital waiting lists 615-7w
House condition survey 687w
Housing insulation 686w
Housing standards 823-6
Lead pipes 690-1w
Licensing laws 820-1
Local government constituencies 682w
Local government reform 39-41w, 201w, 332w, 479w, 631w, 682w, 813-4, 817-20, 822, 832w
Local government services 687w
Lost working days 832w
Maintenance 170w
Mental illness specific grant 633w
Mentally handicapped 691w
New towns 684-6w
New towns development corporations 684-6w, 821-2
NHS 823-4
NHS trusts 628w, 688-9w, 811-3
Open government 686-7w
Ophthalmology 42-4w
Piers 62w
Private rented housing 688w
Recycling 39-40w
Road tolls 478w
Salmon 38w
Sea transport 319w
Sheep premiums 247-8w, 482-3w, 630w, 833w
Shellfish 625-8w
Smoke alarms 37w, 784w
Suckler cow premiums 833w
Summertime 683w
Sunday trading 686w
Toys & games 484w
Transport 688w
Transport of radioactive materials 726-7w
Travelling people 480-2w
Unemployment 810
Unfair trading practices 383w
Water supply disconnections 613w, 629w, 813
Water supply industry 629w
Wildfowl 383w
Women's employment 691w
Working hours 613w

"Scotland in the Union Partnership for Good"
683w
Publicity 624w

Scotland's Travelling People Advisory Committee
482w
Public appointments 482w

Scott, Rt Hon Nicholas, Minister for Social Security and Disabled People
Debates etc.
Heating allowances (28:10:93) 1047-53
Questions
Handicap benefits 224-5w
Independent Living 1993 Fund, Local government functions 594w
Industrial disablement benefits, Social security claims 511w
Industrial injuries scheme, Shipbuilding 846w
Invalidity benefits, Medical examinations 223-4w, 230-1w
Invalidity benefits, Research 378w
Invalidity benefits, Social security appeals 224w
Invalidity benefits, Social security recipients 168w, 224-5w, 670-1w
Invalidity benefits, Voluntary work 846w
Maintenance, Children 7
Sickness benefits, Departmental correspondence 378w
Social security benefits 164w, 166w
Social security recipients, Medical certificates 232w, 246-7w
Supplementary benefits 224w
Unemployment 7
Unemployment benefits, Expenditure 6

Scott Inquiry
see Arms to Iraq Inquiry

Scottish Cancer Coordinating Committee
620w

Scottish Cancer Therapy Network
620w

Scottish Cancer Trials Office
479w

Scottish councils
Environment protection 38w

Scottish Development Agency
46-50w

Scottish Enterprise
46-50w, 684-6w, 691w
Finance 683w

Scottish Environment Protection Agency
619-20w, 629-30w

Scottish Fish Merchants Federation
784w

Scottish Grand Committee
(19:10:93) 158, (21:10:93) 413

Scottish Hydro Electric
426w, 647w

Scottish Land Court Bill (HL) 1992/93
Debates etc.
Order relating to Com (29:10:93) 1151-2

Scottish Natural Heritage
383w

Scottish Nuclear
623-4w

Scottish Office
Civil service dispersal 783w
Civil service manpower 785w
Doyle, Patrick 385w
Government buildings 832w
House of Commons broadcasting 478w
Information services 783w
Official hospitality 483w

Scottish Office Education Dept
Civil service agencies 384w

Scottish Power
426w

Scottish Power Telecommunications
647w

Scottish Tourist Board
479-80w

Screening
Cervical cancer 384w, 696-7w

Sea King helicopters
Navigational aids 491w

Sea pollution
Beaches 268-70
Radioactive waste disposal 512w, 661w
Sellafield 661w

Sea transport
Northern Ireland 319w
Scotland 319w

Seals
Fishing gear 512w
Nature conservation 780w

Secondary education
294-6w
Cost per pupil 444-6w

Secret Intelligence Service
see MI6

Secure accommodation
219-20w

Securities & Investments Board
6w

Security
Air travel 640w
Party conferences 239-40w, 528w, 652w

Security Facilities Executive
194w

Segregation of prisoners
Wolds Remand Prison 117w

Self-employed
Income tax 675-6w

Self-mutilation
Young offenders 717w

Sellafield
87w, 96w, 153w, 252w, 260w, 263, 545w, 720-1w
Radiation hazards 771w
Radioactive waste disposal 252-3w
Radioactivity 211w
Sea pollution 661w

Sentencing
Appeals 13, 221w
Young offenders 383

Serafimowicz, Siemion
799w
Passports 715w

Serbia
Infectious diseases 265-6w
Sanctions 265-6w

Serious Fraud Office
104w

Set-aside schemes
276-8w, 453w, 469w, 512-3w, 515-6w, 567w, 631-6w, 659-60w
Nature conservation 203w, 659w
Peat bogs 566w

Severn Estuary
Special protection areas 535-6w

Severn Trent Water
Water meters 534w

Sewage
Bristol Channel 566-7w
Waste disposal 653w

Sex discrimination
Criminal law 457w
Retirement age 5-6, 168w

Sex education
101-2w, 813w
Curriculum 813w

***Sex education**—continued*
Primary education 813w

Sexual offences
Compulsorily detained mental patients 553-4w
Homosexuality 551-2w

Sexual Offences Act 1956
Questions
553-4w

Shackleton aircraft
Nuclear weapons 529w

Shareholders
Pensioners 168-9w

Shares
Disclosure of information (28:10:93) 1073

Shaw, Mr David
Questions
Average earnings 476w
Local government reform, Scotland 682w
Military bands, Deal Barracks 386-8
Ministry of Defence, Manpower 803w
National insurance contributions, Community action 225w
Pensioners, Consumer durables 595-6w
Pensioners, Personal income 4
Personal pensions 848w
Small businesses, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 176-7w

Sheehy Committee
see Police Responsibilities & Rewards Inquiry

Sheep meat
968-9

Sheep premiums
772w, 799w
Scotland 247-8w, 482-3w, 630w, 833w

Sheffield
School administration 368w

Sheffield Community & Priority Care Services NHS Trust
Public appointments 344w

Sheffield University
222w

Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Debates etc.
Public Accounts Committee (25:10:93) 591-606, 660

Shellfish
Food contamination 625-8w
Scotland 625-8w

Sheltered employment
599w

Sheltered housing
718-9w
Wales 578-9w

Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries & Food
Questions
Agricultural products, Export promotion 965-6
Agricultural products, Export rebates 516-8w
Agricultural Training Board 775w
Arable area payments scheme 276-8w
Artificial sweeteners 511w
Beef, Intervention stocks 372-3w
Brucellosis 514w
Brucellosis, Cheshire 513-4w
Coastal protection, Repairs & maintenance 775w
Common agricultural policy 965
Common agricultural policy, EC budget 969
Common agricultural policy, Expenditure 964-5
EC Agriculture Council 260-1w
Farm incomes, Marginal land 798w
Forestry Commission, Access to countryside 958
Forestry Commission, Privatisation 959

***Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian**—continued*
Forestry Review Group 958
GATT 959-60
GATT, Agricultural products 959
Hill livestock allowances 798-9w
Horses, Equine viral arteritis 275w
Milk Marketing Board 373-4w
Organic farming 778w
Organic farming, EC countries 778w
Organic farming, Food imports 778w
Potato marketing scheme 776w
Sheep premiums 799w
Tenant farmers, Law reform 773w
Tree planting 958-9
United Kingdom Register of Organic Food Standards 778w
Veterinary Medicines Directorate, Annual reports 203w
Weeds Act 1959 775w

Shepherd, Mr Colin
Questions
Director of Passenger Rail Franchising 758w
House of Commons catering 233w
House of Commons catering, Members' facilities 347-8w

Shersby, Mr Michael
Debates etc.
Police Responsibilities & Rewards Inquiry (28:10:93) 983
Public Accounts Committee (25:10:93) 604, 618-22
Questions
Assaults on police 384
Crime prevention 13
Police 969
Processed food 773w
Science Museum 573w

Ship chartering
Customs & Excise 9-10w

Shipbuilding
Industrial injuries scheme 846w

Shipbuilding Intervention Fund
Swan Hunter Shipbuilders 246w

Shipping accidents
MFV Pescado 640w

Shipping registration
Fishing vessels 374w

Shirayama Group
262

Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Questions
Racial incitement, Prosecutions 708w

Short, Ms Clare
Debates etc.
Priests (Ordination of Women) Measures 1993 (29:10:93) 1122-4
St Philip's College Birmingham (26:10:93) 797-9, 801
Questions
European Social Fund, Employment schemes 72w
Water charges 274-5

Sickness benefits
Departmental correspondence 378w

Signposts
470w

Simpkin Partnership
Nuclear Electric (22:10:93) 552-8

Simpson, Mr Alan
Debates etc.
Defence estimates (19:10:93) 224-6
Questions
Low pay, East Midlands 208w

Sims, Mr Roger
Debates etc.
NHS administration (21:10:93) 404
Priests (Ordination of Women) Measures 1993 (29:10:93) 1139-41
Questions
GP fundholders 677

Single people
Council tax 264

Sinn Fein
(22:10:93) 483-550

Sites of special scientific interest
Environment protection 652w

Sizewell B
Computer applications 245w

Sizewell C
646w

Skillcentres
Privatisation 138, 366w

Skinner, Mr Dennis
Debates etc.
Bombings, Northern Ireland (25:10:93) 587
Business questions (18:10:93) 23
Coal mining (20:10:93) 287-8, (27:10:93) 892, 895, 901, 912
Defence estimates (18:10:93) 28
European Economic Area Bill (HL), Order relating to Com (20:10:93) 308-12
European Economic Area Bill (HL), 2R & Com (21:10:93) 419, 426, 450, 458
Management & Administration of Safety & Health at Mines Regulations 1993 (26:10:93) 703-4
NHS administration (21:10:93) 403
Oral question time intervention (19:10:93) 135
Police Responsibilities & Rewards Inquiry (28:10:93) 984
Ten minute rule bills, Points of order (19:10:93) 161
Welsh Development Agency (19:10:93) 150
Questions
Anglo-Irish agreement 320w
Fraud, Prosecutions 104w
GATT 959-60
Personal pensions 12
Tourist industry, Brass bands 560

Skyguard radar
Low flying 56w

Slaughterhouses
182w
Pigs 568w

Slimbridge
Low flying 488w

Small businesses
Corporation tax 12w
Government assistance 176-7w
Industrial health & safety 366-7w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 176-7w

Small Cetacean Abundance in the North Sea
350-1w

Smith, Mr Andrew
Debates etc.
Wing bypass (19:10:93) 253-4
Questions
Dept for Education, Public relations 262w
Political refugees, Immigration applications 239w
Prisoners' transfers, Northern Ireland 270w

Smith, Mr Chris
Questions
Beaches, Sea pollution 269
Cetaceans, Nature conservation 569-70w
Channel tunnel, Railway network 638-9w
Forestry Commission, Privatisation 783w
Forestry Review Group 612w
Hedges incentive scheme 538-9w
River Medway, Nature conservation 534-5w

Smith, Sir Dudley
Debates etc.
Defence estimates (19:10:93) 199-202
National Lottery Etc Bill, Lords amendts (20:10:93) 362
NHS administration (21:10:93) 408

Smith, Rt Hon John
Questions
British Rail, Privatisation 969-70
Terrorism, Northern Ireland 687-8
VAT, Energy prices 142

Smith, Mr Llew
Debates etc.
Defence estimates (19:10:93) 208-10
Questions
Agricultural land, Alternative energy 274w
Aid financed trade, Codes of practice 811w
Ammunition 63w
Ammunition, Uranium 63w, 325w, 705-6w
Arms embargoes, Radar 575w
Arms exports 706w
Arms to Iraq Inquiry 573w
Asbestos, Land pollution 158w
Asia, Nuclear non proliferation 81w
Association of Insurance & Risk Managers in Industry & Commerce 155w
AWE Aldermaston, Construction 800w
AWE Aldermaston, Radioactive waste disposal 800w
AWE Aldermaston, Radioactive wastes 62w
China, Nuclear weapons tests 206w
Chlorofluorocarbons, Refrigerators 96w
Climate Change Convention 280w
Commonwealth Institute, Finance 811w
Computers, Export controls 244w
Council of Europe 205w
Defence advisory notices 325w
Defence equipment, Exports 818w
Defence industries, Diversification 700-1w
Dept of Trade & Industry, Environment protection 153-4w
Disclosure of information, EC law 658w
Dounreay, Radioactive waste disposal 628w
EC action, Departmental publications 817-8w
EC Environment Council 193w
EC internal trade, Export controls 154w
EC law 303w
Employment opportunities, Environment protection 333w
Employment opportunities, THORP 333w
Energy conservation, Conferences 193w
Engineering Employers' Federation, Environment protection 193w
Environment, Business 96w
Environment, EC law 279w
Environment, Statistics 275w
Environment Wales initiative 375w
Environmental Action Fund 530-1w
Environmental Auditors Registration Association 194w
Environmental education, Business 248w
Environmental policy 255w
Environmental policy, Departmental publications 280w
Evans, Anthony, Racial harassment 62w
Export licensing 152-3w
Food contamination 563w
Forestry Technology Training & Management Steering Committee 517-8w
France, Nuclear weapons tests 80w
Harwell, Radioactive waste disposal 826w
Health hazards, Uranium 834w
Hong Kong, Nuclear non proliferation 665w
Institute for European Environmental Policy 279-80w
Intergovernmental conference, THORP 467w
International Atomic Energy Agency, Conferences 205w
Iraq, UN resolutions 413-4w
Iraq, Weapons 665-6w
KONVER programme 303-4w
Land pollution, Civil liability 278w
Laybys, Litter 430w
MI6, Government buildings 82w
Ministers' visits abroad, Japan 96w
Nuclear accidents, International cooperation 436w
Nuclear fuel reprocessing, EC countries 153w
Nuclear fuels, Contracts 153w
Nuclear power, Exports 303w
Nuclear safeguards 154-5w
Nuclear safeguards, EC law 155w
Nuclear submarines, Radiation hazards 368w
Nuclear weapons, Arms control 205w
Nuclear weapons tests, France 519w
Open government 1-2w, 658-9w
Open government, Codes of practice 1-2w
Open University, Envifonmental education 279w

Smith, Mr Llew—continued
Organisation for Economic Cooperation & Development, Science & technology research 268w
Overseas aid 812w
Parliamentary buildings, Asbestos 669-70w
Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration, Open government 2w
Partnership for change, Conferences 193w, 265w
Police equipment, Export controls 400w
Radiation hazards, Gibraltar 519w
Radioactive waste disposal, Drigg 720-1w
Radioactive waste disposal, Irish Sea 87w
Radioactive waste disposal, Sea pollution 661w
Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee, Health physics 826w
Radioactive wastes 724-5w
Radioactivity, Solway Firth 628w
RAF Fylingdales, Radiation hazards 63w
Railway accidents, Bournemouth 27w
Riot control weapons 201w, 272w
Riot control weapons, Export controls 201-2w
Rural development areas 278w
School milk, EC grants & loans 274-5w
Sea pollution, Radioactive waste disposal 512w
Sellafield, Radioactive waste disposal 252-3w
Sellafield, Sea pollution 661w
Sizewell C 646w
Submarines, Fishing vessels 16-7w
Technology foresight programme 369w
Terrestrial initiative in global environmental research 254w
THORP 260w, 416-7w, 771w, 826-7w
THORP, Japan 575w
THORP, Radioactive waste disposal 153w
Thorpe, Tom 155w
Transport of hazardous materials, Labelling 299w
Transport of radioactive materials, Drigg 545w
UN Economic Commission for Europe, Agriculture 189w
United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority, Information services 153w
Uranium, Nuclear fuel reprocessing 721w
US bases, Menwith Hill 484w
Wave power 646w
Written questions, Costs 6w
Wylfa power station, Radiation hazards 162-3w

Smoke alarms
Deaf 37w, 784w
Scotland 37w, 784w

Smoking
31w
Death 32w
Industrial health & safety 475w
NHS 315w
Toys & games 484w
Women 31-2w
Young people 32w, 694w

Smyth, Rev Martin
Debates etc.
Bombings, Northern Ireland (25:10:93) 581-2
Education & Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1993 (26:10:93) 751-2, 765, 768
Northern Ireland (22:10:93) 527, 542, 548-9
Questions
Business questions 393
Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1993 375
Overseas aid 18
Post traumatic stress disorder 33w
Post traumatic stress disorder, Counselling 463w
VAT, Day nurseries 847w

Snaresbrook
Crown courts 5-6w, 794-6w

Snow & ice
B6355 618w

Soames, Mr Nicholas, Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture
Questions
Advisory Committee on Novel Foods & Processes, Lupins 183-4w

Soames, Mr Nicholas—continued
Advisory Committee on Novel Foods & Processes, Public appointments 568-9w
Alcohol advertising 967-8
Animal welfare, Transport of animals 968
Apples, Apples Day 963-4
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy 261-2w
Bovine tuberculosis 774w
Brewing industry, Alcoholic drinks duties 967
Cereal products, Folic acid 777w
Cider 964
Fisheries, Pest control 797w
Food contamination 563w
Furs, Farms 180-2w
Import of live animals 564w
Import of live animals, Disease control 564-5w
Meat, Food contamination 565w
Mink, Animal welfare 178-9w
Mink, Botulism 178w
Mink, Farms 178-9w
Mink, Isle of Wight 177-9w, 181w
Mink, Transport of animals 177w
Organophosphorous pesticides, Birds 777-8w
Organophosphorous pesticides, Fish 777w
Ostriches, Import of live animals 563-4w
Pesticide residues, Food contamination 797-8w
Pesticide residues, Industrial health & safety 177w
Pesticides 798w
Pig Disease Eradication Fund, Finance 799w
Pigs, Slaughterhouses 568w
Porcine somatotropin 563w
Poultry, Animal welfare 777w
Rabies, EC action 273w
RAF Aston Down, Bovine tuberculosis 566w
Rhubarb 964
Sheep meat 968-9
Transport of animals, Animal welfare 512w, 660w, 773w
Transport of animals, EC law 564w
Veterinary drugs, EC law 773w
Warble fly 775-6w

Social & Liberal Democrats
239-40w

Social Fund
Social security claims 791w
South Down 791w

Social science & humanities students
Student numbers 443w

Social security
Computers in government departments 377w

Social security abuse
163-4w, 223w
Identity cards 751w

Social Security Appeal Tribunals
330w, 377w

Social security appeals
377w
Disability living allowance 510w
Disability working allowance 510w
Invalidity benefits 224w

Social security benefits
164w, 166w
Energy prices 595w
Expenditure 377w
Lone parents 594w
Medical examinations 36w

Social Security Benefits Agency
(25:10:93) 591-662
Leeds 379w
North Yorkshire 169w
Offices 379w

Social security benefits disqualification
Maintenance 594w

Social security benefits overpayment
228-30w
Civil proceedings 228-9w

Social security benefits rates
Housing benefits 168w, 509-10w

Social security benefits reductions
Income support 226w
Maintenance 170w, 844w

Social security benefits rules
Retirement pensions 671w

Social security claims
Adjudication officers 509w
Industrial disablement benefits 511w
Invalidity benefits 790w
Medical records 595-6w
Social Fund 791w

Social Security Contributions Agency
North Yorkshire 169w

Social security recipients
Blyth Valley 670-2w
Disability working allowance 510w
Family credit 780w
Homelessness 846w
Housing benefits 164-5w, 509w
Income support 164-5w, 168w, 780-1w
Invalidity benefits 168w, 224-5w, 670-1w
Lone parents 330-1w, 506-8w
Means tested benefits 845w
Medical certificates 232w, 246-7w

Soil Survey & Land Research Centre
821w

Soley, Mr Clive
Questions
Rents to mortgages scheme 265

Solo Appointments Hammersmith
Licensing 352-3w

Solway Firth
Radioactivity 628w

South Africa
EC external trade 435w
Entry clearances 146w

South & East Cheshire Health Authority
Public appointments 502w

South Down
Community care 465w
Road works 213w
Social Fund 791w

South East Arts Board
471w

South East Regional Health Authority
835-6w

South East Thames Regional Health Authority
NHS trusts 496w

South Korea
North Korea 818w

South London
Crimes of violence 144w
Railway travel 433w

South Wales
Cannabis 9-10w

South West region
Manufacturing industries 130-1
Water charges 273-4, 690-1

South West Thames Regional Health Authority
312w

South Yorkshire
Bus services 299w
Low flying 489w

Southend-on-Sea
Assisted areas 402-4w
Travel-to-work areas 70w

Southport
Local government reform 276

Sowerby bridge
Road accidents 545w

Spain
Fishing vessels 189-90w, 373w

Spare parts
(25:10:93) 591-662

Spastics Society
686

Speaker and deputies, For rulings & statements see separate heading Speaker's rulings & statements
Debates etc.
Addressing the Chair (22:10:93) 526, (27:10:93) 856
Amendments & new clauses (18:10:93) 27, (20:10:93) 302, 322, 327, 335, 350, 359, (21:10:93) 463-4, 466-8, (28:10:93) 999, 1039
Business motions (29:10:93) 1152
Business questions (18:10:93) 21-3, (28:10:93) 993-4
Calling of Members (19:10:93) 214, (20:10:93) 294
Calls to order (18:10:93) 86, (19:10:93) 160, (21:10:93) 386, (22:10:93) 527
, (26:10:93) 693-4, 704, (27:10:93) 879, 891, 900, (28:10:93) 960, 963, 1015
Committee stage (20:10:93) 301
Disallowed questions (19:10:93) 130, (20:10:93) 265, (26:10:93) 690
Forms of address (19:10:93) 232, (22:10:93) 544
Leave to speak (26:10:93) 800, (27:10:93) 940
Members' interventions (18:10:93) 43, (19:10:93) 178, (20:10:93) 343, (22:10:93) 488, 527, 529-30, (26:10:93) 708, (27:10:93) 853, (28:10:93) 1031, (29:10:93) 1118, 1146
Members' speeches (18:10:93) 99, (19:10:93) 176, (22:10:93) 483, 511, (26:10:93) 717, (29:10:93) 1097, 1130
Ministerial statements (19:10:93) 151, (20:10:93) 280, 289, (21:10:93) 402, (25:10:93) 579
Oral questions (25:10:93) 576
Orders & regulations motions (19:10:93) 158, (27:10:93) 923
Points of order (18:10:93) 20, 25-6, 27, 83, (19:10:93) 157, 161, 162, 205, 251, (20:10:93) 296-7, 321, (21:10:93) 412, (22:10:93) 482, 505-6, 511, 526, 527, 547-8, (26:10:93) 693-4, 698, (27:10:93) 827, 834, 853, 858, (28:10:93) 1016, (29:10:93) 1083
Royal Assent (21:10:93) 413
Scope of debate (20:10:93) 301, 305, 314-6, 362, (21:10:93) 423, 461
Standing Order No 20 applications, Mine safety (18:10:93) 24
Supplementary questions (19:10:93) 134, (28:10:93) 960, 963
Ten minute rule bills (19:10:93) 161, (20:10:93) 299
Ten minutes rule (18:10:93) 65, (19:10:93) 202, 205, (27:10:93) 877

Speaker's rulings & statements
General Synod measures (29:10:93) 1083
Ten minutes rule (18:10:93) 27, (19:10:93) 162, (27:10:93) 835
Unparliamentary expressions (20:10:93) 262, (26:10:93) 724

Spearing, Mr Nigel
Debates etc.
European Economic Area Bill (HL), Order relating to Com (20:10:93) 302-4, 308, 313, 318
European Economic Area Bill (HL), 2R & Com (21:10:93) 415-6, 428-32
NHS administration (21:10:93) 406
Priests (Ordination of Women) Measures 1993 (29:10:93) 1100
Taxation of Domestic Fuel & Power (Amendment) Bill, 1R (21:10:93) 412
Questions
Ambulance services, Emergency calls 36-7w
Bus services, Greater London 757w
Channel tunnel, Railway network 809w
Coal mining, Production 305-6w
Crossrail, Road traffic 27w
Crown courts, Judges 6w
Crown courts, Snaresbrook 5-6w, 794-6w
Deregulation initiative 157-8w
East London river crossing 25w
Gas fired power stations 158w
Heathrow Airport, Railway network 26w

Spearing, Mr Nigel—continued
Howard, Michael, Today Programme 272w
London Ambulance Service 681-2
London docklands 251-2w
London Underground, Underground railways 757w
Lorries, Axle weights 27w
Lorry drivers, Working hours 25w
M25, Motorways 18-9w
Maternity services 37w
NHS trusts, Contracts for services 345w
Open government, Codes of practice 1w
"Patient's Charter News" 501w
Prison Officers' Association, Penal reform 132-3w
Railway fares, Privatisation 25-6w
Right of silence 142w
Road safety, Research 809w
Roads, Expenditure 26-7w
Transport & Road Research Laboratory, Privatisation 809w
Treaty on European Union 79w
VAT, Construction 200-1w
VAT, EC countries 8-9w
VAT, Food 14-5w
VAT, Tax harmonisation 6-8w

Special category prisoners
Hull Prison 151w

Special education
559w
Codes of practice 559-60w
Educational finance 559w
Further education 443-4w
Kirbie Kendal School 746w
Teacher training 96-8w

Special Operations Executive
Public records 242w

Special protection areas
534-5w
Severn Estuary 535-6w

Spectacles
Haymand, Martin 699w
Optical charges 34-5w
Optical charges exemptions 29-30w

Spellar, Mr John
Debates etc.
Business questions (28:10:93) 995
Defence estimates (18:10:93) 77-9
Questions
Conservative Party, Finance 144
Countryside stewardship scheme 533w
Nadir, Asil 103-4w
School milk, EC grants & loans 182w

Spencer, Sir Derek, Solicitor-General
Questions
Prison staff, Crimes of violence 105w

Spicer, Sir Jim
Questions
Business questions 391
Sheep meat 968-9

Spicer, Mr Michael
Questions
European Movement, Government assistance 411w

Sponsorship
Technology colleges 560w

Sports
567
Government grants 566-7

Sports competitors
Drug abuse 469-70w

Sports Council
367w, 822w

Sports facilities
Rate rebates 89w

Sportsgrounds
Rugby 561

Spring, Mr Richard
Debates etc.
Archaeology (27:10:93) 944-7
Questions

***Spring, Mr Richard**—continued*
Aid financed trade 18
Veterinary Medicines Directorate, Annual reports 203w

***Sproat, Mr Iain**, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept of National Heritage*
Debates etc.
Archaeology (27:10:93) 947-52
National Lottery Etc Bill, Lords amendts (20:10:93) 322-3, 327-32
Questions
Ancient monuments, Conservation 471-2w
BBC, Advertising 568
English Tourist Board 470w
English Tourist Board, Government grants 562
Historic buildings, City of London 471w
Holidays, VAT 562
Hotel & catering industry 560
Listed buildings, Hospitals 472w
Redundant churches, Property transfer 202-3w
Royal Parks Constabulary 473-4w
Rugby 562
Rugby, Government grants 561
Rugby, Sportsgrounds 561
Science Museum 573w
Sports competitors, Drug abuse 469-70w
Television licences 568
Television licences, Northern Ireland 568-9
Tourism, Road signs 470w
Tourist industry, Brass bands 560
Tourist industry, Deregulation initiative 559-60
Tourist information, Road signs 567-8

Squatting
Civil proceedings 218w

Squire, Ms Rachel
Debates etc.
Defence estimates (18:10:93) 67-9

***Squire, Mr Robin**, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept for Education*
Debates etc.
Education, Kent (21:10:93) 476-80
Education (School Teachers Pay & Conditions) (No 2) Order 1993 (26:10:93) 775-9, 781, 786, 789, 792-3
Questions
Class sizes, Educational standards 99w
Curriculum, Advisory bodies 441w
Curriculum, Educational assessment 448w
Curriculum, Ministerial policy advisors 439-40w
Dearing review 667w
Education, Ethnic minorities 666-7w
English education, Curriculum 368w
Funding Agency for Schools, Public appointments 668-9w
Genetics, Curriculum 98w
Grant maintained schools 436-40w, 667w
Grant maintained schools, Audit 744w
Grant maintained schools, Ballots 295-6w
Grant maintained schools, Conferences 745-6w
Grant maintained schools, Cumbria 99-101w
Grant maintained schools, Energy costs 448w
Grant maintained schools, Finance 744-5w
Grant maintained schools, Government grants 445-7w, 814-6w
Grant maintained schools, Inspections 558w
Grant maintained schools, School population 450-2w
Grant maintained schools, VAT 447-8w
Grant Maintained Schools Centre 448w, 815w
Grant Maintained Schools Centre, Corporate plans 816w
Grant Maintained Schools Centre, Government grants 814-5w
Grant Maintained Schools Centre, Manpower 442w
Hasmonean School, Voluntary schools 287w
Kirbie Kendal School, Special education 746w
Languages education, Ethnic minorities 448w
Parents' Opposed to Opting-Out, Government grants 441-2w
Pupil-teacher ratios 743-4w

***Squire, Mr Robin**—continued*
School administration, Sheffield 368w
School Curriculum & Assessment Authority 558w
School population 558w
Schools, Inspections 292-3w, 813-4w
Secondary education 294-6w
Teacher training, Primary education 558w
Teacher training, Student numbers 98w
Technology colleges 287w
Technology colleges, Sponsorship 560w
Technology schools initiative, Government grants 287-92w
Uniform business rate, Government grants 814w

Standard of living
Pensioners 12

Standard spending assessments
86w, 250w, 270-1, 350w, 717-8w, 827-8w
Greenwich (22:10:93) 481
Northumberland 270
Public petitions (22:10:93) 481
Refugees 825-6w

Standards specifications
Environment protection 804w

Standing Order No 20 applications
Mine safety (18:10:93) 24

Standing Order No 27
(26:10:93) 671

Standing Order No 39
(26:10:93) 671

Standing Order No 191
(26:10:93) 671

Staphylococcus aureus
843w

State Veterinary Service
179w

"Statement on the Defence Estimates, 1993"
(18:10:93) 27-120, (19:10:93) 162-251

Statistics
Environment 275w

Statute Law (Repeals) Bill (HL) 1992/93
Debates etc.
Order relating to Com (29:10:93) 1151-2

Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Questions
Forestry Commission, Privatisation 782-3w
Local government constituencies, Scotland 682w
Local government reform, Berwickshire 819
Overseas aid 17
Sheltered housing 718-9w

Steen, Mr Anthony
Debates etc.
Deregulation (No 2) Bill, 1R (26:10:93) 695-7
Questions
Fish conservation 689-90
Parliamentary building maintenance & repair 669w
Parliamentary Works Office, Manpower 669w

Steinberg, Mr Gerry
Debates etc.
Education (School Teachers Pay & Conditions) (No 2) Order 1993 (26:10:93) 779-81

Stephen, Mr Michael
Debates etc.
Business questions (28:10:93) 995
Crime (28:10:93) 1002, 1010, 1013, 1021
Questions
Council housing, Building repairs 250w

Stern, Mr Michael
Debates etc.
Priests (Ordination of Women) Measures 1993 (29:10:93) 1099, 1124-5

Stevenson, Mr George
Debates etc.
Coal mining (20:10:93) 282-3, (27:10:93) 874, 906-7

***Stewart, Mr Allan**, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Scottish Office*
Questions
Ambulance services, Scotland 483-4w
Brain, Medical rehabilitation 626w
Breast cancer, Medical research 620-2w
Breast cancer, Medical treatments 620-1w
Cervical cancer, Screening 384w
Children's hearings, Scotland 612w
Children's panels, Scotland 44-6w
Community councils, Local government reform 248w
Cystic fibrosis, NHS complaints 622-3w
Cystic fibrosis, Scotland 623w
Day nurseries, Scotland 688w
Death, Scotland 624-6w
Dental services, Scotland 613-4w
Dental services, Waiting lists 613-5w
Dentists, Manpower 614w
Development agencies, Public appointments 46-50w
Economic situation, Lanarkshire 687w
Edinburgh Royal Infirmary 682w
Edinburgh Western Hospital 683w
European Regional Development Fund, Scotland 687w
European Regional Development Fund, Transport 383w
Fertility, Scotland 622w
Foreign investment in UK, Scotland 691w
Health services, Ethnic minorities 625w
Heart diseases, Hospital waiting lists 619w
Homosexuality, Health services 619w
Hospital waiting lists, Scotland 615-7w
Inverclyde enterprise zone, Planning permission 41-2w
Local government reform, Argyll & Bute 385w
Local government reform, Berwickshire 630-1w, 814-5
Local government reform, Midlothian 691w
Local government reform, Relocation of employees 39-40w
Local government reform, Scotland 40-1w, 332w, 479w, 631w, 832w
Local government services, Scotland 687w
Lost working days, Scotland 832w
Mental illness specific grant, Scotland 633w
Mentally handicapped, Mental health community care 691w
New towns development corporations, Scotland 684w
NHS, Scotland 823-4
NHS trusts, East Lothian 689w
NHS trusts, Patients 628w
NHS trusts, Scotland 688-9w, 811-3
Ophthalmology, Hospital waiting lists 42-4w
RENAVAL, Inverclyde 384-5w
Scottish Cancer Trials Office 479w
Scottish Enterprise, Finance 683w
Scottish Office, Doyle, Patrick 385w
Tayside Health Board, Hospital waiting lists 615-6w
Torness power station, Planning permission 623-4w
Toys & games, Smoking 484w
Women's employment, Employment opportunities 691w

Stoke on Trent City Council
Commissions for local administration 822-3w

Stoke Park Wood
Land acquisition 567w

Stop & search
Terrorism 220w

Stott, Mr Roger
Debates etc.
Education & Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1993 (26:10:93) 752-5, 764
Northern Ireland (22:10:93) 523, 545-7

Strang, Dr Gavin
Questions
Arable area payments scheme 276-8w
Artificial sweeteners 511w
Brucellosis 514w
Brucellosis, Cheshire 513-4w
Common agricultural policy 965
Edinburgh Royal Infirmary 682w

Strang, Dr Gavin—continued
Farm incomes, Marginal land 798w
Forestry Commission, Privatisation 959
Hill livestock allowances 798-9w
Hill livestock allowances, Scotland 832-3w
Horses, Equine viral arteritis 275w
Organic farming 778w
Organic farming, EC countries 778w
Organic farming, Food imports 778w
Sheep premiums 799w
Sheep premiums, Scotland 833w
United Kingdom Register of Organic Food Standards 778w
VAT; Food 268w

Stranraer
Transport 478-9w

Straw, Mr Jack
Questions
Council tax 282-4w
Housing association grant 268
Local government expenditure, Unemployment 14w
Local government reform 261

Streeter, Mr Gary
Debates etc.
Assisted Areas Orders 1993 (27:10:93) 934-5
Crime (28:10:93) 1000, 1003
Defence estimates (19:10:93) 169
Questions
Pensioners, Personal income 3-4

Student accommodation
Multiple occupation 263-4w

Student grants
Northern Ireland 679w

Student numbers
Northern Ireland 320w, 679w
Portrush Hotel & Catering College 680w
Social science & humanities students 443w
Teacher training 98w
University of Ulster 466w

Student unions
99w, 262w, 559w

Students
Energy prices 560w

Submarines
Fishing vessels 16-7w

Subsidiarity
82w, 665w

Suckler cow premiums
799w
Scotland 833w

Sudan
Human rights 79w, 664w, 734w
Overseas aid 102w
Peace negotiations 79-80w

Suffolk
Probation committees 454w

Sugar
Intervention prices 192w

Suicide
Schizophrenia 606w
Young offenders 717w

Sulphur
Treaties 652w

Sumberg, Mr David
Debates etc.
Assisted Areas Orders 1993 (27:10:93) 931
Questions
Local government revenue 89w
Motorways, Road construction 690

Summer Time (Amendment) Bill 1992/93
Debates etc.
1R (27:10:93) 828-33

Summertime
145w, 388w
Road accidents 683w

Summertime—continued
Scotland 683w

Sunday trading
Scotland 686w

Supervision orders
Children in care 608w

Supplementary benefits
224w

Supplementary credit approvals
31w

Surgery
33w, 308-9w
Death 766w
Hospitals 495w, 500w

Sustainable development
249w, 656w

Swan Hunter Shipbuilders
Shipbuilding Intervention Fund 246w

Swansea University
see University College of Swansea

Sykes, Mr John
Debates etc.
Crime (28:10:93) 1002, 1006

Tai Cymru
see Housing for Wales

Take-up of employment
207w
Prisoners' release 387w
West Midlands 71-2w

Tape recorded evidence
458w

Tapsell, Sir Peter
Questions
Economic & monetary union 972
Official engagements 203-4w, 267w

Tarmac Brick & Tiles
Departmental correspondence 350w

TASM
(18:10:93) 27-120

Tax allowances
674w
Income tax 14w
Personal equity plans 13w
Waste disposal 424w

Tax avoidance
141, 381w

Tax evasion
National insurance contributions 170-1w
Tobacco duties 748-9w

Tax harmonisation
VAT 6-8w

Tax havens
423-6w, 672-3w
Fraud 424-5w

Tax rates & bands
Income tax 571-2w, 749-51w

Tax repayments
9-10w

Tax thresholds
Income tax 377w

Tax yields
423w
Airport tax 381w
Immobilisation of vehicles 422w
Income tax 422-3w, 427w, 673-4w, 849-50w
VAT 380-2w

Taxation
Company cars 381-2w

Taxation of Domestic Fuel & Power (Amendment) Bill 1992/93
Debates etc.
1R (21:10:93) 412

Taxis
Competition 638w

Taxpayers
571-2w, 675-6w

Taxpayer's charter
570

Taylor, Mrs Ann
Questions
English education, Curriculum 368w
Grant maintained schools 436-40w
Grant maintained schools, Audit 744w
Grant maintained schools, Ballots 295-6w
Grant maintained schools, Conferences 745-6w
Grant maintained schools, Finance 744-5w
Grant maintained schools, School population 450-2w
Secondary education 294-6w
Teacher training, Student numbers 98w
Technical & vocational education intitiative, Finance 339-40w
Technology colleges 287w
Technology schools initiative, Government grants 287-92w

Taylor, Mr Ian
Debates etc.
European Economic Area Bill (HL), Order relating to Corn (20:10:93) 305
Questions
GP fundholders 600w

Taylor, Rt Hon John David
Debates etc.
Northern Ireland (22:10:93) 503-11
Questions
British embassies, Cyprus 84w
Eastern Health & Social Services Board, Expenditure 212w
Fishing vessels, Decommissioning 961
Fishing vessels, Decommissioning grants 466w
Health centres, Armagh 465w
Hospitals, Northern Ireland 372-3
Northern Ireland government 320w
Residential care, Eastern Health & Social Services Board 463-4w
University of Ulster, Student numbers 466w

Taylor, Mr John M, Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Dept
Questions
Administration of justice 637w
Courts & Legal Services Act 1990 419w
Crown courts, Judges 6w
Crown courts, Snaresbrook 5-6w, 794-6w
Crown courts, Trials 793w
Judges 637w
Justices clerks 418-9w
Land Registry Office, Contracts for services 797w
Legal aid scheme 797w
Legal aid scheme, Expenditure 265w, 637w
Lord Chancellor's Dept, Government buildings 638w
Lord Chancellor's Dept, Official hospitality 234w
Powers of attorney, Mentally handicapped 419w
Probate Registry Cardiff 419w
Public records 3w
Public records, Codes of practice 3-4w
Public Trustee, Civil service agencies 793-4w
Royal Free NHS Trust, Public records 4-5w
West Midlands Police, Judgments 578w

Taylor, Mr Matthew
Debates etc.
Oral question time intervention (19:10:93) 131
Questions
Close companies, Company taxation 672w
Departmental publications, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 173w
Handicap benefits 224-5w
Manufacturing industries, Manpower 130-1
Special education, Teacher training 96-8w
Supplementary benefits 224w
Victim support schemes, Government grants 572

Taylor, Sir Teddy
Debates etc.
Assisted Areas Orders 1993 (27:10:93) 924, 940
Business questions (18:10:93) 21-2
European Economic Area Bill (HL), Points of order (19:10:93) 251
European Economic Area Bill (HL), Order relating to Com (20:10:93) 304-10
European Economic Area Bill (HL), 2R & Com (21:10:93) 414, 418, 421, 435, 438-42, 447, 463, 467-70
Questions
Local government reform, Scotland 682w
Treason, Treaty on European Union 708w

Tayside Health Board
Hospital waiting lists 615-6w

Teacher training
Primary education 558w
Special education 96-8w
Student numbers 98w

Teachers
Pay (26:10:93) 772-96

Team care valleys project
375w

Technical & vocational education initiative
Finance 339-40w

Technology colleges
287w
Sponsorship 560w

Technology foresight programme
369w, 573-4

Technology partnership initiative
574-5w

Technology schools initiative
Government grants 287-92w

Telecommunications Act 1984
Questions
574w

Telecommunications industry
Licensing 647w

Telephone services
Disability living allowance 596-7w

Telephone systems
648w
House of Commons 268w

Telephone tapping
458-9w

Telephones
646-7w

Television licences
474w, 568
Northern Ireland 568-9

Teleworking
400w

Temple-Morris, Mr Peter
Debates etc.
Bombings, Northern Ireland (25:10:93) 587-8
Questions
War crimes, Criminal investigation 144w

Temporary employment
Redundancy 333-4w

Ten minutes rule
Speaker's rulings & statements (18:10:93) 27, (19:10:93) 162, (27:10:93) 835

Tenant farmers
Law reform 773w

Terrestrial initiative in global environmental research
254w

Terrorism
218w
Codes of practice 681-2w

Terrorism—continued
Dublin 320w
Northern Ireland 321w, 373-5, 687-8
Property insurance 302w
Stop & search 220w

Thailand
Ministers' visits abroad 309-10w
Visas 85w

Thatcher, RtHonBaroness
397

The Tote
see Horserace Totalisator Board

Theatres
Arts finance 472w

Theft
238-40w

Therapeutic Regime Prison Services Task Force
127-8w

Thomason, Mr Roy
Questions
Local government reform 260-1

Thompson, Mr Jack
Debates etc.
Coal mining (20:10:93) 289, (27:10:93) 851
Management & Administration of Safety & Health at Mines Regulations 1993 (26:10:93) 728-30, 734
Questions
Employment opportunities, Northern region 131

THORP
96w, 252-3w, 260w, 263-4, 282w, 395-6, 416-7w, 436w, 771w, 826-7w
Departmental correspondence 267w
Employment opportunities 333w
Intergovernmental conference 467w
Japan 575w
Radioactive waste disposal 153w, 252w

Thorpe, Tom
155w

Thurnham, Mr Peter
Debates etc.
Business questions (18:10:93) 22
Questions
Administration of justice 637w
Business questions 394
Community care 686
Community care, Voluntary organisations 603w
Departmental correspondence, Performance standards 95w
Economic situation, Northern Ireland 380
Housing 414-5w
Housing benefits, Social security benefits rates 509-10w
Housing benefits, Social security recipients 509w
Landlords, Private rented housing 415w
Magistrates, Court's charter 575-6
Overseas aid 811-2w
Pay 130
Post Office, Performance appraisal 577w
Redundant churches, Property transfer 202-3w
Retirement age, Sex discrimination 5-6
Vaccination, Children 605-6w

Tibet
Family planning 663-4w
Infanticide 664w

Timesharing
157w

Tinnitus
605w
Government grants to voluntary organisations 605w

Tipping, Mr Paddy
Debates etc.
Business questions (28:10:93) 997
Coal mining (20:10:93) 283, (27:10:93) 857, 904-6

Tipping, Mr Paddy—continued
Management & Administration of Safety & Health at Mines Regulations 1993 (26:10:93) 702
Questions
Forestry Review Group 958
Harlow Wood Orthopaedic Hospital 602w
Local government reform 273

Tobacco
Animal experiments 641-2w
France 749w
Hospitals 502w

Tobacco duties
Tax evasion 748-9w

Today Programme
Howard, Michael 272w

Tomlinson Inquiry
see Londons' Health Service Medical Education & Research Inquiry

Tomography
Greenwich Healthcare NHS Trust 835-6w

Torch Communications
647w

Tornado aircraft
53-5w, 57-8w, 490w, 523-4w, 527-8w, 801w
Air accidents 519w, 701w
Armed forces training 57w, 326w
Germany 59w
Low flying 53w, 55w, 523w, 527w
Nuclear weapons deployment 730w

Torness power station
Planning permission 623-4w

Touche Ross
Government departments 269-70w

Tourism
Road signs 470w
Trawsfynydd power station 376w

Tourist attractions
567-8

Tourist boards
Borders region 479-80w, 622w
East Lothian 479-80w, 622w

Tourist industry
Berwickshire 480w
Brass bands 560
Deregulation initiative 559-60
Haddington 480w

Tourist information
Road signs 567-8

Tourists
Borders region 480w
Lothian 480w

Tower Hamlets
Housing benefits 596w

Townend, Mr John
Questions
Armed forces strength 492w
Employment opportunities, Young people 134

Townsend, Mr Cyril D
Debates etc.
Defence estimates (18:10:93) 36
Questions
Terrorism, Northern Ireland 373-4

Toys & games
Scotland 484w
Smoking 484w

Tracey, Mr Richard
Questions
Business questions 393-4
Housing associations, Housing construction 267-8
Justices clerks 418-9w

Tractors
Agricultural machinery 17w
Road accidents 17w

Tractors—continued
Road safety 17-8w
Road tax 17w
Vehicle number plates 17w

Trade & Industry Select Committee
(27:10:93) 835-922

Trade promotion
Environment protection 574-5w

Trade union membership
Oil industry 69-70w

Traffic areas
Civil service agencies 545w

Traffic examiners
Manpower 27w

Training
667w
Older workers 476w

Training & enterprise councils
72w, 137, 333w, 365w
Accounting 163w
Annual reports 819-20w
Expenditure 366w
Wales 163w, 587w, 819-20w

Training for work
210w

Trans-European networks
(19:10:93) 252-8

Transitional arrangements
Community care 833-4w

Transplant surgery
(20:10:93) 298-300, 610-1w

Transport
Capital investment 757-8w
European Regional Development Fund 234w, 299w, 383w
Scotland 688w
Stranraer 478-9w

Transport & Road Research Laboratory
809w
Privatisation 809w

Transport & Security Services
194w

Transport of animals
Animal welfare 512w, 660w, 773w, 968
EC law 564w
Mink 177w

Transport of hazardous materials
Labelling 299w

Transport of radioactive materials
Drigg 545w
Nuclear accidents 802w
Nuclear weapons 726-7w
Scotland 726-7w

Transport Security Division
Annual reports 810w

Travel
Surveys 431w

Travelling expenses
Police Responsibilities & Rewards Inquiry 386w

Travelling people
Caravan sites 480-2w
Scotland 480-2w

Travel-to-work areas
Southend-on-Sea 70w

Trawsfynydd power station
Tourism 376w

Treason
Treaty on European Union 708w

Treasury
(25:10:93) 591-662
Doyle, Patrick 382w

Treasury—continued
Government buildings 746w, 847-8w
Official hospitality 244w

Treaties
Agricultural workers 777w
Sulphur 652w
Weapons 406w, 410-1w, 519w

Treaty on European Union
79w
Treason 708w

Tree planting
958-9

Treforest
Anthrax 820-1w

Trend, Mr Michael
Questions
EC Environment Council 90-1w
Halons 91-2w

Trespass
Police powers 222w

Trials
Crown courts 793w

Tributyl tin
Nature conservation 826w

Trident missiles
Defence procurement 729-30w
Nuclear weapons tests 729w

Trident submarines
729w

Trimble, Mr David
Debates etc.
Bombings, Northern Ireland (25:10:93) 585
Northern Ireland (22:10:93) 487, 494, 531, 535
Questions
Homelessness, Northern Ireland 381-2
Northern Ireland Audit Review Group 235w
Television licences, Northern Ireland 568-9

Trotter, Mr Neville
Debates etc.
Defence estimates (19:10:93) 214-6
Questions
British Transport Police 20w
Low flying 368-9w
Swan Hunter Shipbuilders, Shipbuilding Intervention Fund 246w

Tuna
778-9w

Turkey
British embassies 78w
Fish farming 274w

Twinn, Dr Ian
Questions
Council housing, Refugees 825-6w
GP fundholders 600w
Refugees, Bosnia-Herzegovina 713w
Tourism, Road signs 470w

Tyler, Mr Paul
Debates etc.
Assisted Areas Orders 1993 (27:10:93) 928-30, 937
Crime (28:10:93) 1031
Questions
Fish conservation 962
International Labour Organisation, Agriculture 777w
Police, Manpower 546w
Set-aside schemes 567w
Set-aside schemes, Nature conservation 659w
Written questions, Costs 427w

Tyres
Waste disposal 655-6w

UK contributions
Family planning 663w
International Planned Parenthood Federation 662-3w
UN High Commissioner for Refugees 103w

UK contributions—continued
UN Population Fund 662-3w

UK contributions to EC budget
14w, 422w

UK Detention Services
455-6w

UK Ecolabelling Board
Public appointments 824w

UN
see United Nations

UN Children's Fund
see UNICEF

UN Economic Commission for Europe
193w, 275w, 652w
Agriculture 189w

UN General Assembly
Arms control 412w

UN High Commissioner for Refugees
UK contributions 103w

UN Mission for a Referendum in Western Sahara
80w

UN Population Fund
UK contributions 662-3w

UN resolutions
Iraq 413-4w

UN Special Commission on Iraq
665-6w

Underground railways
London Underground 757w

Unemployment
7, 140, 687, 691-2
Basildon 132-3
Blyth Valley 140-1
Cunninghame 689
EC countries 71w
Graduates 137-8
Greater London 208w
Lancaster 129-30
Local government expenditure 14w
Scotland 810
West Yorkshire 134-5
Young people 332-3w

Unemployment benefits
Expenditure 6
Offshore workers 69w

Unfair trading practices
Prosecutions 383w
Scotland 383w

Unibank Bill (HL) 1992/93
Debates etc.
3R order read (19:10:93) 129, (21:10:93) 371, (28:10:93) 953

UNICEF
812w

Uniform business rate
Government grants 814w

Uniforms
Nurses 311w

Union Railways
638-9w, 809w

United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority
156w
Capital investment 302w
Information services 153w
Police 156w

United Kingdom Register of Organic Food Standards
778w

United Nations
(18:10:93) 27-120, 84w, 818w

University College of Swansea
811w

University of Ulster
Student numbers 466w

Unparliamentary expressions
Speaker's rulings & statements (20:10:93) 262, (26:10:93) 724

Upper Waiting Hall
347w

Uranium
Ammunition 63w, 325w, 702w, 705-6w
Health hazards 834w
Nuclear fuel reprocessing 721w

Urban areas
Low flying 488-9w
Road safety 161w
Wales 161w

Urban investment grant
Wales 587-8w

Urban investment grants
Caerphilly 324-5w

Urban programme
252w

Uruguay round
590-2w

US bases
Menwith Hill 484w

USA
Citizen's Charter 569
Defence contracts 802w
Foreign relations 267-8w
Low flying 524-5w
Nuclear weapons 205w

Vacancies
477w
Birmingham 597-8w
Lancashire 598w

Vaccination
Children 605-6w
German measles 695w

Valleys Health Group
375w

Valleys initiative
234w

Valuation
Council tax 417w

Valuation Office
Councillors 281-2w

Valuation tribunals
281-2w

Value Added Tax (Payments on Account) Order 1993
Debates etc.
(19:10:93) 158, (28:10:93) 1073

Vanunu, Mordechai
79w

VAT
Air fares 571w, 752w
Bus fares 752w
Clothing 572w, 752w
Construction 200-1w, 587w
Day nurseries 847w
EC countries 8-9w
Energy prices 142, 382w, (21:10:93) 412, 422w, 447w, 560w, 676-7w, 847w
Food 14-5w, 268w
Grant maintained schools 447-8w
Holidays 562
Medical equipment 382w
Northern Ireland 570w
Publications 243-4w, 352w, 570w, 677w, 751w
Tax harmonisation 6-8w
Tax yields 380-2w

VAT exemptions
Clubs 382w

VAT zero rating
571-2w

Vaz, Mr Keith
Questions
City challenge 417w, 653w
Council tax, Valuation 417w
EC Committee of the Regions 272
Immigration applications, Administrative delays 85w
Standard spending assessments 717-8w

Veal
Export of live animals 968

Vehicle Inspectorate
27w, 431w, 544w
Fees & charges 432w

Vehicle number plates
Tractors 17w

Veterinary drugs
EC law 773w

Veterinary Medicines Directorate
Annual reports 203w

Victim Support
see National Council of Victim Support

Victim support schemes
Finance 557w
Government grants 572

Vienna Declaration on Human Rights
411-2w

Vietnam
(18:10:93) 122-8

Vietnamese refugees
(18:10:93) 122-8

Village Speed Control Working Group
428w

Visas
Thailand 85w

Vocational training
138-9
Kidderminster 137
West Midlands 139
Young people 138-9

Voluntary organisations
Community care 603w
EC grants & loans 319w

Voluntary schools
Hasmonean School 287w

Voluntary unemployment
Income support 226w

Voluntary work
Invalidity benefits 846w

Vulcan aircraft
Low flying 489w

Wages councils
354-64w

Wages Inspectorate
354-64w

Wakefield
Coal mine closures 134-5

Wakefield & Pontefract Community Health NHS Trust
682

Waldegrave, Rt Hon William, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster
Questions
Arms to Iraq Inquiry 569, 571-2, 574
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, Doyle, Patrick 268w
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, Official hospitality 236w
Citizen's Charter 572
Citizen's Charter, Publicity 571
Civil servants, Public meetings 369-70w
Civil service, Contracts for services 494w
Contracts for services 569-70
Disclosure of information, EC law 658w

Waldegrave, Rt Hon William—continued
Magistrates, Court's Charter 575-6
Nature conservation, Parks 494w
Open government 1-2w, 658-9w
Open government, Codes of practice 1-2w
Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration, Open government 2w
Public records, Nuclear weapons tests 495-6w
Public service 659w
Science & technology, Expenditure 236w
Science & technology policy 494w, 573
Science & technology research 574-5
Science education, Primary education 574
Technology foresight programme 369w, 574
USA, Citizen's Charter 569
Victim support schemes, Government grants 572

Walden, Mr George
Debates etc.
Defence estimates (18:10:93) 29
Wing bypass (19:10:93) 252-4

Wales
162w, 519-22w, 568, 578w
Ambulance services 322-4w
Arable area payments scheme 453w
Arable farming 821w
Asbestos 158w
Church property (25:10:93) 590
Dental services 579w
Diabetes 580w
Environmental education 819w
European Parliament constituencies 589-90w
European Regional Development Fund 234w
Eye tests 782w
Family credit 780w
GP fundholders 580-7w
Higher education 376w
Hill livestock allowances 452-3w, 782w
Housing 643w
Housing & handicapped 578-9w
Housing standards 820w
Income support 780-1w
Local government constituencies 579-80w
Local government finance 642-4w
Manufacturing industries 208w
NHS internal market 158w
NHS trusts 580-7w
Nursery nurses 376w
Ophthalmology 159-60w
Peat bogs 644-5w
Public bodies 643-4w
Regional planning & development 376w
Road tolls 374-5w
Road traffic control 645w
Sheltered housing 578-9w
Training & enterprise councils 163w, 587w, 819-20w
Urban areas 161w
Urban investment grant 587-8w
Waste disposal 820w
Water supply disconnections 451-2w
Youth training 645w

Walker, Mr Bill
Debates etc.
Defence estimates (18:10:93) 35, 42, 55, 100-1, (19:10:93) 231
EC Social Charter, Points of order (18:10:93) 25-6
Summer Time (Amendment) Bill, 1R (27:10:93) 828
Questions
Economic situation, Scotland 811
Forestry, Access to countryside 816-7

Walker, Mr A Cecil
Questions
Public sector housing, Northern Ireland 465-6w

Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Debates etc.
Management & Administration of Safety & Health at Mines Regulations 1993 (26:10:93) 705, 712-4

Wallace, Mr James
Questions
Church Commissioners, Costs 540w
Church Commissioners, House of Commons questions 540w

Wallace, Mr James*—*continued
Ecclesiastical Committee, House of Commons staff 540w
Salmon, Fish farming 38w
"Scotland in the Union Partnership for Good", Publicity 624w
Scottish Office, Civil service manpower 785w
Scottish Office, Information services 783w
Shellfish, Food contamination 625-8w
Social security recipients, Medical certificates 232w, 246-7w
Unemployment, Scotland 810
Village Speed Control Working Group 428w
Wind power, Orkney 576w

Waller, Mr Gary
Questions
Hospital closures 500w
Rugby, Sportsgrounds 561

Walley, Ms Joan
Debates etc.
Coal mining (27:10:93) 885
Questions
Birmingham relief road 430w
Coal, Energy research 156-7w
European Regional Development Fund, Transport 234w, 299w, 383w
Goods vehicles, Road haulage licences 543-4w
"Guide to Making Representations" 545w
M11, Road construction 341w
M20, Road construction 807w
Motor vehicle testing, Goods vehicles 807w
Radioactive waste disposal, Drigg 720-1w
Road accidents, Sowerby bridge 545w
Road haulage licences 756w
Road tolls 429w
Road tolls, Scotland 478w
Road tolls, Wales 374-5w
Traffic areas, Civil service agencies 545w

Walsall
Employment opportunities 86w

Wandsworth Borough Council
Revenue support grant 720w

War casualties
Bosnia-Herzegovina 500w

War crimes
Criminal investigation 144w, 707w

War Crimes Act 1991
Questions
707w

War widows
British citizenship 222w

Warble fly
775-6w

Ward, Mr John
Debates etc.
Crime (28:10:93) 1002, 1007
Priests (Ordination of Women) Measures 1993 (29:10:93) 1095
Questions
Common fisheries policy 961-2

Wardell, Mr Gareth
Questions
Chronically sick, Prescription charges 606w
Creutzfeldt-Jakob dementia 607w
Dental health, Cancer 693w
Dental Practice Board 607w
Dental services, Hygiene 693w
Dental services, Wales 579w
Diabetes 607w
Diabetes, Medical equipment 693w
Diabetes, Wales 580w
European Parliament constituencies, Wales 589-90w
Housing, Rural areas 643w
Local government constituencies, Wales 579-80w
Morriston Hospital, Heart diseases 579w
NHS trusts, Annual reports 580w
Public bodies, Wales 643-4w
Sewage, Bristol Channel 566-7w
Waste disposal, Local authority powers 820w

Wardle, Mr Charles*, *Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Home Office
Debates etc.
Crime (28:10:93) 1001, 1004-12, 1036-7
European Convention on Human Rights (20:10:93) 367-70
Questions
Air accidents, Birds 271w, 716w
Animal experiments, Tobacco 641-2w
Animal Procedures Committee, Advisory bodies 641w
British National Party, Public order policing 557w
Business premises, Fire regulations 152w
Deportation, Departmental correspondence 799-800w
Driving, Disqualifications 460w
Entry clearances, South Africa 146w
European Police Information Centre 715w
Genetics, Criminal investigation 215w
Identity cards 714w
Immigration, Disclosure of information 150w
Multiple occupation, Fires 152w
Parish constables 215w, 220w
Party conferences, Security 239-40w
Police 215w, 556w
Police, Gypsies 545-6w
Police, Life expectancy 546w
Police, Manpower 546w
Police, Plumstead 557w
Police, Protective clothing 715w
Police Responsibilities & Rewards Inquiry 151w, 271w, 386-7w
Police Responsibilities & Rewards Inquiry, Public appointments 386w
Political refugees, Immigrant detainees 458w
Political refugees, Immigration applications 239w
Prisoner escorts, Greater London 551w
Refugees, Bosnia-Herzegovina 713w
Riot control weapons 272w
Safer cities scheme 217-8w
Serafimowicz, Siemion 799w
Serafimowicz, Siemion, Passports 715w
Tape recorded evidence 458w
Trespass, Police powers 222w
War crimes, Criminal investigation 144w
West Midlands Police, Police discipline 556w

Warehouses
531w

Wareing, Mr Robert N
Questions
Armed forces casualties, Bosnia-Herzegovina 325w
Draskovic, Vuk, Official visits 204w
EC grants & loans, Merseyside 245-6w
Housing estates, Liverpool 92w
Ministers' domestic visits, Liverpool 89-90w
Serbia, Infectious diseases 265-6w
Serbia, Sanctions 266w
Yugoslavia, Official visits 204-5w
Yugoslavia, Sanctions 204w
Yugoslavia, Water pollution 204w

Warner Committee
see Children's Homes Staff Selection Inquiry

Warships
Command & control 328w

Waste disposal
416w, 656w
Belfast 92w
Disposable nappies 430w
Hazardous wastes 531w
Incinerators 654-5w, 824w
Inverclyde District Council 633-4w
Local authority powers 633-4w, 820w
Sewage 653w
Tax allowances 424w
Tyres 655-6w
Wales 820w

Waste management
654-5w, 789w, 820w
Licensing 655w

Water charges
197-8w, 274-5
Anglian Water 274

Water charges*—*continued
South West region 273-4, 690-1
Yorkshire & Humberside 274

Water meters
534w, 826w
Severn Trent Water 534w

Water pollution
Cardiff Bay 161-2w
North West region 251w
Yugoslavia 204w

Water resources
Nitrates 773w

Water supply
EC law 827w

Water supply disconnections
276, 531-2w, 534w, 828-9w
Scotland 613w, 629w, 813
Wales 451-2w

Water supply industry
Scotland 629w

Water transport
342w

Waterson, Mr Nigel
Debates etc.
Summer Time (Amendment) Bill, 1R (27:10:93) 828-30
Questions
Hotel & catering industry 560
Property insurance, Terrorism 302w

Watson, Mr Mike
Questions
Local government reform, Scotland 817-8

Wave power
646w

WE 177 nuclear bomb
730w

Weapons
Iraq 665-6w
Treaties 406w, 410-1w, 519w

Weather forecasting
Low flying 522w

Weeds Act 1959
Questions
570w, 775w

Weights & Measures Act 1985
Questions
724w

Weils disease
Health education 692w

Welsh, Mr Andrew
Debates etc.
Heating allowances (28:10:93) 1050
Questions
Architectural conservation, EC grants & loans 43-4w
Business questions 396-7
Local government reform, Scotland 813
Salmon, Fish farming 38w

Welsh Affairs Select Committee
643w

Welsh Development Agency
587w, (25:10:93) 591-662, 638w
Accounting 781w
Business expenses 781w
Company cars 781-2w
Conflict of interests 781w
Ministerial statements (19:10:93) 147-58
Offices 588-9w
Public appointments 781w

Welsh Language Bill (HL) 1992/93
Debates etc.
Royal Assent (21:10:93) 413

Welsh Language Board
Finance 578w
Public appointments 821-2w

Welsh Office
Doyle, Patrick 324w
Expenditure 453w
Government buildings 821w
Official hospitality 234w

Welsh Office Drawing Office
Contracts for services 161w

Wessex Regional Health Authority
Resignations 612w

West coast railway line
428-9w

West Lothian
Local government reform 691w

West Midlands
Low pay 210w
Take-up of employment 71-2w
Vocational training 139

West Midlands Police
Judgments 578w
Police discipline 556w

West Midlands Regional Health Authority
Public appointments 344w

West Wales Training & Enterprise Council
163w

West Yorkshire
Unemployment 134-5

West Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive
Rolling stock 756w

Westminster & Chelsea Hospita
(25:10:93) 591-662

Westminster Hall
233w

Whales
Nature conservation 276w, 772w
Norway 276w, 966-7

Wheat
Farm incomes 172-3w
France 172-3w
Imports 185-6w
Prices 188w, 563-4w

***Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John**, Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office*
Debates etc.
Northern Ireland (22:10:93) 548-50
Questions
Anglo-Irish agreement 374
Anglo-Irish talks 321w
Army in Northern Ireland 375, 382-3
Civil servants, Northern Ireland 793w
Government buildings, Northern Ireland 817w
IRA, Finance 319w
Northern Ireland Audit Review Group 235w
Northern Ireland Office, Government buildings 817w
Northern Ireland Office, Official hospitality 235w
Prisons, Northern Ireland 467w
Royal Ulster Constabulary, Conditions of employment 94w
Terrorism, Dublin 320w
Terrorism, Northern Ireland 321w, 373-5
Voluntary organisations, EC grants & loans 319w

Whisky
Alcoholic drinks duties 420-1w
Consumption 419-20w
Exports 420w
Manpower 419w
Prices 420w
Retail trade 420w

Whittingdale, Mr John
Debates etc.
NHS administration (21:10:93) 407
Questions
BBC 563
GATT, Agricultural products 959
Science & technology policy 573

Wicks, Mr Malcolm
Debates etc.
Defence estimates (18:10:93) 31
Questions
Maintenance, Children 9-10

***Widdecombe, Miss Ann**, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept of Employment*
Debates etc.
Low pay, Lancashire (28:10:93) 1077-80
Priests (Ordination of Women) Measures 1993 (29:10:93) 1094, 1116-22, 1126, 1133
Questions
Astra Training Services, Arthur Andersen 365-6w
Astra Training Services, Company liquidations 365w
Average earnings 476w
Casual workers 209w
Commissioner for the Rights of Trade Union Members 669w
Dept of Employment, Doyle, Patrick 337w
Dept of Employment, House of Commons broadcasting 71w
Employment level, EC countries 70w
Employment opportunities, Energy conservation 597w
Employment opportunities, Environment protection 333w
Employment opportunities, Young people 133-4
Employment schemes 136
Employment training, Departmental forms 337-8w
Equal opportunities 209-10w
European Social Fund, Employment schemes 72w
Manufacturing industries, Manpower 208w
Older workers, Training 476w
Paternity leave 366w
Public sector employment, Age discrimination 476w
Publishing, Manpower 352w
Skillcentres, Privatisation 138, 366w
Take-up of employment, West Midlands 71-2w
Technical & vocational education intitiative, Finance 339-40w
Temporary employment, Redundancy 333-4w
Training & enterprise councils, Expenditure 366w
Training for work 210w
Travel-to-work areas, Southend-on-Sea 70w
Unemployment, EC countries 71w
Unemployment, Graduates 137-8
Unemployment, Young people 332-3w
Vacancies, Birmingham 597-8w
Vocational training 138
Vocational training, Kidderminster 137
Workstart 135-6
Youth employment, Birmingham 772w
Youth unemployment 133
Youth unemployment, Greater London 210w

Widowers' benefits
223w

Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Debates etc.
Access to Parliament, Points of order (20:10:93) 321
Defence estimates (18:10:93) 86-9

Wigley, Mr Dafydd
Debates etc.
Welsh Development Agency (19:10:93) 153
Questions
Income support, Social security benefits reductions 226w
Insurance, Chronically sick 14w
Invalidity benefits, Social security recipients 168w
Pension Law Review Committee 329-30w
Pesticide residues, Industrial health & safety 177w
Teleworking 400w
Thailand, Visas 85w

Wild animals
Imports 414w

Wildfowl
Pest control 383w
Scotland 383w

Wildfowl Trust
488w

Wilkinson, Mr John
Debates etc.
Bombings, Northern Ireland (25:10:93) 590
Defence estimates (18:10:93) 34-5, 105-7

Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Debates etc.
Public Accounts Committee (25:10:93) 598, 632-8, 647
Welsh Development Agency (19:10:93) 153

Williams, Mr Alan W
Debates etc.
Welsh Development Agency (19:10:93) 152
Questions
Anglo-Irish talks 321w
THORP 263, 282w

Wilson, Alan
495w

Wilson, Mr Brian
Questions
Bus Promotion Working Party 22w
Bus services, Privatisation 22w
Income support, Cunninghame 168w

Wind power
Countryside 415w
Orkney 576w

Wind turbines
576w

Wines
Imports 421w

Wing bypass
(19:10:93) 252-8

Winnick, Mr David
Debates etc.
Bombings, Northern Ireland (25:10:93) 588
Business questions (28:10:93) 996
Former Cabinet Ministers (Interests) Bill, 1R (20:10:93) 297
Northern Ireland (22:10:93) 492, 506, 508-9
Questions
Anglo-Irish talks 320w
Benton, Anthony 270-1w
Business questions 397
Pensioners, Personal income 8
Retirement pensions 331w
Russia, Elections 278w
Serafimowicz, Siemion 799w
Serafimowicz, Siemion, Passports 715w
Sickness benefits, Departmental correspondence 378w
Tarmac Brick & Tiles, Departmental correspondence 350w
USA, Foreign relations 267-8w
War crimes, Criminal investigation 707w

Winterton, Mrs Ann
Debates etc.
Defence estimates (19:10:93) 177
Questions
Curriculum, Advisory bodies 441w
Curriculum, Ministerial policy advisors 439-40w
South & East Cheshire Health Authority, Public appointments 502w

Winterton, Mr Nicholas
Debates etc.
Coal mining (20:10:93) 285

Wise, Mrs Audrey
Questions
Hospital waiting lists 684

Witnesses
219w

Wolds Remand Prison
116-7w
Bail information schemes 117-8w

Wolds Remand Prison—continued
Codes of practice 116w
Contracts for services 117w
Crimes of violence 116w
Criminal Justice Liaison Committees 116w
Libraries 117-8w
Manpower 133-4w
Prison administration 118w
Prison population 126-7w
Segregation of prisoners 117w

Wolfson, Mr Mark
Debates etc.
Defence estimates (19:10:93) 174, 200

Women
Employees' contributions 328w
Hormone treatments 683-4
Invalidity benefits 6
Low pay 210w
Retirement pensions 328-30w
Smoking 31-2w

Women clergy
(29:10:93) 1083-151

Women's employment
Employment opportunities 691w
Scotland 691w

Women's Royal Naval Service
(19:10:93) 162-251

Wood Committee
see Rating of Plant & Machinery Review

Woodgrange Park Cemetery Bill (HL) 1990/91
Debates etc.
2R* (21:10:93) 371

Wool, Rosemary
127-8w

Woolf Inquiry
see Manchester Strangeways Prison Riot Inquiry

Woolwich Arsenal
Defence Research Agency 731w

Worcester Health Authority
838w

Worcester Royal Infirmary
838w

Working hours
208-9w
Agricultural workers 613w
Junior hospital doctors 609w, 766-7w, 834-5w
Lorry drivers 25w
Scotland 613w

Workington
Factories 132

Workstart
135-6

World War II
Courts martial (19:10:93) 159-61
Festivals & special occasions 728w

Worth Moor pumping station
190-2w

Worthington, Mr Tony
Questions
Homelessness, Northern Ireland 381

Wray, Mr Jimmy
Questions
NHS trusts, Scotland 812

Wrexham Maelor Hospital
Expenditure 163w

Wright, Dr Tony
Debates etc.
Coal mining (20:10:93) 293
Questions
NHS reform 385

Written questions
Costs 6w, 427w

Wylfa power station
Radiation hazards 162-3w

Wymott Prison
Inquiries 271-2w
Prison riots 115w, 271-2w
Prisoners' transfers 113-4w

Yeo, Mr Tim, Minister of State, Dept of the Environment
Questions
Beaches, Sea pollution 268-70
Birds 260w
Cetaceans, Death 650w
Cetaceans, Nature conservation 350-1w
City challenge 417w
Climate Change Convention 280w
Clinical wastes, Incinerators 654w
Countryside stewardship scheme 533w
Drinking fountains 531w
Drinking Water Inspectorate 650w
EC Environment Council 90-1w, 193w
Ecolabelling 249w
Energy conservation 250w
Energy conservation, Conferences 193w
Energy conservation, Energy prices 654w
Energy conservation, Government departments 256-9w
Engineering Employers' Federation, Environment protection 193w
Environment, EC law 279w
Environment protection, Sites of special scientific interest 652w
Environmental Action Fund 530-1w
Environmental Auditors Registration Association 194w
Environmental policy 255w
Environmental policy, Departmental publications 280-1w
Gas fired power stations 823w
Gas fuels, Research 823w
Halons 91-2w
Hazardous wastes, Waste disposal 531w
Hedges incentive scheme 538-9w
Home energy efficiency scheme 536w
Institute for European Environmental Policy 279-80w
Integrated pollution control, Fees & charges 536w
Land pollution, Civil liability 278w
Lead pollution, Pollution control 532w
National Rivers Authority, Manpower 415w
Nature conservation, EC law 535w
Noise, Complaints 281w
Noise control 278-9w
Nuclear accidents, International cooperation 436w
Open University, Environmental education 279w
Orimulsion, Licensing 651w
Oxford University, Radioactive wastes 823w
Ozone layer, Air pollution control 253w
Packaging 195-6w
Partnership for change, Conferences 193w
Peat, Ecolabelling 652w
Radioactive Substances Act 1960, Prosecutions 656-8w
Radioactive waste disposal, Irish Sea 87w
Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee, Health physics 826w
Radioactive wastes, Health hazards 505-6w
Recycling 195w
River Medway, Nature conservation 534-5w
Rural development areas 278w
Sellafield, Radioactive waste disposal 252-3w
Severn Estuary, Special protection areas 535-6w
Severn Trent Water, Water meters 534w
Sewage, Waste disposal 653w
Sulphur, Treaties 652w
Sustainable development 656w
Tarmac Brick & Tiles, Departmental correspondence 350w
Terrestrial initiative in global environmental research 254w
THORP 263-4, 282w, 416-7w, 826-7w
THORP, Radioactive waste disposal 252w
Tributyl tin, Nature conservation 826w
UK Ecolabelling Board, Public appointments 824w
Waste disposal 416w, 656w

Yeo, Mr Tim—continued
Waste disposal, Incinerators 654-5w, 824w
Waste disposal, Tyres 655-6w
Waste management 655w
Waste management, Licensing 655w
Water meters 534w, 826w
Water pollution, North West region 251w
Water supply, EC law 827w
Water supply disconnections 276, 531-2w, 828-9w
Wild animals, Imports 414w
Wind power, Countryside 415w

Yorkshire & Humberside
Forests 562w
Water charges 274
Youth unemployment 305-6w

Young, Rt Hon Sir George, Minister for Housing and Planning
Questions
Accommodation Agencies Act 1953 650w
Building industry 256w
Council house rents 250w
Council house sales 252w
Council house sales, Local government revenue 251w, 534w
Council housing, Building repairs 250w
Council housing, Lancashire 348-9w
Council housing, Local government expenditure 720w
Council housing, Lone parent families 253-4w, 348w
Council housing, Refugees 825w
Disabled facilities grants 533-4w
Docklands light railway, Greenwich 200w
First time buyers 255w
Homelessness 253w, 255w, 280w
Homelessness, Lancashire 349w
Homelessness, Northumberland 417w
Hostels, Greater London 86-7w
House renovation grants, Lancashire 829-30w
Housing 414-5w
Housing, Lancashire 349-50w
Housing, Local government finance 829w
Housing association grant 267-8
Housing associations, Housing construction 267-8
Housing associations, Right to buy 266-7
Housing capital allocations 828-30w
Housing construction, Community care 281w
Housing construction, East Sussex 261-2
Housing construction, Greater London 259-60w
Housing estates, Liverpool 92w
Housing investment programmes, Lancashire 536-8w
Landlords, Private rented housing 415w
Leasehold housing, Advisory services 194w, 831w
Ministers' domestic visits, Liverpool 89-90w
Mortgage relief, First time buyers 279w
Multiple occupation, Housing standards 254w
Owner occupied housing 266-7
Planning permission, Housing construction 417w
Private rented housing, Right to buy 534w
Security Facilities Executive 194w
Sheltered housing 718-9w

Young offenders
393-5w, 714-5w
Crimes of violence 393w
Criminal statistics 549-52w
Greater London 146-50w
Habitual offenders 240w
Lewisham 146-50w
Prison population 459-60w
Prison sentences 462w
Prisoners on remand 391-3w
Prosecutions 103w
Remand in custody 549w
Self-mutilation 717w
Sentencing 383
Suicide 717w

Young people
Drug abuse 222w
Employment opportunities 133-4
Housing benefits 845-6w
Income support 5
Smoking 32w, 694w

Young people—continued
Unemployment 332-3w
Vocational training 138-9

Youth custody
548-52w, 557w

Youth employment
Birmingham 772w

Youth training
772w
Wales 645w

Youth unemployment
133, 139-40
Greater London 210w
Yorkshire & Humberside 305-6w

Yugoslavia
Official visits 204-5w
Overseas aid 103w, 418w
Sanctions 204w
Water pollution 204w